

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Media Center

Tuesday, December 17, 2024
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, December 17, 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 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, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There were no 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. Hear FY'26 Budget Discussion

Information

Superintendent Amy Minor provided a comprehensive overview of the FY'26 budget, emphasizing that enrollment is stable and projected to increase slightly in the coming years. Administrators are closely monitoring class sizes to ensure alignment with Vermont's Education Quality Standards. Superintendent Minor reviewed Vermont's unique education funding system, explaining how local tax rates are calculated to cover statewide school budgets. Business and Operations Manager George Trieb discussed the state funding formula, highlighting key terms and the Tax Commissioner's letter projecting an average statewide property tax increase of 5.9%. He detailed the components of the funding formula controlled by the district versus those dictated by the state or legislature. Significant factors influencing the budget include salaries and benefits, including statewide-negotiated health care, food services, transportation, and special education programs. Superintendent Minor presented graphs showing a decade-long trend of low tax increases in Colchester, averaging 2.8%, despite a significant increase last year due to the new funding formula.

Superintendent Minor outlined key priorities for the budget, including maintaining resources to support multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) in academics, social-emotional learning, and inclusion; adhering to Vermont Education Quality Standards for class sizes; prioritizing early literacy and mathematics proficiency; continuing co-curricular activities; protecting services for the district's most vulnerable students and families; exploring system efficiencies to ensure fiscal responsibility; and retaining current levels of professional staffing while monitoring future needs identified by school principals.

Director Yousey-Hindes emphasized the board's commitment to being good stewards of tax dollars, noting the board's limited influence on elements of the funding formula that drive tax rates. Director Longo highlighted that significant service cuts would compromise compliance with education standards and expressed relief that the projected tax increase is better than initially expected. Board Chair Cox stressed the importance of maintaining existing programming to meet both current and emerging student needs and shared a positive outlook on the budget's numbers.

The budget assumes all positions will be filled; however, 32 positions are currently vacant. Director Yousey-Hindes inquired about the impact of unfilled positions. Superintendent Minor and other administrators acknowledged temporary solutions, such as increased reliance on substitutes and staff covering multiple roles, but cautioned that these measures are unsustainable. Superintendent Minor noted ongoing hiring difficulties, despite efforts to address vacancies, and pointed to broader workforce issues affecting schools across the state.

The board discussed additional information needed to refine the budget before finalizing the warned amount in January.

IV. Second and Final Reading of Students Who Are English Learners Policy: F22 **Action**

No changes were requested since the first reading.

Director Longo moved to approve the second and final reading of the Students Who Are English Learners Policy, which will now be titled the Multilingual Learners Policy: F22. The motion passed unanimously.

V. First Reading of Video Surveillance Policy: F24 **Action**

This policy was reviewed as part of the scheduled cycle. Superintendent Minor provided context around the policy and how it's implemented. She noted that it is in compliance with the Vermont School Board Association's model policy. The policy has served the district well.

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

VI. Approval of Consent Agenda **Action**

The board reviewed the following consent agenda.

There were no items on the agenda that required board approval.

VII. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Action

- **December 3, 2024**

Director Longo moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on December 3, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports

Information

- Student musicians at CMS and CHS are performing in multiple concerts this week.
- PPS and UMS renovation committees meet with Black River Design to study and finalize the floor plans. They are planning to tour area schools that have recently undergone renovations. Engineering company Krebs and Lansing dug test pits at both schools.

IX. Future Agenda Items

Information

- School Reports
- FY26 Budget Development
- Policy Work

X. Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations

Action

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to enter executive session at 7:56 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to exit executive session at 8:20 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Adjournment

Director Kigonya moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Recorder:

Board Clerk:

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk