

Colchester School District

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, January 20, 2026
7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, in the Colchester High School Library Media Center. Board Directors in attendance were Lindsey Cox, Laurie Kigonya, Jennifer Fath, and Student Representative Trinity McCarthy. Board Director Nic Longo joined the meeting at 7:31 p.m. Administrators and employees in attendance were Superintendent Amy Minor, Chief Financial and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Carmolli, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There was one audience member.

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. Citizens Participation*

None.

III. Hear Presentation on Assessments

Informational

Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Carmolli presented an assessment report for 2025, detailing the Colchester School District's academic performance and growth. She provided a comprehensive overview of the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP) results, noting that Colchester students achieved a 61% proficiency rate in English Language Arts (ELA), while math proficiency stood at 52% and science at 51%, all of which outperformed the state average. The district also observed positive trends in closing equity gaps for multilingual learners and students with disabilities in ELA. Ms. Carmolli shared ELA assessment examples for different age groups, noting that it is an extremely rigorous exam that requires students to read, analyze, and interpret multiple pieces across genres. Student Board Member Trinity McCarthy echoed these statements, noting that many topics were introduced during the test that would prompt conversations with their teachers. She shared that the teachers and staff are very supportive during testing periods, offering snacks and movement breaks, which were needed given the difficulty of the exams.

Beyond standardized testing, the report included data from internal STAR assessments and social-emotional evaluations. She noted that a major benefit of STAR assessments is that they are taken multiple times throughout the school year, which allows educators to make adjustments in real time based on the data, ultimately allowing them to be more responsive. STAR growth data from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 showed significant improvements across the board, with early literacy rising by 11 percentage points, reading by 6 points, and math by 4 points. Additionally, the district saw favorable trends in student engagement, with the graduation rate increasing to 96% and chronic absenteeism decreasing from 20% to 18%. The DESSA assessment further indicated strengths in social and self-awareness among students, with social awareness scores jumping from 47% to 69% over the past year.

The presentation concluded by outlining the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) goals, which aim to further improve academic and social-emotional achievement and close gaps for historically marginalized groups. To achieve these objectives, the district is focusing on strengthening instructional systems, evidence-based practices, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Ms. Carmolli emphasized that successful strategies currently in place include instructional coaching, data teams, and enhanced social-emotional learning supports, all of which contribute to a deeper engagement in student learning. Board members asked a series of questions connected to the testing environment, advanced preparation, and how individual and cohort scores are distributed and analyzed.

IV. Hear FY'27 Budget Presentation

Informational

Superintendent Amy Minor opened the FY'27 budget presentation by emphasizing the district's stable enrollment, which has remained consistent for over a decade and is projected to grow according to a 2024 demographic report. She showed how enrollment translates into class sizes, noting that while some grades fluctuate slightly above or below state recommendations, the district remains appropriately "right-sized" in terms of the number of students in core classes. This operational efficiency has historically supported fiscal restraint, resulting in a modest average tax increase of 2.73% over the last ten years. For the upcoming fiscal year, the primary budget drivers include salaries and benefits, specifically a projected 7.3% increase in state-negotiated healthcare costs following last year's 11.9% increase, as well as a 15% rise in transportation costs over three years, and necessary funding for out-of-district placements and other services that are required to meet identified student needs.

In response to a previous board request for a mid-range reduction scenario, administrators presented a strategic plan to reduce the baseline budget by \$1,077,007. This proposal includes shifting \$500,000 in maintenance costs to the Capital Reserve Fund, saving \$427,007 by eliminating five vacant support staff positions and 1.0 FTE (salary and benefits), and reducing \$150,000 in professional services no longer required due to student transitions. These adjustments result in a total budget increase of 8.13%. However, officials clarified that 3.62% of that figure is allocated to the voter-approved facilities bond, leaving the actual annual operational increase at 4.51%.

During the Board discussion, Director Longo commended the administration for identifying these reductions, characterizing the 4.51% operational increase as reasonable and highlighting that the facilities bond is a vital investment for long-term taxpayer savings. Director Kingonya also voiced her support for the proposal, though she cautioned that further reductions to professional services in future years could eventually impact student outcomes. In response to clarifying questions from Director Fath regarding staff vacancies, administrators confirmed that the decision to eliminate these positions was carefully vetted and explained that staffing levels are aligned with specific service needs rather than raw enrollment numbers. Board Chair Cox concluded the session by noting a consensus among the Board, echoing the sentiment that the recommended budget and estimated tax rate are manageable within the current economic climate.

Director Kigonya moved to adopt a budget of \$70,167,602 for the support and operation of the Colchester School District for the year beginning July 1, 2026.

V. Approval of Consent Agenda

Action

The board reviewed the following items on the consent agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA (Updated 1/20/2026)

Board Meeting Date: 1/20/2026

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

[illegible]

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

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	Hours/Wk	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Handbook	Robyn	Terranova	Leave of Absence	Van Driver	35	DW	Request for Leave of Absence 1/21/26-1/30/26	N/A		Yes

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational

[illegible]

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

VI. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Action

Director Longo moved to approve the minutes from the January 6 and January 13, 2026, meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports

Informational

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

VIII. Future Agenda Items

Informational

- CHS Club and Programming Presentations
- Policy Work
- Facility Renovation Updates
- FY27 Budget Communication Plan
- 2026-27 School Calendar

IX. Adjournment

Director Longo moved to adjourn at 8:21 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk