

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Remote Meeting

Tuesday, June 1, 2021
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, June 1, 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 Board Chair Craig Kieny, Directors Lindsey Cox, Laurie Kigonya, and Ben Yousey-Hindes; Director Nic Longo joined the meeting at 7:47 p.m.; Student Board Member Julia Correll; Superintendent Amy Minor; Director of Special Education Carrie Lutz; Director of Curriculum Gwendolyn Carmolli; Business and Operations Manager George Trieb; Principals: Chris Antonicci, Jordan Burke, Heather Baron, Michele Cote, and Carolyn Millham.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Craig Kieny called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. Citizen Participation

None.

III. Presentation from McKibben Demographics: Projected Enrollment Informational

Jerome McKibben presented an overview of his demographic report for Colchester. He noted several key factors in the study which ultimately showed that district enrollment is forecasted to increase by 65 students, or 3.1%, between 2020-21 and 2025-26; and it is forecasted to grow by 74 students, or 3.4%, from 2025-26 to 2030-31. He noted that even if the town continues to have construction of new homes, the increasingly dominant factor affecting the amount of population and enrollment change will be the rate, magnitude, and price of existing home sales. In summary, Mr. McKibben stated that the enrollment numbers over the next decade appear to be close to stable. He noted that most school districts, not only in Vermont but around the country, are going to lose enrollment and that the growth forecasted in Colchester is incredibly unique.

Board Chair Kieny and Director Cox both asked for confirmation that based on his report, any new facilities built in the district would not need to be built bigger to account for expanded numbers. Mr. McKibben agreed, however, he made it clear that he was not familiar with the current capacity of the district's facilities. His report is only for enrollment and does not factor in the square foot per child or the age and functionality of the facility. He noted that the square feet needed per enrolled child has increased over the years with the growing number of services that school districts provide. Director Cox stated that the Education Quality Standards indicate how many children should be in a classroom but does not provide a square foot per child guideline. She requested Superintendent Amy Minor include that point in a future board discussion about facilities. Director Kigonya asked if the district has conducted a traffic study. Superintendent Minor said she will share the results from a study that was completed in 2019.

Superintendent Minor gave an update on kindergarten enrollment for next school year. With both Porters Point School and Union Memorial School being nearly identical in their physical appearance as well as resources, staffing, and curriculum, the district pays close attention to enrollment levels to make sure class sizes are consistent between the two buildings. This demographic report confirms what the district has been tracking over the past few years. There has been a rise in enrollment at Union Memorial School, which is making class sizes larger at Union Memorial School than at Porters Point School. Class size is an important factor in students' achievement and success, and the district is making it a priority to ensure all enrolling kindergarteners are placed with a comparable number of students per classroom. While students have historically attended the school located on the side of the town they live, students who live in the middle of town are now being placed at Porters Point School to ensure that the district can balance class size and resources.

IV. Discussion: Black Lives Matter Flag

Discussion

Board Chair Keiny recounted the history of how the school board decided to raise the Black Lives Matter (BLM) flag on flagpoles at schools in the district. At the July 7, 2020 meeting, the district passed a resolution that the BLM flag would be flown at each school for the 2021-22 school year and committed to reviewing raising the flag on an annual basis. He read the resolution and motion from that meeting, as well as several excerpts of the statement that the board made to the community on August 18, 2020, explaining their decision.

Based on the board's resolution from the July 7, 2020 meeting, the flag is scheduled to come down at the end of the school year unless action is taken under district policy E11: Flagpole Requests. He noted that this agenda item is a discussion and no action will be taken at this meeting. He asked the board to offer proposals on next steps and a potential timeline.

Director Cox appreciated that the flag was raised to promote conversation and to serve as a symbolic and public action of the district's vision statement which reads, "We strive to prepare each student for success in life by providing an enriching, welcoming, and safe environment." Director Cox advocated for the board to hold themselves accountable to the resolution made last year. She pushed for the board to take more concrete steps in their commitment to anti-racist action, particularly with reviewing policies using an equity lens. The Flagpole Requests policy states that a proposed flag may be flown for a maximum of three months. With that in mind, Director Cox proposed to fly the BLM flag for the first three months of next school year, at which point she would hope that students would use the Flagpole Requests policy to engage the school board to keep the flag raised for another three months.

Director Longo agreed with Director Cox's statements and said he would like to keep the flag raised as a commitment to continuing the conversation, education, and awareness that is happening at the local level and globally. He stated that the tiny action of raising the BLM flag at CSD schools is extremely important. He noted that the district is on the cusp of hiring its first diversity, equity, and inclusion coordinator and stated that the position will be ideally set up to guide board members through their policy work. He suggested that the board keep the BLM flag up through the summer and the first three months of school at which point the future of the flag would be dependent on a student group requesting it to stay up by using the process outlined in the policy.

Directory Yousey-Hindes strongly supported continuing to fly the BLM flag through the summer and into next school year. He remarked that the flagpole is a stance of government speech and flying

the flag is a message to the greater community, not just those who walk in the building during the school year. In reviewing the board statement that was written before his term on the board, he shared his concern regarding that board's acknowledgment that they had, "not had any discussion or taken an official position on the Black Lives Matter organization's political goals or composition." He encouraged the current board to take a more rigorous approach in investigating all sides of an issue or idea to determine how much of the board's goals and objectives align with the proposal.

Director Kigoya shared her full support for continuing to fly the BLM flag and asked to make sure that students are made aware of the Flagpole Request policy and their opportunity to engage the school board.

Student Board Member Correll agreed that the flag is important to students and showcases the district's inclusiveness. She stated if the board were to take it down for the summer, there should be advanced notification to students and community members so they would know the board's intent. Ideally, she would like to see it stay up through the summer since there is summer school, camps, and athletics happening at many schools. She also suggested the district or school board use a survey to gauge how students feel about the flag and what it means to them. She stated that getting direct input from students may help them be more involved and would help give the board direction.

Board Chair Kieny agreed with keeping the flag up. He feared that taking it down would imply that the issues being addressed had been resolved, which he stated is far from true. However, he asked the board to consider all alternatives, including flying a flag that was inclusive to more minority groups. Director Yousey-Hindes agreed and stated that with the acts of violence targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), the current affairs in the middle east and growing anti-Semitism make it worth considering, although he felt unsure of what a more inclusive alternative would look like.

Director Yousey-Hindes agreed with Student Member Correll and stated the removal of something that people have come to expect seeing could be jarring and would require proactive explanations. He questioned if the continuity of keeping the flags up over the summer would be less burdensome to the district than taking them down and then raising them again at the start of school. He also acknowledged the complex situation that will occur when it eventually becomes time to transition away from flying the BLM flag. He requested that a structure be put in place to guide students through the change. Director Yousey-Hindes also asked Superintendent Minor to confirm with the district's attorney that the Flagpole Requests policy infers that the board can decide to raise a flag on their own without an official request from a student group.

Director Cox stated the board's primary action should be to uphold the vision and mission statements of the district and to ensure that the reasoning for whatever step taken is directly connected back to those statements. She also voiced her appreciation of the board's restraint in micromanaging curriculum or administration connected to this topic. She hopes the board hears from students about what would make them feel safe and welcomed at school.

The board then discussed the timeline for making a final decision. They agreed that they would like all members present for the vote. Director Cox has a conflict during the next scheduled board meeting and will not be in attendance. The board decided to hold a special meeting on Tuesday, June 22 to offer another opportunity for the public to engage the board and to make a final decision.

V. First Reading of Policies: E2, G2, E8

Action

At the advice of the Vermont School Board Association, the district has worked to consolidate policies that have overlapping topics to make the policy manual more comprehensive and easier to navigate. In the case of these three policies, it was determined that policies G2: Title I Comparability and E8: Prevention of Conflict of Interest would be removed as stand-alone policies. Instead, the content from those policies would be relocated into policy E2: Grant Funding.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the first readings of the Grant Funding Policy E2, the Prevention of Conflict of Interest Policy G2, and the Title I Comparability Policy E8. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Approval of Personnel Consent Agenda

Action

The following Personnel Consent Agenda was reviewed by the board.

PERSONNEL CONSENT AGENDA

Board Meeting Date: June 1, 2021

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Teacher	Ryan	Batche	New Hire	Middle School STEM Teacher - One Year Only	1.0 FTE	CMS	Request to Hire	Jessica Frank	Yes	Yes
Teacher	Dawn	Bissonnette	End of Employment	Elementary Teacher	1.0 FTE	PPS	Request to end Employment effective June 30, 2021			Yes
Teacher	Anna	Hartman	New Hire	Elementary School Nurse	1.0 FTE	PPS	Request to Hire	Moriah McCullagh	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
Support Staff	David	Hodge	End of Employment	Communication Specialist	35	CHS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Parker	Cadwell	End of Employment	Paraeducator	32.5	PPS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Roy	Bishop	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	32.5	CHS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Logan	Lemnah	End of Employment	Paraeducator	32.5	PPS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Dominique	Herbert	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	40	CMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Megan	Tighe	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	32.5	CMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Roseann	Martin	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	32.5	CMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Eli	Pine	End of Employment	Paraeducator-504	32.5	CHS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Caroline	Clark	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	32.5	CMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Phoebe	Paron	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	32.5	CMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Emily	LaCroix	End of Employment	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Support Staff	Kelsey	Sadewicz	Transfer	HR Coordinator	40	CO	Notice of Transfer	Amy Silverston	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Adrienne	Cameron	End of Employment	Paraeducator-SPED	32.5	MBS	Notice of End of Employment			Yes
Individual Contract	Allison	Eaton	New Hire	Behavior Specialist	1.0 FTE	CMS	Notice of Hire	New Position	Yes	Yes

Director Cox moved to approve the Personnel Consent Agenda for June 1, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Approval of Meeting Minutes: May 18, 2021 Action

Director Kigonya moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on May 18, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes: May 25, 2021 Action

Director Yousey-Hindes requested to clarify the second bullet.

Director Cox moved to approve the amended minutes from the special meeting held on May 25, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Superintendent Minor provided an update on COVID-19 impacts. Education Secretary Dan French and Health Commissioner Dr. Levine released a joint memo strongly recommending schools continue to follow the Agency of Education's Strong and Healthy Year Guidance for the remainder of the school year, even if the state of emergency order is lifted. While they have not released any written guidance for next school year, they have shared the expectation that all students will return to full in-person learning. Superintendent Minor stated that they are still waiting to hear about things like podding, masks, and visitors/volunteers in the buildings.

X. Future Agenda Items Informational

- Policy work
- Facilities renovation projects
- Special meeting 6/22 at 7:00 pm to discuss BLM flag
- Board Retreat on 6/14 at 4:30 pm

XI. Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations Action

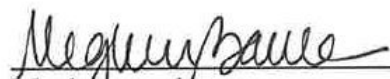
Director Yousey-Hindes moved to enter executive session at 8:54 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations.

Director Cox moved to exit executive session at 9:29 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. Adjournment

Director Longo moved to adjourn at 9:29 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:


Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:


Nic Longo
Board Clerk