

# COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting  
Colchester High School Media Center

Tuesday, September 3, 2024  
7:00 p.m.

## MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, in the Colchester High School Media Center. Board members in attendance were Board Chair Lindsey Cox, Directors Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, Jennifer Fath and Student Board Member Rylee Friend. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum Gwen Carmolli, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There were five audience members.

### I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### II. Citizen Participation

None.

### III. Introduction of Student School Board Member for 2024-25

Information

Colchester High School Principal Andrew Conforti introduced Rylee Friend, the student school board member for the upcoming school year. He outlined the application process for the appointment and acknowledged Rylee's contributions to the school community. He touted her mentorship of young students, her involvement in multiple clubs and initiatives, and expressed his confidence that she will do a great job representing students of the school district in this role.

### IV. Hear Update from School Principals

Information

All five school principals were in attendance and shared an update on the opening of school.

- Colchester High School Principal Andrew Conforti highlighted that school leaders are focusing on attendance and have been encouraged to see an improvement and high levels of student engagement, especially from students who struggled last year. Energy levels are high, noting that sixty student ambassadors helped welcome 9<sup>th</sup> graders and new students through the Smart Start program, and Spirit Week preparations have begun.
- Colchester Middle School Principal Tara Sharkey shared that the school year started strong, with in-service efforts paying off in hallways and classrooms. Students are building community through advisory and classroom activities, with middle school teams kicking off the year with field trips. The maintenance, custodial and office staff's hard work helped rearrange spaces near the front office to make it more welcoming and approachable to students and visitors.
- Malletts Bay School Principal Jordan Burke shared that preschool had started just that day and was starting well. She noted that throughout the first few days of school, they worked hard to set a positive tone for non-academic routines like arrival, dismissal, and lunch. That helps set the foundation for the school year. As teachers are now diving into academics, they are reinforcing norms, supported by the PBIS framework of promoting safe, respectful and

responsible behavior. Faculty are recognizing students' efforts and earning celebrations, contributing to a fun and positive start to the school year.

- Porters Point School Principal Carolyn Millham shared that the school's back-to-school events were a great opportunity to reconnect returning families and build relationships with new ones. New teachers and staff members are undergoing training and onboarding, with time set aside for them to connect with each other.
- Union Memorial School principal Chris Antonicci was proud of his staff and students for surviving the new calendar, which starts school with a five-day week. He said there have been many happy students in the classrooms and they were thrilled to have nearly 100% family participation at the kindergarten meet and greet, highlighting the engagement from parents and guardians.

## **V. Presentation on District Facilities Renovation Bond Proposal Information**

The Colchester School Board and administrators in the district provided a detailed presentation of a proposed bond that will be on the ballot on November 5 to renovate, expand, and update the infrastructure of schools in the district. Superintendent Amy Minor gave an overview of the current state of each school that included photos and specific examples such as inaccessible doorways, rooms, and playgrounds, outdated plumbing, insulation, windows, and roofs that have outlived their useful life, undersized and outdated electrical systems, a failing septic system, lack for automated sprinkler systems, disorganized front entryway with insufficient space and sightlines for proper visitor screening, shared multi-purpose spaces like gyms that double as cafeterias that limit master scheduling options, lack of space to provide individual or small group academic intervention which has led to delivering those services in hallways, closets, and vestibules, lack of dedicated classrooms for subjects that have teachers moving from room to room on a cart, misalignment of housing the preschool program with grades 3-5 instead of K-2 because of the lack of space and classrooms, among other things. Superintendent Minor shared the draft floor plans and 3D renderings developed by architects and highlighted how the renovations and additions would improve safety, security, and spaces for learning and support. It was noted that these improvements would prepare the district for the future. Enrollment has remained steady and even increased slightly in the last few years. Projections show that the trend will continue, with the demographer forecasting an additional increase of about 100 students by 2029.

