

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Media Center

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

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, in the Colchester High School Media Center. Board members in attendance were Board Chair Lindsey Cox, Directors Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Jennifer Fath, and Student Representative Rylee Friend. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Carmolli, Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz, and Director of Instructional Support Services Jean Shea, CHS Principal Andrew Conforti, CHS Director of Student Support Services Amber Keep, CHS Special Education Team Leaders Dave Sharkey and Dana Visser. There were two 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

Doug Bishop of Oak Circle, newly elected to represent the Chittenden-20 district in the Vermont Legislature, addressed the board. During his campaign, he attended numerous town and school district meetings. He expressed appreciation for the work of the district and board, congratulated them on the bond approval, and wished them success in their efforts on the FY26 budget. Mr. Bishop emphasized his commitment to staying in contact with the administration and looked forward to future discussions.

III. Hear Presentation on CHS Champ Program

Information

Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz provided an overview of the CHS Champ Program. Initially presented to the board in the spring of 2024, the program addresses the needs of students with elevated internalizing behaviors who struggle in general education settings despite their academic capabilities and desire to attend school. The program, launched at the start of the school year, currently serves nine students and emphasizes flexible scheduling. CHS Special Education Team Leaders Dave Sharkey and Dana Visser detailed the program's schedule and curriculum, which incorporates hands-on methods to increase engagement and movement. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting increased attendance and support. A video presentation showcased student activities, including classroom participation and community field trips. Board members discussed the program's broader impacts and potential scalability. Director Yousey-Hines praised the program as an exemplar of meeting students' diverse needs and highlighted its alignment with the district's mission. Director Fath inquired about transcript representation and future capacity. The program's credits are proficiency-based and count towards graduation. Ms. Visser explained pathways for transitioning students, with options including tech programs, internships, or reintegration into general education. Student Representative Rylee Friend asked about collaboration with general education teachers to avoid redundant content. Mr. Sharkey assured coordination with teachers to ensure complementary, not repetitive, learning experiences.

IV. FY'26 Budget Discussion**Information**

Business and Operations Manager George Trieb reviewed the Commissioner of Taxes' annual education tax rate letter, projecting a 5.9% increase in statewide average education property tax bills. He explained the implications for Colchester, noting variables like the common level of appraisal and the dollar yield, which could significantly influence local tax rates. Mr. Trieb stressed that variables are likely to change in the upcoming months. Superintendent Minor will provide updated information on long-term weighted average daily memberships and funding mechanisms, enabling the board to establish spending targets and estimate a tax rate. Two additional meetings in January will review budget scenarios and react to any possible changes from the AOE or legislative.

V. First Reading of Students Who Are English Learners Policy: F22**Action**

This policy was reviewed as part of the annual cycle and is required by the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA). The VSBA has updated its model policy, and administrators recommended aligning the district's policy with those changes. Beyond those changes, there were several additional recommended updates, most notably the title and terminology for referring to students learning English. The district now uses the term "multilingual learners," and the draft policy was revised accordingly. The board discussed the policy's implementation and the legal requirements for supporting multilingual students in their education and acquisition of English.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the first reading of the Students Who Are English Learners Policy: F22. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. First Reading of Weapons Policy: F24**Action**

This policy was reviewed as part of the annual cycle. Superintendent Minor provided historical and practical context on the distinction between firearm violations and violations involving other types of weapons. During the review process, administrators observed that weapon policies vary across districts statewide. Superintendent Minor noted that Colchester has the strictest weapons policy in the county, requiring school board hearings for all violations regardless of the weapon type or circumstance. She highlighted that many districts separate firearm policies from those addressing other weapons, allowing for greater clarity and flexibility, especially at the elementary level. The board discussed the potential benefits of creating two distinct policies. Superintendent Minor provided examples of how a separate weapons policy could establish thresholds for violations that would necessitate a school board hearing.

Director Longo moved to approve the first reading of the Weapons Policy: F24. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Approval of Consent Agenda**Action**

The board reviewed the following consent agenda.

There were not items on the agenda that required board approval.

VIII. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Action

- November 19, 2024

Director Longo moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 19, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports

Information

- Administrators met with Black River Design to start finalizing the initial timeline for the bond facilities work.
- Appreciation given for the community's generosity during the recent clothing and gift card drive to support students and families in need.

X. Future Agenda Items

Information

- School Reports
- FY26 Budget Development
- Policy Work

XI. Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations

Action

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to enter executive session at 8:50 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to exit executive session at 9:39 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. Adjournment

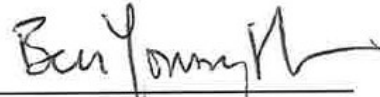
Director Longo moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Recorder:



Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:



Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk