

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting, Special Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, January 10, 2023
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

The Colchester Board of Education held a Special Board Meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2023. Those in attendance were Board Chair Lindsey Cox, Board Directors Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, and Felix Anderson. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Gwen Caromolli, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There were no audience members.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

II. FY'24 Budget Discussion

Informational

Following the general meeting on January 3, the board requested to review additional budget scenarios and associated costs before making a final decision at the January 17 meeting. Superintendent Amy Minor and fellow district administrators outlined three scenarios with varying levels of additions. The recommended additions were explained in detail with corresponding data and rationale for their need at previous meetings. Some of the recommended positions are already filled and active in the district, having been added using Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Administrators have recommended moving the funding source of these positions into the voter budget now to secure their place before the federal funding runs out or is eliminated.

All three scenarios applied \$250K in reductions, which was achieved by removing seven open positions and adjusting the amount of expected tuition revenue based on enrollment projections. The district currently has 25 open positions that have remained unfilled since the beginning of the school year. Superintendent Minor stressed that while these are needed positions, the current hiring landscape makes it unlikely that they will be filled. When looking at the open positions, administrators agreed that the district could function without seven of them if it could result in adding and hiring for the recommended positions.

The first scenario adds 2 support staff positions and 3 FTE positions which equates to an estimated tax increase of 2.07% and an increase in equalized per pupil spending of 8.37%. The second scenario adds 2 support staff positions and 3.5 FTE positions which equates to an estimated tax increase of 2.47% and an increase in equalized per pupil spending of 8.82%. The third scenario adds 2 additional support staff positions, 5.7 FTE positions which equates to an estimated tax increase of 3.11% and an increase in equalized per pupil spending of 9.51%.

The board discussed the positive impact of the \$250K reduction to the baseline budget and subsequent estimated tax increase. Business and Operations Manager George Trieb pointed out that Colchester taxpayers saw a 3.69% decrease in taxes last year, so even if the board were to select the third scenario which results in an estimated tax increase of 3.11%, the two-year average would still

result in a tax decrease. Mr. Trieb reviewed Vermont's Property Tax Credit which impacts approximately 70% of Colchester taxpayers and allows them to pay their taxes based on income instead of property value.

The board reviewed the budget language that will appear on the ballot. The language is set by State statute and includes the increase in equalized per pupil spending, not the estimated percentage increase in taxes. The board discussed concerns that voters may unintentionally confuse the per pupil spending number that shows on the ballot with the estimated tax increase. They also agreed on the importance of the district's communication plan, which will highlight the ballot language, the immediate need for the recommended positions, and remind the community of last year's tax decrease.

The board discussed the three scenarios that were presented and explored various iterations that would combine certain aspects of each into a new scenario. Superintendent Minor agreed to bring back information detailing their new request at the next meeting and the board agreed they will be prepared to make a final decision and sign the associated warning.

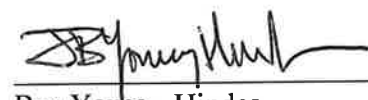
III. Adjournment

Director Anderson moved to adjourn at 6:50 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:


Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:


Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk