

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, November 16, 2021
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, in the Colchester High School Library. Board members in attendance were Board Chair Craig Kieny, Directors Lindsey Cox, Nic Longo, Laurie Kigonya, and Ben Yousey-Hindes. District administrators in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum Gwendolyn Carmolli and three Colchester Alternative Program Teachers, Phil Gulizio, Jaime Wark, and Lisa Ryan. There were no audience members.

I. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

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

II. Citizen Participation

Colchester resident, Genna Barnaby, provided a video statement asking for clarification on the COVID-19 case totals for the 2020-2021 school year; requesting additional details on the individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 in the current school year; requesting information on any CSD community members who have been injured from receiving the vaccine, or who died from COVID-19; and information how CSD is using ESSER funds and other money designated to schools in regards to COVID-19.

III. CAP and Central Office Relocation Presentation and Discussion

Action

Colchester Alternative Program (CAP) Teachers, Phil Gulizio, Jaime Wark, and Lisa Ryan presented an overview of the mission, purpose, and opportunities provided to high school students enrolled in CAP. The program is currently housed in a leased space on Blakely Road. The owner of the building has listed it for sale three times over the past six years. If a sale is successful, it is unknown if the new owners would allow the program to continue operating out of the space. Given that uncertainty, Superintendent Amy Minor and Business and Operations Manager George Trieb have been looking into other locations for the program. There are currently no other rental spaces within walking distance to Colchester High School and even if there were, they cited concerns with entering the program into a different lease for fear that a similar issue would occur. Their recommendation to the board was to move CAP to the current CSD Central Office building which is located on the Colchester High School campus and is owned by the district. While it would require renovations to transform the space from an office setting to a learning environment, it would provide a permanent home for the program. Other benefits include an increase in classroom size and gathering spaces, a full bathroom with a washer and dryer to meet the unique needs of students who do not have access to those things at home, and closer proximity to the high school's main building. The board was supportive of this recommendation.

With the movement of CAP to the current Central Office building, the district would need to relocate Central Office to a rental space. Three potential properties were identified but the best fit is

located at 59 Rathe Road in Colchester. It offers additional square footage which would allow the district to relocate personnel who currently have offices in schools, giving those buildings the ability to recoup some space back for students. Superintendent Minor gave a timeline that includes securing the new lease for the central office in December, construction occurring in the spring and summer, and completion by August 1.

The board engaged in discussion with the CAP teachers about how the students would feel about the change, how they will solicit design input from students, and the potential additional capacity and programming that the new space would offer.

Director Kieny asked for a cost breakdown associated with ending the current CAP lease, moving the program to Central Office, and relocating Central Office to a rental space. Business and Operations Manager George Trieb explained that it is essentially swapping one existing lease for another, however, the impact of the new Central Office lease on the future budget is about an additional \$45K per year. He shared that the cost per square foot is not much greater than the current lease, but there is more space. The other expenditure will be an estimated \$250K-\$350K in renovations to the current Central Office building to make it a learning environment for CAP. He noted that vendors are tough to secure, and the supply chain is unpredictable. The renovation schedule will be important to allow time to have the new CAP facility completed by the end of the summer. He explained how the board's capital reserve account works and how the board can utilize it for projects like this. He also noted that the timing allows some of the costs to be spread across two budget years.

Director Cox moved to authorize the business manager to finalize the bid process for necessary renovations to convert the current central office building into the Colchester Alternative Program and to sign a 3-year lease for a rental space to house the district's central office personnel. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Out-of-District Placement Presentations **Information**

This agenda item was moved to the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

V. FY'23 Budget Discussion: Assumptions **Information**

Business and Operations Manager, George Trieb, presented his core budget assumptions for the FY'23 budget. The assumptions are the predicted increases in the budget from the current year to next year. While some items ranged from no change to 4%, both health insurance and the general transportation contract are predicted to increase 10% over the current budget.

At 8:01 pm, Board Chair Kieny made a motion to take a short, five-minute recess. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting resumed at 8:05 pm.

VI. Citizens' Participation at Board Meetings Discussion **Action**

Board Chair Kieny provided some history regarding individual participation at school board meetings. Before the pandemic, the public could contact the board individually or as a group at any time, however, live participation during a meeting was only allowed in person. The board would respond to questions submitted in other formats at the second meeting of each month. Throughout the pandemic, public meeting environments have shifted greatly across the country due to health

concerns. In June of 2021, the board started to allow written participation for those who choose not to attend in person. Since then, submitted statements have been read allowed by a board member or district employee. The board also created Public Comment Rules which are noted on each agenda and posted online. The board engaged in a discussion on if they should expand, remove, or alter any of its participation options.

