

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Remote Meeting

Tuesday, April 6, 2021
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, April 6, 2021. Governor Scott signed H.681 into law, making temporary changes to Vermont's Open Meeting Law. Part of those changes allow school districts to hold school board meetings remotely with no designated meeting location. LCATV provided coverage through a live stream and citizens were provided online and telephone options to participate in the meeting. Those in attendance were Directors: Craig Kieny, Lindsey Cox, Nic Longo, Laurie Kigonya, and Ben Yousey-Hindes; Student Board Member Julia Correll; Superintendent Amy Minor; Director of Curriculum Gwendolyn Carmolli; Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz; Business and Operations Manager George Trieb; Principals Heather Baron, Michele Cote, Jordan Burke, Chris Antonicci and Carolyn Millham; and Fred Duplessis, CPA from Sullivan, Powers, and Co.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Craig Kieny called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. Citizen Participation

None.

III. Hear Colchester School District Audit Report for FY'20

Informational

Fred Duplessis, CPA from Sullivan, Powers and Co., provided the board and community with an overview of their audit report and findings for FY'20. A copy of the report is available on the district website. The audit was clear and the district was found to be in full compliance.

IV. COVID-19 Update

Informational

Superintendent Amy Minor provided an update on COVID-19 related topics including free meal bundles for families to cover April break, the start of the spring sports season, voluntary surveillance testing for employees, and districtwide COVID-19 case data. The Agency of Education (AOE) is preparing to release updated guidance for schools to outline operational considerations for the remainder of this school year. It has not been published yet, however, the AOE has confirmed that they are reducing the distancing standard at the middle and high school level from six feet to three feet. This will have considerable impact to the administrative teams that are planning different options to provide more in-person opportunities to students. Superintendent Minor also shared the district's recovery plan efforts. She went over the timeline for what they are working on now and their future work. The focus areas of the recovery plan are:

- Social-emotional functioning
- Mental health and well-being
- Student engagement
- Academic achievement and success

Colchester resident, Heidi Guevin, called with a question regarding the current in-person instruction model in grades K-5. She asked why students were attending four days per week as opposed to five days per week. Superintendent Minor stated it is primarily due to staffing and contractual needs. Students are remote on Wednesdays because teachers have additional duties this year. Students are podded with their immediate classmates and cannot mix with other classes for things like lunch and recess, which is when teachers normally have contractual time to plan lessons and conduct grade-level or content specific meetings. There is not enough staff to cover the extra duties such as health screenings, lunch, and recess. Wednesdays are used for teachers to make up for that missing time throughout the week. She noted that the leadership team has been actively discussing solutions to find a balance between ensuring teachers have enough prep, planning, and meeting time, while also getting students back in the building on Wednesdays.

Superintendent Minor and Colchester Middle School Principal Michele Cote went over class size at the middle school and some concerning capacity issues that exist even in the absence of distancing requirements. They went over some potential solutions around adding staffing, reconfiguring and purchasing new furniture, and creative ways to share spaces or utilize spaces to gain classroom space.

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Gwen Carmolli, provided the board with an overview of the district's student assessment data, highlighting grades 3-8. Currently, they are not seeing a big gap in scores for literacy, but there are gaps showing on local assessments in math. This data showed evidence of a need for additional work, particularly in math, for these grade levels. Ms. Carmolli requests using Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to hire two specialized math coaches to work with Malletts Bay School and Colchester Middle School. She believes these positions will help support instruction, resulting in improved outcomes for students in those grades. The board unanimously expressed support of using ESSER funds for this purpose.

Colchester resident, Heidi Guevin, called in again to ask if Colchester's assessment scores aligned with national scores. Ms. Carmolli stated the gap or dip in scores for specific grades is a national trend and that the district's local data does match up with the rest of the country. She elaborated that they are still determining how much of the gap will widen as a result of the pandemic. National data has not been compiled yet, but projections show a 10-point gap in math on a national level.

Director Lindsey Cox asked if the benefit to students would be greater by hiring classroom teachers to reduce class size instead of coaches to improve instruction. Ms. Carmolli agreed that class size can affect outcomes, however, there is well-respected research that says coaching can have a profound impact by reaching a larger swath of students through their teachers. Colchester Middle School Principal Michele Cote offered that this year did afford a unique opportunity to observe smaller class sizes interact since they are currently operating in a hybrid model. There have been benefits to having smaller class sizes, however, space provides the biggest barrier to adding additional classroom teachers.

V. Approval of Furniture Purchase for Colchester Middle School

Action

It has been confirmed by the Agency of Education (AOE) that the updated guidance for schools will reduce the distancing standard at the middle and high school level from six feet to three feet. The administrative team at Colchester Middle School determined that they will need different classroom furniture to potentially introduce more students in the building at a time. Currently, the school has a

number of tables that are large but cannot fit two students while maintaining three feet of distance. Those tables will be swapped out for individual tables to fit more students in the room at one time.

