

Colchester School Board Meeting Agenda & Packet

January 20, 2026



**Colchester School District
Board of Education Meeting**
January 20, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.
Colchester High School Library

Meeting Agenda

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|--------------|--|--|----------------------|
| I. | Call to Order | | |
| II. | Citizens Participation* | | |
| III. | Hear Presentation on Assessments | | Informational |
| IV. | Approval of FY'27 Budget and Warning | | Action |
| V. | Approval of Consent Agenda | | Action |
| VI. | Approval of Meeting Minutes | | Action |
| | ○ January 6, 2026 (General) | | |
| | ○ January 13, 2026 (Special) | | |
| VII. | Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports | | Informational |
| VIII. | Future Agenda Items | | Informational |
| IX. | Adjournment | | |

***Meeting Participation and Viewing Options**

Meetings are open to the public unless warned otherwise. Colchester citizens have an opportunity to speak or comment on any items listed on the agenda. For topics not listed on the agenda, public comment can be made during the Citizen's Participation agenda item. Please review the Public Comment Rules listed at www.csdvt.org/schoolboard prior to the meeting. If not attending in person, citizens may also participate in the meeting by emailing a prerecorded message to schoolboard@colchesters.org with "Citizens Participation" listed in the subject line. It must be received by noon on the day of the meeting, include your full name and phone number, and follow the Public Comment Rules. LCATV will provide live stream coverage via: www.lcatv.org/live-stream-3.

CONSENT AGENDA (REVISED 1/6/2026)

Board Meeting Date: 1/20/2026

<p><i>Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)</i></p>	
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Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Board Approval Required

[illegible]

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational

[illegible]

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

<p><i>Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)</i></p>	
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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	
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[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

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.

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk