

Colchester School District

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, December 16, 2025
7:15 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, in the Colchester High School Library Media Center. Board Directors in attendance were Lindsey Cox, Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes and Jennifer Fath. Administrators and employees in attendance were Superintendent Amy Minor, Chief Financial and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Carmolli and UMS Principal Chris Antonicci. There were no audience members.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Citizens Participation*

None.

III. Hear School Report: Union Memorial School

Informational

Principal Chris Antonicci presented an informational report on Union Memorial School, providing a comprehensive overview of enrollment, attendance, assessment, and discipline data from the 2024-25 school year. He outlined current schoolwide goals that align with the building's continuous improvement plan. Reflecting on his presentation from the previous year, Principal Antonicci highlighted progress in literacy. He explained how adjustments to foundational skills instruction and the implementation of specific concepts have led to measurable improvements in student comprehension. He also shared mathematics data across various cohorts, detailing the action steps taken to improve student outcomes. A key strategy discussed was the use of "deliberate practice," which emphasizes structured, goal-oriented repetition and immediate feedback to help students navigate the effort and discomfort required for mastery. He also detailed the school's efforts to align Essential Expectations with ESSA standards, IEP goals, and report card grading systems. Principal Antonicci illustrated how educators collaborate to achieve objectives in the school's action plan, noting the use of dedicated professional learning time and weekly grade-level meetings. These meetings allow staff to analyze math and literacy data in real-time to identify and organize student intervention groups.

Beyond academics, the Principal offered accolades to the PTA for their role in generating school connections through community events and the recent artist-in-residence program. Finally, Principal Antonicci expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the Board and administration as he formally acknowledged his upcoming retirement at the end of the current school year.

IV. Hear FY'27 Budget Presentation

Informational

Chief Financial Officer George Trieb presented an informational overview of the baseline budget for FY'27. He explained that the baseline budget represents a "roll-over" of current operations into the new year, which results in a projected increase of approximately \$6.4 million, or 9.8%, over the FY'26 budget. Mr. Trieb identified the primary cost drivers as contract-negotiated salaries, statewide-negotiated healthcare, out-of-district student placements, food service, and transportation.

Additionally, the Board discussed the impact of including the first facility bond payments within the operational budget as required by state statute. Mr. Trieb suggested that the Board consider using the capital reserve fund to fund a project at CHS thereby reducing \$500K in expenses from the baseline budget.

Director Yousey-Hindes expressed concern about including bond repayments in the operational budget, noting that this could lead to confusion among taxpayers about day-to-day spending. He advocated for a specific communication strategy to remind the public why the facility repairs are crucial while providing clear talking points that separate bond costs from general operations. By "backing out" bond costs from the operational total, the Board can show that it's still adhering to operational efficiency and effectiveness in ways that align with the community's values. The presentation at the next meeting will include a specific percentage representing the bond's contribution to the overall budget increase.

Director Fath noted that while Colchester has historically maintained reasonable increases, the cumulative effect of rising costs is becoming a significant concern. She inquired how the proposed budget increase would translate into estimated tax rates and requested an update on developments at the state level. Mr. Trieb responded that the district is still waiting for several components of the state funding formula. He also mentioned a recent news report that the Governor is considering a "buy down" of the tax rate, similar to the previous year, but urged the Board to focus on the local budget—the portion they can control—since the state ultimately determines how that spending translates into a tax rate.

The Board also reviewed the status of Colchester's Common Level of Appraisal (CLA). Mr. Trieb explained that the CLA serves as a significant amplifier of the tax rate. Because the town hasn't completed a full appraisal since 2011, the CLA is expected to be exceptionally low. While officials are checking the status of the current town-wide appraisal, it is highly unlikely to be implemented in time for the FY'27 budget cycle.

Board Chair Cox characterized the 9.8% increase as very high and requested that the administration provide scenarios at the next meeting to reduce that increase by half, even if such reductions require difficult conversations and decisions. She expressed interest in potentially "swapping" items to better meet the current needs of students and employees and asked for additional Board guidance for the administration. The Board had some discussion and Superintendent Amy Minor stated that the administration would bring back broad expenditure reduction scenarios, noting the need for sensitivity regarding filled positions and the formal processes required for staff reductions. The Board agreed to schedule an additional meeting in January dedicated to further budget planning.

**V. First Reading of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
Compliance Policy: D7**

Action

This policy was reviewed as part of the annual CSD policy revision cycle. It outlines the District's commitment to federal privacy laws, including HIPAA, and the protection of confidential health information related to employee benefits and health plans. It is in full compliance with all relevant state and federal laws and regulations. No changes were recommended or requested.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the first reading of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Compliance Policy: D7. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. First Reading of Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students Policy: F10 Action

This policy was reviewed as part of the annual CSD policy revision cycle. It governs the prevention of harassment, hazing, and bullying of students. This policy is identical to the model policy provided by the State and is fully compliant with all legal requirements. No changes were recommended or requested.

Director Longo moved to approve the first reading of the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students Policy: F10. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. First Reading of Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy: F11 Action

This policy was reviewed as part of the annual CSD policy revision cycle. It ensures District compliance with federal Title IX regulations, specifically prohibiting all forms of sex-based discrimination and sexual harassment while establishing legally mandated grievance procedures. It is the model policy from the Vermont School Boards Association and is fully aligned with state and federal law. No changes were recommended or requested.

Director Fath moved to approve the first reading of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment as Prohibited by Title IX Policy: F11. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Approval of Consent Agenda Action

The board reviewed the following items on the consent agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA										
Board Meeting Date: 12/16/2025										
<i>Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)</i>										
Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	Hours/Wk	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Teacher	Aurina	Hartz	New Hire	Elementary Teacher LTS	1.0 FTE	PPS	Notice of Hire	Brittany Wildermuth	Yes	Yes
<i>Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Board Approval Required</i>										
Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	Hours/Wk	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	DonCarlos	Davis	Leave of Absence	Food Service	30	CMS	Request for LOA 1/16/26 - 1/29/26			
<i>Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational</i>										
Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	Hours/Wk	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Jordan	Soutiere	New Hire	Paraeducator	32.5	MBS	Notice of Hire	N/A	Yes	Yes
Co-Curricular	Marissa	Fortin	New Hire	"C" Basketball Coach	Coach	CMS	Notice of Hire	N/A	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Nancy	Japhet	Resignation	Food Service Worker	31.5	CMS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Jessica	Randall	Resignation	Paraeducator	14.0	MBS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Makayla	Beauty	New Hire	Paraeducator	32.5	CMS	Notice of Hire	N/A	Yes	Yes
Co-Curricular	Nikhil	Blasius	New Hire	JV "B" Basketball Coach	Coach	CHS	Notice of Hire	N/A	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Autumn	Buerkett	New Hire	ML Paraeducator	32.5	CMS	Notice of Hire	Maeve Cohen	Yes	Yes

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

IX. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Action

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 18, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports

Informational

- The district administrators recently participated in a cybersecurity tabletop training and an AI in Education workshop.
- Superintendent Minor provided a construction update for the facilities work happening at PPS.

XI. Future Agenda Items

Informational

- School Reports
- School Assessment Presentation
- Policy Work
- Facility Renovation Updates
- FY27 Budget Development
- Quarterly Financial Report

XII. Adjournment

Director Longo moved to adjourn at 8:34 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk