



**TOWN OF COLCHESTER
ANNUAL SCHOOL MEETING MINUTES**

**COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
MARCH 3, 2008**

Moderator William Garrett called the 86th Annual School Meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. Boy Scouts Troop 601 led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

In attendance were Larry Waters (Superintendent), George Trieb (Business Manager), School Board members Dirk Reith, Mike Rogers, Dan Carver, Dick Pecor and Paul Smith, Gwen Carmolli (Director of Instruction), Carrie Lutz (Director of Special Education), as well as all schools' Principals, and Karen Richard (Treasurer).

ARTICLE 1

To choose a Moderator.

Elected moderator, William Garrett, was present. No action required.

ARTICLE 2

To act upon the reports of the Town School District Officers.

MOTION by Kathrine Niquette, SECOND by Al Healy, to accept the reports of the School District Officers.

DISCUSSION: Andre Morin asked why the all day kindergarten, which was voted down last year, was included in the budget instead of being a separate line item again. Mr. Pecor stated that he does not believe a budget should be deconstructed with separate articles. He noted that the budget focuses on all learners K-12, and kindergarten is elemental to this. 42 potential students were lost last year because of the lack of kindergarten (a loss of \$8K each). Brian Grenon stated that the taxpayers' 'no' vote last year should have been honored. Paul Smith noted that the School District has been receiving state payments for kindergarten since the 1980s, but have only been offering it part-time. Mr. Waters explained that there are currently 117 kindergarten students, with a projection of 150 for the next years. Tom Raub also questioned why a 'no' vote resulted in all day kindergarten being part of the budget. Mr. Waters recommended the inclusion to the School Board because the School District needs to offer a complete package to the community. Laurie Laplant stated that children need all the support and help they can get early on and applauded Colchester for revisiting the issue. Brian Grenon noted that residents might vote against the budget because they feel the School Board went behind their backs. Mr. Rogers explained that the Board was approached by a group of residents after last year's defeat and asked to add the all day kindergarten, which was not possible until the new budget. The issue was discussed all year long. Michelle Penca noted the 8% enrollment decrease in the last ten years while the budget increased by 110%. Renn Niquette explained that she was on the School Board when it decided to separate the kindergarten ballot item. She asked if the item will be kept in the budget, if it fails. Mr. Carver replied that it would; other cuts would be made instead. He

added that mandated pre-K bills are being heard in the House and Senate already, while Colchester does not have all day kindergarten yet.

Betty Day asked about students who are removed from school buses for fighting and transported by taxis instead. Ms. Lutz explained that taxis are used for a variety of reasons, such as being located outside the bus area or homelessness. The School District has to provide transportation to all students under law and spends approx. \$1,000 per month on taxis.

Andre Morin referred to the negative figures in the special education budget and asked why money is being taken away from such important needs. Ms. Lutz explained that the budget was developed in October 2007, which required making predictions which are not always met. Mr. Morin asked about education outside Vermont. Ms. Lutz replied that some individual education plans require the use of resources outside the state, if they are not available locally.

Ted Lamos asked about advertising expenses. Mr. Waters explained that this is for position advertising, some of which is done all over New England.

Ted Lamos asked why, if a budget is voted down, the previous year's budget cannot be reused. Ms. Richard explained that the Town Charter does not include such language, reverting to state law instead.

Duane Juairé stated that citizens keep losing their powers and need to stand up to the government. Children should stay at home and not be forced into preschool next.

Al Healy asked how the 8% budget increase is sustainable for people on fixed incomes, noting that budgets double every eight years on average. Mr. Reith explained that budgets increase due to different needs each year. Mr. Carver added that the law protects residents with fixed incomes under \$90K per year with tax increase caps.

MOTION by Roger Derby, SECOND by Henry Kolberc, to call the question. VOTING: majority of ayes; motion carried.

ARTICLE 2 VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 2 is passed.

ARTICLE 3

To see what stipends, if any, shall be paid its Directors for the coming year for their service and attendance at meetings.

Moderator Garrett explained that the stipend is currently set at \$1,300 for each director.

MOTION by Inge Schaefer, SECOND by Mike Whalen, to fund the stipend for Directors at \$1,300 for the coming year. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 3 is passed.

ARTICLE 4

To see whether the District will vote to authorize the School Directors to borrow money for current and necessary expenses by issuance of notes not in excess of anticipated revenue for this school year.

MOTION by Howard Kalfus, **SECOND** by Inge Schaefer, to adopt Article 4 as read. **VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 4 is passed.**

ARTICLE 5

To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.

Mr. Trieb explained that the proposed voter budget is \$29,097,821 (an 8.67% increase) plus grants and articles for maintenance and consumables, for a total amount of \$30,679,563. The proposed tax rate increase is 10.24%. Mr. Trieb explained education and per pupil spending (Colchester is the second lowest district for the latter). He noted the Common Level of Appraisal's decrease in the last few years and its effect on per pupil spending. Mr. Trieb gave examples of property tax rate increases and highlighted property tax assistance received through homestead filings. Article 8 on the ballot is a capital reserve fund for major buildings and grounds repairs, replacements and improvements. The amount spent will not exceed 2% of the budget (\$600K). General school conditions are good with boilers running at 62% efficiency. Replacing them would increase the efficiency to 90%. Roger Derby noted that capital fund money not used goes back to the voters as revenue.

ARTICLE 6

To adjourn said Town School District meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester Meeting House, Main Street, in said Town on Tuesday, March 4, 2008, for voters in District 7-1 to vote for School Directors and to vote on the following propositions by Australian ballot with voting to begin at 7:00 a.m. and to close at 7:00 p.m.

To adjourn said Town School District meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester High School, Lake Lane (off Malletts Bay Avenue), in said Town on Tuesday, March 4, 2008, for voters in District 7-2 to vote for School Directors and to vote on the following propositions by Australian ballot with voting to begin at 7:00 a.m. and to close at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION by Tom Raub, **SECOND** by Al Healy, to adopt Article 6, as read. **VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 6 is passed.**

Moderator Garrett adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

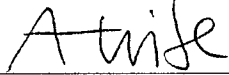
ARTICLE 7

Shall the voters of the Colchester School District appropriate thirty million, six hundred and seventy-nine thousand, five hundred and sixty-three dollars (\$30,679,563), necessary for the support of schools for the year beginning July 1, 2008?

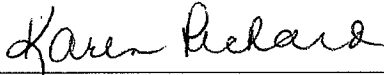
ARTICLE 8

Shall the voters approve an annual appropriation in an amount equal to two percent (2%), or such lesser amount as may be available, of the annual operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year to be deposited in the School District's Capital Reserve Fund for maintenance, repairs and related improvements; said amount to be appropriated from the School District's fund balance and annual fiscal year operating budget surplus?

Respectfully submitted,



Anja Twite, Recording Secretary



Karen Richard, Town Clerk/Treasurer



William Garrett, Moderator