

Colchester School District

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, January 13, 2026
7:00 p.m.

Special Meeting Minutes

The Colchester Board of Education held a special board meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, in the Colchester High School Library. In attendance were Board Members Lindsey Cox, Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, and Jennifer Fath; Superintendent Amy Minor, Chief Financial and Operations Officer George Trieb, Director of Curriculum Gwen Carmolli, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There were no audience members present.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Citizens Participation

None.

III. FY'27 Budget Discussion

Informational

Superintendent Amy Minor reviewed slides from the January 6, 2026, presentation, providing a comprehensive overview of educational tax components and various budget scenarios. Following a prior request from the Board, administrators presented specific details regarding potential reductions required to reach the "middle-range" scenarios previously discussed. Superintendent Minor first outlined Scenario B, which represents an approximate 1% reduction to the overall budget. This would be achieved by reducing the repairs and maintenance line item by \$500,000 and eliminating \$220,000 through five vacant support staff positions. Scenario C offers a more significant 2% reduction by incorporating all measures from Scenario B plus the elimination of five additional vacant support staff positions for a total savings of \$440,000. Scenario C also includes a \$150,000 reduction in professional education services—shifting contracted services like tutoring back to the building level—a \$65,000 reduction in professional stipends, and the reduction of 2.0 FTE teaching positions. In total, Scenario C would reduce the budget by \$1,415,000.

During the walkthrough of these scenarios, Superintendent Minor emphasized changes in per-pupil spending, noting that this figure appears on the voter ballot as a primary indicator of the district's fiscal responsibility. She clarified that although the facilities bond was approved separately by voters, a state requirement enacted four months prior to the bond's passage mandates its inclusion in the annual operating budget's per-pupil calculation. Consequently, under Scenario B, the total increase in per-pupil spending is 10.15% inclusive of the bond, but only 2.29% when isolating operational costs. Under Scenario C, the total increase is 8.80% inclusive, but just 0.94% when the bond commitment is removed. The District and the Board have petitioned the State to allow the removal of bond payments from this specific calculation and are currently awaiting a decision.

Director Yousey-Hindes and Director Kigonya inquired about the potential impact of these reductions on student outcomes and the district's progress in closing achievement gaps. Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz explained that the identified support staff positions are currently vacant and have

historically been difficult to fill consistently. She also noted that the positions often fluctuate based on student need and enrollment. Director Fath asked how the schools have adapted to the positions not being filled. Ms. Lutz noted that administrators have implemented "direct instruction mods," which allow special education teachers to provide assignment and homework support to students during assigned periods rather than relying on traditional study halls. This concept emerged when administrators were forced to reimagine how to provide services to students with fewer staff, and it has proven very successful. Regarding the 2.0 FTE teaching positions, Superintendent Minor shared that a thoughtful approach was taken to ensure the district maintains its level of programming and experiential offerings, though she acknowledged that these reductions would inevitably increase class sizes and workloads in other areas. She further clarified that the projected savings for these positions include both salary and benefit costs.

Director Longo questioned external financial factors, including the possibility that the Governor would use state funds to lower the tax rate, as was done the previous year. Superintendent Minor stated that the district has not factored this into its calculations because it is not a guarantee, especially given the Governor's interest in broader changes to state education funding.

Following this, Board Chair Cox invited members to share their preferences regarding the proposed scenarios. Director Yousey-Hindes noted that it was helpful to see the bond payments separated from operational costs, as this demonstrates the district's commitment to controlling expenses while providing necessary new facilities. He advocated for keeping the total per-pupil increase below 10% and expressed trust in the district's administrators to spread reductions in a way that minimizes the burden on any single area. Director Longo and Director Kigonya expressed support for Scenario B, finding the 2.29% operational increase (excluding the bond percentage) to be a reasonable figure. Director Fath suggested a target between Scenarios B and C, asking whether specific elements of the latter could be adopted without causing significant impacts. Board Chair Cox agreed, requesting that administrators return with a revised scenario targeting an approximate 9% increase in the per pupil spending, inclusive of the bond. She emphasized the importance of being fiscally responsible to taxpayers while meeting student needs, particularly as bond payments are expected to increase over the next two years before reaching their maximum amount. To conclude the session, the Board decided to transfer the \$133,000 surplus from FY'25 into the capital reserve fund.

IV. Proposed Executive Discussion to Discuss Contract Negotiations

Action

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to enter executive session at 7:59 p.m. discuss contract and labor relations issues. The motion passed unanimously.

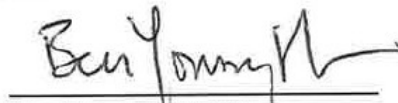
V. Adjournment

Director Kigonya moved to exit executive session and adjourn at 8:50 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:


Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:


Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk