

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Media Center

Tuesday, January 16, 2024
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, in the Colchester High School Media Center. Board members in attendance were Board Directors Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Felix Anderson, Laurie Kigonya and Student Representative Phoebe Richardson. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum Gwen Carmolli, Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz, and Social Emotional Learning Coordinator Jayme Gaudet. Board Chair Lindsey Cox joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Vice Chair Nic Longo called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Citizen Participation

None.

III. Second and Final Reading of Restrictive Behavioral Intervention Policy: F35 Action

No edits were requested. It was noted that the draft policy included in the public packet of supplemental materials for the meeting was an old version. The version being approved was the correct draft that was reviewed at the first reading on January 2, 2024.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the first reading of the Use of Restraint and Seclusion Policy: F35. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

IV. Second and Final Reading of Child Find Policy: F32 Action

This policy was last updated in 2017. The Child Find process aims to locate and identify students with a disability to determine eligibility for support and protection through the special education or Section 504 rules. The Child Find process is required by law for all school districts, and because of that, the Vermont School Board Association (VSBA) does not have a Child Find policy in their model policy manual. Most Vermont districts have the Child Find process outlined in a procedural document, not as a policy.

In March 2022, the Colchester School Board approved the Special Education Policy: G2. This policy states that the district will use the Vermont Special Education Procedures and Practices Manual developed by the Vermont Agency of Education. This manual clearly outlines the requirements and procedures for Child Find compliance. District administrators acknowledged the redundancy and recommended eliminating this policy from the CSD policy manual.

Director Anderson moved to approve the removal of the Child Find Policy: F32 from the CSD policy manual. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

V. First Reading of the Animals in the Classroom or on School Property Policy: F29

This policy was last reviewed in 2016. During the review process, it was determined that the Vermont School Board Association does not require or recommend school districts to have a policy on this topic, nor do they have it on their list to consider. District administrators recommended transitioning this policy to a set of procedures.

Director Kigonya moved to approve the first reading of Animals in the Classroom or on School Property Policy: F29. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

VI. First Reading of Harassment of Employees Policy: D12

This policy was last reviewed in 2017. The Vermont School Board Association (VSBA) requires school districts to have this policy and recently updated their model policy in November of 2023. The draft reviewed by the board aligns with the VSBA model policy and has been reviewed by attorneys. The board asked a few clarifying questions and discussed the steps that the district and employees would follow while using this policy.

Director Anderson moved to approve the first reading of Harassment of Employees Policy: D12. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

VII. Approval of the FY'25 Budget and Warning (moved to item X) Action

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to reschedule this item to later in the meeting pending the arrival of Board Chair Lindsey Cox. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

VIII. Approval of Consent Agenda Action

The board reviewed the consent agenda. Superintendent Amy Minor noted the retirement notice of two Colchester Middle School administrators at the end of the school year and thanked them for their service.

CONSENT AGENDA

Board Meeting Date: January 16, 2024

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Administrative	Julie	Tanguay	Resignation	Director of Student Support Services	1.0	CMS	Request to end employment 06/30/24			

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Board Approval Required

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Pam	Handy	New Hire	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Hire	Heather Sheppard	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Heather	Sheppard	Resignation	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Lindsey	Troescher	Resignation	HR Coordinator	40.0	CO	Notice of Resignation			

Director Anderson moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- IX. Approval of Meeting Minutes** **Action**
- January 2, 2024 (general)
 - January 2, 2024 (special)
 - January 9, 2024 (special)

Director Kigonya moved to approve the minutes from the meetings held on January 2, 2024 and January 9, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

- X. Approval of the FY'25 Budget and Warning** *(moved from item VII)* **Action**

Board Chair Lindsey Cox joined the meeting at the start of this presentation at 7:35 p.m.

Superintendent Amy Minor recapped her previous presentations, highlighting steady enrollment and the district's historical spending comparison to the state and regional districts. She noted the top priority of administrators is to maintain current staffing and programming for students in the next budget. She gave an overview of the FY'25 educational tax components, including state-controlled numbers such as the dollar yield and the common level of appraisal (CLA). Business and Operation Manager George Trieb highlighted the importance of the district qualifying for the 5% tax cap allowed through Act 127. He illustrated it by showing the estimated tax increase on various property values with and without the cap. He also gave the estimated figures for taxpayers in Colchester whose household makes less than \$129,000 per year and qualifies for a property tax credit. The state sets the criteria yearly, and the household income limit is lower than in previous years. Taxpayers who qualify for this credit pay their taxes based on income instead of property value. Historically, about 70% of residents qualified for the property tax credit. This year, it appears that approximately 61% of taxpayers will qualify.

At the board's request, Superintendent Minor provided two areas administrators identified as priority needs. The first is to respond to a sharp increase in new American students with an additional multilingual educator. The number of newcomer students with little or no English proficiency increased from six students two years ago to 31 this school year. When asked for another area of immediate need, Superintendent Minor highlighted 504 data at Colchester Middle School. Students identified with a disability are eligible for a 504 Plan. Ideally, plans are managed by employees with specialized training in disability law and educational knowledge of each disability area. Currently, the school's counselors handle 20 of the 39 middle school plans. No other school counselors in the district oversee 504 case management.

The board reviewed the three budget scenarios presented at the January 9, 2024 meeting, which included no additions, \$105K in additions to fund either support for 504 plan students or multilingual learners, or add \$210K to fund both. In all three examples, the estimated tax increase would be 15.50%.

Director Anderson agreed that the district should move forward to meet needs in as many places as possible. He pointed to recent contract negotiations and the critical adjustments to the pay structure to attract and retain employees. He recommended that the board be cautious, not knowing how

significantly Act 127 and the declining CLA would impact the tax rate in the coming years. He suggested not making any additions to the FY'25 budget. Board Chair Cox noted that the district has done well adapting to the changing needs of students and highlighted how crucial student support is to respond to achievement gaps that have surfaced ultimately. She stated that the data presented about newcomers and how the middle school managing Section 504 plans is significant enough to warrant additional staffing in those areas. Director Yousey-Hindes agreed with Board Chair Cox's statements and feels the needs outlined by administrators are critical. He emphasized his trust in school leadership and their capabilities for supporting students. He noted that the debated positions could have long-term adverse effects on the impacted students if the schools do not receive the resources to meet their needs. Director Kigonya agreed and supported providing the district with additional staffing resources to meet the outlined needs. Director Longo appreciated Director Anderson's comments about thinking about the future and acknowledged there would be an impact down the road based on decisions made this year. However, he highlighted that Colchester has been the region's lowest-spending district per pupil for years and is always well below the state average. He stated that Colchester would remain a fiscally restrained district even with adding these two positions. After continued discussion, the board agreed that the positions were critical to meeting the needs of students and moved to adopt a budget that included their addition.

Director Cox moved to adopt a budget of \$57,425,957 for the support and operation of the Colchester School District for the year beginning July 1, 2024, seconded by Director Longo. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

XI. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports Information

- The LCATV Informational Budget Video will be filmed at the start of the meeting on February 6. Student Board Representative Phoebe Richardson will moderate.
- The district is hosting two workshops to engage community members in facility planning. They are open to anyone in the Colchester community and will take place on Tuesday, January 23, and Wednesday, January 24, at 6:30 p.m. in the CMS Cafeteria.


XII. Future Agenda Items Information

- Continuation of the Policy Review Cycle
- Quarterly Financial Report
- NEASC Report from CHS

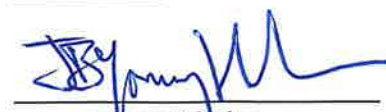
XIII. Adjournment

Director Kigonya moved to adjourn at 8:11 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:


Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:


Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk