



**TOWN OF COLCHESTER
ANNUAL SCHOOL MEETING MINUTES**

**COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
MARCH 3, 2014**

Moderator Jerry Flanagan called the Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance were Larry Waters (Superintendent), George Trieb (Business Manager), Gwendolyn Carmolli (Director of Curriculum & Instruction), Carrie Lutz (Director of Special Education), Dawn Gruss (Colchester Middle School Principal), Chris Antonicci (Union Memorial School Principal), Jim Marshall (Porters Point School Principal), Julie Benay (Malletts Bay School Principal), Amy Minor (Colchester High School), as well as School Board Members Mike Rogers (chairman), Lincoln White and Craig Kieny.

There was a video presenting of the American flag and singing of the National Anthem by a Colchester High School student, during which audience stood. Therefore the Pledge of Allegiance was not recited.

Nadine Scibek, Selectboard chair, and Mike Rogers, School board chair, presented an engraved plaque to Richard Paquette, thanking him for forty years of Town Service: He was a Selectboard member and chair for twenty years, a school board member for fifteen years and served four years on the Colchester Planning Commission.

ARTICLE 1

To choose a Moderator, if elected moderator is not present.

Elected moderator, Jerry Flanagan, was present. No action required.

ARTICLE 2

To act on reports of the School District Officers.

Mr. Flanagan noted that the reports were available in the Town booklets that were handed out.

MOTION was made by David Coates and Gary Zeno SECONDED to adopt Article 2 as read.

There was no further discussion.

VOTING: The Ayes carried the Motion. Article 2 is passed.

ARTICLE 3

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

MOTION was made by Dirk Reith and SECONDED by Richard Pecor to set a stipend of \$1,300 each for compensation to the School Board for the coming year.

There was no discussion.

VOTING: the Ayes carried the Motion. Article 3 is passed.

ARTICLE 4

To determine 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 was made by Dirk Reith and SECONDED by Greg Gillard to adopt Article 4 as read.

Ben Levasseur asked for clarification of the article. George Trieb explained that it is necessary to borrow money to cover expenditures through a tax anticipation note because state funding is not received until September.

There was no further discussion.

VOTING: the Ayes carried the motion. Article 4 is passed.

ARTICLE 5

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

Larry Waters introduced an eleven minute video presentation to support the district's Strategic Vision Plan, illustrate the community's pride in Town schools, and share information about school funding. Residents can also visit the Spotlight blog and/or school website for information about the proposed school budget.

Student-teacher ratios were discussed. Teacher training continues for Common Core.

Mr. Waters also made the following points about Colchester schools:

- The per pupil cost is lower than the state average.
- Colchester schools are meeting state and federal standards.
- Colchester schools are safe; video systems have been installed in all Colchester schools.
- Unlike many school districts, K-2 enrollment is increasing in Colchester.
- Graduation rate is among the highest in Vermont.

George Trieb presented the budget expenditures, revenue, costs per pupil and tax ramifications. Mr. Trieb also talked about the 1:1 proposed technology initiative and the increased use and importance of technology in all classrooms. The 1:1 initiative would provide Chromebooks to 290 Middle School students and 160 laptops to incoming 9th graders. Teacher contract negotiations are in progress. Most of these meetings are open for viewing. Construction will begin in the spring on the new science labs and should be finished by September.

Greg Gillard asked if every Kindergarten classroom has a paraprofessional. Mr. Waters replied yes.

Carolyn Lettieri inquired if the new laptops are used by the students through their graduation. Mr. Trieb answered yes. For High School students, the laptops will go home and back. Middle School equipment will remain at school, although that may change depending on the responsibility of the student.

Ben Levasseur asked if there were any studies showing that increased technology use helps core learning skills. Mr. Trieb pointed out that technology helps students do research, increases creativity and makes students better learners.

Bob Correll asked if technology will have an impact on student teacher ratios. Mr. Waters answered yes, in the future. Virtual classrooms are useful for remediation, as well.

Bobbie Holzel commented that use of technology is a necessity and asked if technology cuts costs for textbooks and do those costs offset each other. Amy Minor responded that some classes that are not offered at CHS, such as technology or language courses, are available to students as virtual courses and online courses help contain costs. Some math courses, such as algebra or geometry, use online resources rather than text books. Courses are available for remediation support or advancement. In addition, the new assessments that will replace NECAPs will be given by computer and students will require computer skills to prove their academic skills.

Bob Correll wanted clarification that laptops would be a recurring purchase. Mr. Trieb responded yes. There would be ongoing annual purchases required to bring the district to a true 1:1 at CMS and CHS. This would be about a three year process.

