

Colchester School District

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, January 6, 2026
7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, in the Colchester High School Library Media Center. Board Directors in attendance were Lindsey Cox, Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, Jennifer Fath, and Student Representative Trinity McCarthy. Administrators and employees in attendance were Superintendent Amy Minor, Chief Financial and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Carmolli, Director of Instructional Support Services Jean Shea, and CMS Principal Tara Sharkey. There was one audience member.

I. Call to Order

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

II. Citizens Participation*

None.

III. Hear School Report: Colchester Middle School

Informational

Principal Tara Sharkey presented an informational report on Colchester Middle School, providing a comprehensive overview of enrollment, attendance, assessment, and discipline data from the 2024-25 school year. Central to the school's mission of providing a developmentally responsive and equitable environment, the CMS Action Plan aligns with goals of achievement, equity, and student agency. This work includes the establishment of bi-weekly, data-driven Curriculum Team Professional Learning Communities and the addition of a literacy-focused instructional coach to refine ELA, Math, and Social Studies curricula. These efforts have yielded tangible results, with students in Strategic Literacy interventions showing gains in STAR Reading proficiency scores. Furthermore, the school has prioritized student agency and school culture by involving all teachers in Action Plan Committees that lead projects such as student-facilitated debates, Socratic seminars, and restorative practice initiatives. By integrating monthly themes like self-advocacy and empathy alongside community-building activities like Culture Days and flag ceremonies, the school continues to foster a high level of student engagement and empowerment.

IV. Approval of Colchester School District Announced Tuition Rates

Action

Each year, districts are required by law to announce their anticipated tuition for students attending Colchester Schools from other districts that do not have a high school or middle school. Announced tuition is the district's best guess as to the cost of tuition for sending districts, however, there is a protection mechanism in place for both the sending district and the receiving district. If the announced tuition is more than or less than 3% of the allowable tuition, districts are allowed to "true up or down" the announced tuition. Most tuition students attending CSD are from the Grand Isle Supervisory Union and the town of Georgia.

Director Longo moved to approve the announced tuition rate for FY 2027 at \$18,100 for elementary grades (k-6) and \$25,500 for secondary grades (7-12).

V. Hear FY'27 Budget Presentation

Informational

Superintendent Amy Minor opened the presentation by highlighting that student enrollment in Colchester remains strong, serving as a notable anomaly compared to the declining enrollment trends seen across much of the state. She explained that because class sizes currently align with the Agency of Education's Quality Standards, the district has avoided significant faculty reductions in recent years.

Superintendent Minor then provided an overview of the Vermont education funding system, emphasizing its nature as a statewide model where property taxes fund the budgets approved by local communities. She noted that increased spending in other districts across the state directly influences Colchester's tax rates. Furthermore, she clarified that districts can only provide estimated tax rates at this stage, as the state does not set the final rate until all municipal budgets are passed and the total funding requirement is determined. Highlighting the district's history of fiscal responsibility, she observed that Colchester has maintained a modest average tax increase of 2.73% over the past decade.

Chief Financial and Operations Officer George Trieb followed with a breakdown of Educational Tax Components and the various entities that control them. He informed the board that for the FY'27 budget cycle, the state approved the use of an updated Common Level of Appraisal to 110% following the recent town-wide reappraisal. While the overall reappraisal process is finished, individual assessments have not yet been mailed to homeowners. Mr. Trieb stressed the importance of understanding that while a reappraisal typically triggers a significant decline in the education tax rate, a lower rate does not automatically equate to a tax reduction, as the assessed value of homes will simultaneously increase.

Superintendent Minor and Mr. Trieb then presented five side-by-side budget scenarios for FY'27. These options ranged from a scenario with no additions or reductions, resulting in a 9.77% budget increase, to a scenario involving \$2,595,579 in reductions, which would limit the budget increase to 5.77%. Board members engaged in a discussion regarding the potential impact of substantial reductions on the student experience and employees. They requested information on which programs or departments might be affected and asked administrators to share preliminary cost-saving concepts. Mr. Trieb suggested that a starting approach could involve a \$500,000 reduction to the maintenance and repairs budget, along with the elimination of several vacant positions. Superintendent Minor added that the leadership team has held extensive discussions regarding staffing, class sizes, and data to balance the interests of students and taxpayers. She requested specific direction from the board regarding a target budget figure so the administration could provide more refined recommendations for specific reductions.

Superintendent Minor and Mr. Trieb showed the board five scenarios side-by-side for the FY'27 budget. The scenarios ranged from no additions and no reductions, which would increase the budget by 9.77% to no additions and \$2,595,579 in reductions, which would increase the budget by 5.77%.

Director Longo remarked that a budget increase between 5% and 10% is relatively reasonable when accounting for inflation and the voter-approved bond obligations. However, he expressed concern regarding the cumulative effect of these increases as the district approaches full bond repayment in the FY'29 cycle. He urged the board to select a sustainable budget this year to ensure long-term stability. Director Longo noted that while integrating the facilities bond into the operating budget is challenging,

the community is gaining essential new learning environments. Director Yousey-Hindes echoed these sentiments, suggesting the board must consistently remind the community of the necessity and long-term benefits of the facility improvements.

Director Fath observed that difficult decisions may need to be made, noting that even with reductions of \$1.2M or \$1.9M, the budget increase would remain sizable. She expressed her trust in the administration to make thoughtful choices and requested specific details on proposed reductions at the next meeting.

Ultimately, the board reached consensus on requesting that administrators return with specific details on possible reductions to reach the middle-range scenarios presented during the meeting.

VI. Second and Final Reading of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Compliance Policy: D7

Action

No edits were made.

Director Kigonya moved to approve the second and final reading of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Compliance Policy: D7. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Second and Final Reading of Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students Policy: F10

Action

No edits were made.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the second and final reading of the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students Policy: F10. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Approval of Consent Agenda

Action

The board reviewed the following items on the consent agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA (REVISED 1/6/2026)

Board Meeting Date: 1/6/2026

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	Hours/Wk	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Education	Nancy	Smith	Leave of Absence	Preschool Teacher	1.0 FTE	MBS (EEE)	Request for LOA 1/12-2/6	N/A		Yes
Education	Linda	Kapusta	New Hire	LTS- Preschool Teacher	17.5	MBS (EEE)	Notice of Hire	Nancy Smith	Yes	Yes
Administration	Peter	Farrell	New Hire	LTS - Assistant Principal	1.0 FTE	MBS	Notice of Hire	Chris Shackett	Yes	Yes

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

[illegible]

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

[illegible]

Director Kigonya 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 December 16, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports

Informational

- Superintendent Minor provided a construction update for the facilities work happening at PPS.

XI. Future Agenda Items

Informational

- School Assessment Presentation
- Policy Work
- Facility Renovation Updates
- FY27 Budget Development
- 2026-27 School Calendar

XII. Adjournment

Director Longo moved to adjourn at 8:48 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk