

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, September 15, 2020
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, September 15, 2020. Due to COVID-19 precautions, school buildings are remaining closed to the public. LCATV provided coverage through a live stream and citizens were provided online and telephone options to participate in the meeting. Those in attendance (both remotely and in-person) were Board Chair Mike Rogers; Directors: Craig Kieny, Lindsey Cox, Curt Taylor and Nic Longo; Student Representative Julia Correll; Superintendent Amy Minor; Business and Operations Manager George Trieb; Director of Curriculum Gwendolyn Carmolli; Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz; Principals: Heather Baron, Michele Cote, Jordan Burke, Carolyn Millham, and Chris Antonicci; and CHS Humanities Teacher Rachel Cohen.

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Board Chair Mike Rogers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Citizen Participation

Board Chair Rogers acknowledged a letter that was sent to the board regarding the Black Lives Matter flag. The board agreed to respond by sending the jointly crafted letter that was read at a previous meeting. The board also asked that the letter be relocated on the school board webpage to make it easier for the public to find.

III. Rowland Fellowship Update: Rachel Cohen, CHS Humanities Teacher Informational

Rachel Cohen, a humanities teacher at CHS, provided the board with an overview of her work at CHS while serving as a Rowland Fellow. Her focus has been on exploring and creating different learning opportunities for CHS students by having them leave the traditional confines of a classroom to put an emphasis on developing a sense of place within the community. With the onset of COVID-19 and the temporary closure of many local businesses, she shifted her attention to the CHS campus, highlighting the property as an underutilized resource. Using the push to move students outside whenever possible to reduce the transmission of the virus, she worked to utilize the expansiveness of the grounds intentionally, not just as a substitution to the typical classroom. Feedback from teachers and students has been positive. She also guided the board through some of her research which included speaking with local experts, visiting other schools in the region, asset mapping in Colchester, determining what the school's greatest needs are as well as what things the school is already doing well.

Board Chair Rogers asked if students are being pushed to leave the campus, what is the role of the physical school building? Ms. Cohen stated the traditional structure of a classroom with an educator leading a group of students remains imperative. The need for classes to have a centralized location is just as important as the opportunities to integrate "place-based learning". Place-based learning allows for less of a barrier between what students are learning and where they are learning it. It

permits the student to take what they are learning and apply it more immediately, which makes it more relevant to the learner. However, she elaborated that while some lessons lend themselves well to place-based learning, others simply do not and there is still tremendous worth in having a physical school and campus.

Student Board Member Julia Correll agreed with Ms. Cohen's summarization and shared her own experience being a student who attends Burlington Technical Center (BTC) in addition to volunteering at Colchester Rescue. She explained that she plans to go into health sciences after high school and the practical experience she gets at BTC allows her to apply that learning into other facets of her life. She asked Ms. Cohen what areas of Colchester would she be targeting to use as place-based learning options. Ms. Cohen stated she is focusing on the different ways that students are already taking the things they learn at school and using them within their community. She hopes to exemplify those areas where they are already overlapping so students are more aware of the opportunities. To do that, she is looking into what roles students take on in the community through work, internships, sports, the arts, or volunteering.

Director Taylor applauded the efforts and echoed the vast number of resources in Colchester.

IV. Opening of Schools Presentation

Informational

Superintendent Minor gave a statement of appreciation for the district's successful reopening. From administrators, faculty and staff, students and their families, the preparation and planning paid off. She stated that the schools are doing a great job adapting to the new habits, routines, and systems put in place. Opening in a hybrid learning model with the option for fully virtual learning, reduced the district's in-person class sizes and allowed staff and students time and individualized attention to practice new routines and adjust to teaching and learning in hybrid and remote environments.

The principals each shared their initial assessments of how their school did in its reopening. Each stated that the new arrival procedures were implemented very smoothly. They are all utilizing outdoor spaces for both classroom learning and mask breaks. They each highlighted the work that their faculty will be engaged in during the upcoming early release day and how their school will re-design the traditional open house and family conferences since the buildings are closed to the public.

District Nursing Supervisor Deborah Deschamps gave a health update. She touted that students and families have been incredibly cooperative, kind, and considerate with the morning health checks. For the most part, compliance with masks has not been a problem. Physical distancing is taking some gentle reminders. The PPE supply is good and cleaning is going well. She gave a nod to the custodians throughout the district who have been diligent at cleaning and making sure classrooms are stocked with the supplies they need.