Board members expressed strong support for the proposed facilities bond, recognizing it as a critical investment in the district's aging infrastructure. Director Longo highlighted the growing need for improvements, noting that rising costs make this the right time to act, while stressing that the bond represents strategic fiscal responsibility in the long-term. Director Yousey-Hindes echoed support, acknowledging the bond's necessity for ensuring safe, accessible, and updated facilities, while praising the district's history of maintaining its buildings. Board Chair Cox shared confidence in the community's ability to understand the importance of the schools, and Directors Fath and Kigonya, both long-time parents in the district, emphasized the importance of the bond for future generations, urging community members to get informed and act on the urgency of the situation.

Following the presentation, two audience members addressed the board.

Doug Bishop (Oak Circle) thanked everyone for their efforts and urged the community to engage with the board and administrators, emphasizing the importance of asking questions. He expressed curiosity about how the Local Option Tax (LOT) might assist with the bond and inquired about the state's potential role in funding school improvements, as well as the impact on homes of different values.

Ralph Perkins (Braeloch Road) expressed long-standing support for the project, saying it has been needed for 20 years. He asked whether taxpayers would bear the entire cost or if state or federal aid is

possible, and sought clarification on the benefits and risks of using older buildings from the 1950s-70s for future renovations.

Board Chair Cox noted that there will be many opportunities for community members to learn about the full scope of the project. There is a dedicated website at [www.csdbond.org](http://www.csdbond.org) which also has an overview video of the project, several upcoming community presentations and building tour dates.

**VI. Approval of Consent Agenda**

**Action**

The board reviewed the following consent agenda.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Board Meeting Date: 9/3/2024**

*Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)*

<b>Contract Type</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>FTE/Hours</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Agenda Information</b>	<b>Person Replacing</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Admin Support</b>
Teacher	Ryan	O'Hara	New Hire	Long Term Sub 7/8 Social Studies (9/16/24 - 1/2/25)	1.0	CMS	Request to Hire	Damien Dulude	Yes	Yes

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

<b>Contract Type</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>FTE/Hours</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Agenda Information</b>	<b>Person Replacing</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Admin Support</b>
Support Staff	Matthew	Nerbak	LOA	Behavior Interventionist	35.0	MBS	Request for unpaid LOA 9/13 - 10/15			

*Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational*

<b>Contract Type</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>FTE/Hours</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Agenda Information</b>	<b>Person Replacing</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Admin Support</b>
Support Staff	Olivia	Ashkinaze-Collender	New Hire	Multilingual Paraeducator	32.5	CMS	Notice of Hire	Dokyeong Lim	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Aita	Gurung	New Hire	Custodial Staff	40.0	MBS	Notice of Hire	Ryan Jolet	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Ryan	Jolet	Resignation	Custodial Staff	40.0	MBS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Max	Uzer	Resignation	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Pam	Handy	Resignation	Paraeducator	17.5	UMS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Jessica	Williams	Resignation	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	William	Bouffard	Resignation	Technology Specialist	40.0	DW	Notice of Resignation			

There was a personnel item on the agenda that the board requested to discuss further in executive session. The motion was held until after that discussion.

**VII. Approval of Meeting Minutes** **Action**  
• **August 20, 2024**

*Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the minutes from the meetings held on August 20, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.*

**VIII. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports** **Information**  
• Continuation of bond information events.

**IX. Future Agenda Items** **Information**  
• Facilities Bond Project Updates  
• School Reports  
• Policy Work

**X. Executive Session to Discuss a Personnel Matter** **Action**  
*Director Longo moved to enter executive session at 8:41 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. The motion passed unanimously.*

*Director Kigonya moved to exit executive session at 8:52 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.*

*Director Longo moved to approve the personnel consent agenda as provided. The motion passed unanimously.*


**XI. Adjournment**

*Director Kigonya moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m.*

Recorder:

  
Meghan Baule  
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:

  
Ben Yousey-Hindes  
Board Clerk