Directory Longo cited public meeting law and the “reasonable opportunity” that the public should have to express an opinion. The pandemic increased abilities to offer digital methods for the public to engage with the board. He expressed interest in altering participation to allow more live participation, however, he requested that written statements should no longer be read aloud. He cited the potential discomfort or awkwardness for the person reading the letter and the possibility for the letter to be misconstrued with tone or cadence. He suggested a video recording or live video directly from the author instead of a written letter that must be read aloud by someone else.

Director Yousey-Hindes made a distinction between citizens having direct access to the board to express concerns and share opinions, versus the citizen’s ability to make a public statement at an open meeting. He noted that citizens, employees, and students can always reach out to board members individually and that the current discussion is purely about the role that a public meeting plays in allowing participants to reach a broader audience by issuing a public statement that would be recorded in the meeting minutes.

Directory Kigonya stated that citizens have multiple ways to access the board both privately and publicly. She questioned what additional measures needed to be added. She expressed concern about meetings becoming unmanageable due to excessive time or unruliness if online participation is allowed.

Director Cox shared that expanding participation access at board meetings has been a goal of hers since she began serving. She specifically cited citizens who may be unable to travel or attend a live meeting in person because of childcare, work commitments, or other responsibilities. She stated that having a physical time and place to come to a meeting in person should be a bare minimum and that the board should take steps to increase the accessibility of board meetings.

Superintendent Amy Minor shared that many school boards across the state are having similar discussions. She stated that the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) is hosting a webinar on the topic and is currently working with their attorneys to draft a model policy. Superintendent Minor recommended that the board draft a specific CSD policy and accompanying procedures for citizens’ participation that are applicable in a variety of situations or settings. She also noted that if the board were to expand digital participation to the public, they would need to consider adding staff at the meeting to manage whichever platform is chosen.

The board agreed that they would like to see what the VSBA creates but in the meantime, they would like to make an immediate change to cease having board members or employees read submitted letters aloud.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to prohibit the open session reading of emails submitted to the school board unless read by the author or a proxy, and moved to expressly allow the playing of prerecorded messages if they are received by noon on the day of the meeting and follow the board’s Public Comment Rules as listed on the school board website. He also moved that the

board begin the process of preparing a policy and associated procedures to govern citizens' participation for the Colchester School board. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Approval of Consent Agenda

Action

The following Consent Agenda was reviewed by the board.

DRAFT

CONSENT AGENDA

Board Meeting Date: November 16, 2021

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Teacher	Melissa	Fontaine	Transfer	School Nurse	1.0 FTE	CHS	Request to Transfer	Lindsey Campion	Yes	Yes

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Board Approval Required

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Lijuan	Merkel	Leave of Absence	EL Paraeducator	32.5	MBS	Intermittent, Unpaid, Medical Leave			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	Caitlin	O'Neil-Bain	New Hire	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Hire	Logan Lemnah	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Allison	Middleton	Resignation	Paraeducator	32.5	CHS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Deborah	Brosseau	Resignation	Food Service Worker	15	CHS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Munanga	Byamungu	New Hire	Custodian	40	CHS	Notice of Hire	Open Position	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Sandra	Boyd	Transfer	Custodial Manager	40	DW	Notice for Transfer	Richard Johnson	Yes	Yes

Director Longo moved to approve the Consent Agenda for November 16, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 2, 2021 **Action**

Board Chair Kiemy asked to further clarify sentences in section III and IV. Director Cox asked to added current COVID case data known up to that meeting into section III.

Director Longo moved to approve the amended minutes from the meeting held on November 2, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 9, 2021 **Action**

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 9, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports **Informational**

- Superintendent Minor stated the Test to Stay program started this week. The district successfully tested 23 quarantined students on Monday and 67 on Tuesday. They will continue to monitor staffing requirements if the numbers increase. The hope is that the need will eventually decrease as more eligible students are vaccinated. After cases from the weekend and Monday, the total districtwide case count is over 50.

XI. Future Agenda Items **Informational**

- FY'23 Budget Timeline
- Out-of-District Placement Presentation
- Facilities Information
- Policy Work

XII. Executive Session to Discuss Confidential/Identifying Student Information and Contract Negotiations **Action**

Director Cox moved to enter executive session at 9:06 p.m. to discuss confidential student matters and contract negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

XIII. Adjournment

Director Cox moved to exit executive session and adjourn at 9:57 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:

Board Clerk:

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Nic Longo
Board Clerk