Gwen Carmolli, the director of curriculum, gave an update on academics for both hybrid and fully virtual learners. Carrie Lutz, the director of student support services, gave an update on services being provided to students in the current hybrid learning model and the plans that special educators are working on for each student in the event the learning model changes.

Board Chair Rogers expressed his desire to bring all elementary students back to school full time and asked the elementary principals for a timeline on when that could happen. UMS Principal Chris Anotonicci stated that while it is something that they all want and hope for, it would be difficult to do immediately. There are operational demands that would need to be met to bring more students

back safely such as additional desks, plexiglass, and more space in general. PPS Principal Carolyn Millham echoed Mr. Antonicci's statements and added that in addition to keeping the state's guidance in mind, they also need to pay attention to the health of the people in the building and the region's health data. Even if students came back full time, there would still need to be restrictions and safety layers in place. District Nursing Supervisor Deb Deschamps highlighted that students across the state have only been back to school for six days so they need a little more time to watch the health data and assess the positive cases in our region.

Board Chair Rogers asked if the board should schedule a time to prepare for students to return full time since the next meeting is not scheduled until October 6. The four other board members felt it was too soon to begin discussions of bringing more students back into the buildings. Director Longo agrees with the district's current plan and stated that from a parent's perspective, moving slowly and monitoring health data following the reopening feels best. Director Cox agreed and stated it is important for the district to move cautiously and wait to take cues from health officials. Director Kieny also agreed and stated he would not feel prepared to discuss this until more time had elapsed which produced more health data on the transmission rate in schools. He suggested that would not be until the end of the month. Director Taylor concurred. He also pointed to the fact that even though the board does not meet again until early October, the superintendent and her administration will be monitoring the situation and engaging with the state and other regional leaders in the upcoming weeks. Superintendent Minor stated that any plan to bring more students on campus will be carefully considered and intentionally implemented with the health and safety of students and employees at the forefront of any decision making. She continued by saying there are too many variables at the moment and the district needs to continue being successful in the current model before it can move forward to the next. However, she noted that staying in the current hybrid model does not mean that the district is not already planning for the possibility of returning more students to the classroom.

V. Approval of Personnel Consent Agenda

Action

The following Personnel Consent Agenda was reviewed by the board.

PERSONNEL CONSENT AGENDA
Board Meeting Date: September 15, 2020
REVISED

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Teacher	Amanda	Vella	Leave of Absence	Art Teacher	1.0 FTE	UMS/PPS	Request Leave of Absence for 20/21 School Year			
Teacher	Amanda	Vella	New Hire	Art Teacher	1.0 FTE	CHS	Notice of Hire	Anne Cummings	Yes	Yes
Teacher	Kluk	Ryan	New Hire	PE Teacher	0.2 FTE	MBS	Notice of Hire		As Para	Yes

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), *Informational*

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Sarah	Thompson	End of Employment	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Donna	Thompson	New Hire	Food Service Worker	12	CHS	Notice of Hire	open position	Yes	Yes

Director Taylor moved to approve the Personnel Consent Agenda for September 15, 2020, seconded by Director Cox. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

VI. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes: September 1, 2020 Action

Several minor errors were found and corrected.

Director Kienny moved to approve the amended minutes from the meeting held on September 1, 2020, seconded by Director Longo. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

VII. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports Informational

- Superintendent Minor shared that the district received the lead testing results from Malletts Bay School. One tap had a level at or above the 4 parts per billion (ppb) action level. It has since been taken out of service and they are working on a fix.
- Board Chair Rogers noted that the board will be negotiating with all three bargaining units this year. The Association of Colchester Administrators sent a letter to initiate negotiations. Director Cox volunteered to lead on behalf of the board and Director Longo agreed to assist.
- It was also noted that the board sent several thank you notes to members in the community who have supported the reopening of the district in a variety of ways.

VIII. Future Agenda Items Informational

- COVID-19 Updates
- FY'22 Budget Discussion
- Policy Work


IX. Adjournment

Director Cox moved to adjourn at 8:52 p.m., seconded by Director Kienny. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Recorder:


Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:


Lindsey Cox
Board Clerk