Deb Ingham questioned the choice of Chromebooks for Middle School students instead of laptops, noting that Chromebooks are less versatile than laptops. Dawn Gruss replied that yes, Chromebooks have less capacity, but are sufficient for the Google platform that CMS operates within. The instant message function will be disabled. The students will need to learn to use technology responsibly, just as they needed to learn to treat textbooks with respect. Also, cost was a factor. A Chromebook costs around \$300 vs. \$550 for a laptop. The school will have a diversified inventory with laptops and desktops being available in classrooms, as well.

Bob Magoon wanted clarification on the 1:1 Initiative: Would every High School student receive a laptop? Is a laptop truly useless after four years? Mr. Trieb responded that only 9th graders would be receiving the laptops as the program was being phased in. He pointed out that a computer has a “life cycle” and that the laptops would lose value and need to be replaced. Students would have the option to purchase the laptops for a nominal cost at graduation.

Mr. Magoon also inquired if the School employees’ health insurance would be purchased on the Health Exchange. The answer was eventually yes, probably in 2017, large employers would need to move to the Exchange.

Sam Sparhawk shared his concerns about tax increases and asked if there would ever be any cap. He is worried for his children’s and grandchildren’s ability to keep up. He opined there must be a limit on purchases and none of the budgets are conservative enough. He wanted to know what Special Education is and noted it was not part of his schooling when he was growing up. He wants to know what the schools are willing to give up. Mike Rogers answered that sustainability of costs and how to control and contain taxes is a subject of frequent conversations. They strive to choose the cheapest way to get the job done. He explained that Special Ed is mandated by the federal government, along with other state and federal mandates with which local schools are required to comply. Standards and salaries must be met. Costs will continue to go up unless the Legislature comes up with another funding mechanism. He has no answer for it and change will have to come from “higher up.”

Dan Carver, a former School Board member, commented schools have been given the responsibility of curing all social ills, including things that should be cured at home, but schools are now expected to fix. Schools cannot keep up with new legislation passed every year and needs that must be met. He believes a “revolution” may be coming.

Lorraine Gauch stated we know more now about Special Education and how children learn; information we didn’t have years ago. Students with severe handicaps are now mainstreamed, rather than hidden. Learning disabilities are now being addressed but no funding comes with state and federal mandates for standards. She believes education should be funded at the federal level. Giving children the best education possible should be a priority of the federal government.

Carolyn Lettieri commented that we are paying state and federal taxes, as well as local, so we are paying through one way or another. She prefers local funding and local decisions on how those dollars are spent.

Maureen Dakin, also a former School Board member, commented that the problems have not changed. But she believes many of the changes that have occurred are good. children are getting more services and good educations, which in turn will have, hopefully, a positive social impact.

Tyler Anderson, who is self-employed, expressed discouragement. He has moved in the past when taxes got too high for him to afford. He thinks the community and teachers need to tighten belts. He noted that

teachers do not work a full year and taxes are getting out of hand. He likes to have police and fire services but he has no kids in school, so why does he have to pay for the schools?

Bob Magoon worries he may lose his house due to not being able to pay the taxes if they continue to rise. His income does not increase when taxes go up.

Ben Lavasseur asked if student privacy was a consideration when they use Chromebook. Is Google tracking their searches? Amy Minor responded that student privacy is a concern and they have an Acceptable Use Policy for the students. Parent approval is sought for use of student identity and student work online. The students do not use Facebook and their internet use is monitored.

Ben Lavasseur also inquires about the aggregate increase of the school budget over the past 14 years. The school officials did not have that information at hand but they will contact him with that answer.

No other items were discussed.

ARTICLE 6

To adjourn said meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester Meeting House, Main Street, in said Town on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, for voters in District 9-1 to vote for School Directors and 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 meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester High School, Laker Lane (off Blakely Road), in said Town on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, for voters in District 9-2 to vote for School Directors and 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 was made by Richard Pecor and SECONDED by Dan Carver to adopt Article 6 as read. There was no further discussion.

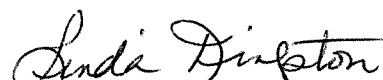
VOTING: the Ayes carried the motion. Article 6 is passed.

Moderator Flanagan adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

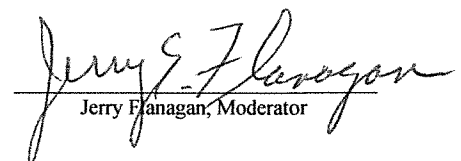
ARTICLE 7

Shall the voters of the Colchester School District appropriate thirty-six million, eight thousand, one hundred and twelve dollars, (\$36,008,112) necessary for the support of schools for the year beginning July 1, 2014?

Respectfully Submitted,


Linda Kingston, Recording Secretary


Karen Richard, Town Clerk


Jerry Flanagan, Moderator