Director Kigonya moved to approve the purchase of furniture for Colchester Middle School as recommended. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Summer School Update **Informational**

The district is expanding its existing summer school program to increase student achievement for all K-5 students that are not on grade level by the end of the school year. Director of Student Support Services, Carrie Lutz, gave an overview of the finalized plans. Each of the three elementary schools will operate a half-day program, providing transportation and meals. The programs will have their own site coordinator and will operate five days a week, for a total four weeks. Each school will have a classroom at every grade level with a maximum of 20 students per class. Identification of eligible students will happen at the building level through classroom teachers, support teams, and administrators. The curriculum will include literacy, math, social-emotional learning and some summer fun.

VII. Kindergarten Enrollment **Informational**

Superintendent Minor shared that Union Memorial School Principal Chris Antonicci and Porters Point School Principal Carolyn Millham are paying careful attention to the number of students enrolled at their K-2 schools, particularly the incoming kindergarten class for the 2021-2022 school year. Enrollment has been growing disproportionately on the Union Memorial side of town, leaving the two schools unbalanced. District leadership will continue giving enrollment updates as families start registering for next school year. The district recently refreshed the demographic study that was completed in early 2017. The updated report showed projected data for enrollment through 2030 which indicates the enrollment difference between the two schools will continue to grow. The board showed interest in having the demographer who compiled the report attend a future board meeting. It was also suggested to include Sara Hadd, the town's director of planning and zoning. As the board looks to develop long-term plans for early elementary students, it was determined that the demographic study results and information for Ms. Hadd will be helpful for future facility planning.

VIII. Second and Final Reading of School Board Policy: B1 **Action**

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the second and final reading of the School Board Policy: B1. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Second and Final Reading of Code of Ethics for School Board Members Policy: B2 **Action**

Director Cox moved to approve the second and final reading of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members Policy: B2. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Second and Final Reading of Management of Policies: A1 **Action**

Director Longo moved to approve the second and final reading of Management of Policies: A1. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Second and Final Reading of Suspension of Policies: A2 **Action**

Director Cox moved to approve the second and final reading of Suspension of Policies. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. Approval of Personnel Consent Agenda **Action**

The following Personnel Consent Agenda was reviewed by the board. Superintendent Minor made note of the announced retirement of math teacher Julie Rutz. She and Principal Heather Baron thanked Ms. Rutz for the dedicated service to the district.

PERSONNEL CONSENT AGENDA

Board Meeting Date: April 6, 2021

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Teacher	Julie	Rutz	End of Employment	Math Teacher	1.0 FTE	CHS	Request to end Employment effective June 30, 2021			Yes
Teacher	Kaitlyn	Jewett	New Hire	Art Teacher	1.0 FTE	PPS/UMS	Request to Hire	Amanda Vella	Yes	Yes
Teacher	Katie	Haddock	New Hire	Elementary Teacher	1.0 FTE	UMS	Request to Hire	Darlene Mulcahy	Yes	Yes
Teacher	Michael	Fetters	New Hire	Special Education Teacher	1.0 FTE	CMS	Request to Hire	Deborah Gay	Yes	Yes
Teacher	Marijke	Reilly	Leave of Absence	Science Teacher	.2 FTE	CHS	Request Leave of Absence for 20/21 School Year			Yes
Teacher	Marijke	Reilly	New Hire	Instructional Coach - One Year Only	.2 FTE	CHS	Request to Hire	Erin Brady	Yes	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
Co-Curricular	James	Yarnell	New Hire	JV Softball Coach		CHS	Notice of Hire	open position	Yes	Yes
Co-Curricular	Christopher	King	New Hire	Ultimate Frisbee Coach		CHS	Notice of Hire	open position	Yes	Yes
Co-Curricular	Emily	Kopacz	New Hire	Track Coach		CMS	Notice of Hire	Sean MacArdle	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Hunter	Stark	New Hire	Behavior Interventionist - Planning Room Coordinator	35	CMS	Notice of Hire	Michael Brown	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Maxwell	Howard	End of Employment	Custodian	40	UMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Co-Curricular	Brittany	Fenumiai	New Hire	Assistant Varsity Softball Coach		CHS	Notice of Hire	open position	Yes	Yes

Director Longo moved to approve the Personnel Consent Agenda for April 6, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

XIII. Approval of Meeting Minutes: March 16, 2021 Action

Director Cox moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on March 16, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- Attorney Heather Lynn from Lynn, Lynn, Blackman & Manitsky will join an upcoming meeting to go over changes to the Title IX rules.


XV. Future Agenda Items Informational

- COVID-19 Updates and Recovery Plan
- Policy Work
- Quarterly Reports

XVI. Adjournment

Director Longo moved to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:


Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:


Nic Longo
Board Clerk