

Colebrook School Board Meeting Minutes

Date	1/21/2025
Time	6:00 pm – CAES Library
Location	Colebrook Academy & Elementary School library
Chairperson	Tim Stevens

Attendance

Attendance Legend: **P** - Present **E** - Excused **A**- Absent **R** - Remotely

School Board Members			Principal		SAU Members		
E	Nathan Lebel	P	Cayenne Amey	P	Kim Wheelock	P	Dana Hilliard
P	David Brooks	P	Julie Brunault		Asst. Principal	P	Bridget Cross
P	Rhonda Lyons	P	Tim Stevens	E	Stephanie Cameron	P	Chris Paquette
P	Robert Murphy				CTE Director		
				P	Emilie Hall		
					Student Report		
				E	Sandra Minigell		
				E	Brodyn Cote		

Public in Attendance: Christine Sullivan, Lisa Brooks, Joey Sweatt, Theresa Deuschle, Kristen Brooks, Dawn Hall, Kathi Lawton-Haynes, Crystal Ouimette, Ryan Ouimette, Heather Brown, Lonnie Brown, Tina Hamelin, April Hand, Jason Thompson, Deb Thompson, Elizabeth Griffin, Rebecca Hailey, Amy Caron, Terrence Rosi, Alyssa Wonkka, Brigid Wonkka-Greene, Kristen Wheelock, Tom Allin, Amelia Sweatt, Ava Ouimette, Anna Britton, Mikhail Young, Benjamin Young, Tanya Young, Tyler Snyder, Lisa Brooks, Rory Shaw, Samantha Samson, Diane Little, Donna Jordan, Daniel Murphy, Michelle McCord, Amber Calhoun, Dawson Calhoun

Minutes

Item	Subject	Action
1.	Roll Call: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tim Stevens at 6:00 pm and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance	
2.	<p>Agenda Adjustments: Tim read a statement regarding the first draft of the 2025/2026 budget. The first draft of the budget was for \$8,625,671.00 which was an increase of \$328,442.00. Also, in addition to this there was a decrease in revenue of \$323,825.00. That would have been a tax increase of \$20.27 which is \$3.36 per thousand. This increase was due to the addition of a full-time CTE Director, a full-time teacher and paraeducator added to support a student, a part-time CTE Health Science Teacher position and a full-time CTE Culinary Teacher.</p> <p>Draft one was not moved forward as it would have been too high of a tax increase. The Administration moved on to draft two which was \$8,343,471.00, which was an increase of \$46,242.00 and a decrease in revenue of \$323,825.00.</p>	

This would make a tax increase of \$18.81 which was an increase of \$1.90 over last year's budget. The updates to draft 2 of the budget include a reduction of a teacher in the student support room, \$3,500.00 for library books, a reduction in math ELA interventionist position, reduction in CTE mentor contract, reduction in plant operations for the purpose and install of our owned propane tank, reduction of 3% increase in principal salary (she will receive additional vacation days in place of the 3% increase). Draft 2 was moved forward and presented to the school board. The board declined draft 2 and asked the administration to create a third draft that would have a zero-tax impact. This would require an additional reduction in the budget of \$368,000.00. The following was prepared as draft 3 for the 2025/2026 budget. Additional revenue for the IDA Grant anticipated as funds were set aside for the 2024/2025 budget to offset a special education teacher that was not hired. These funds in the amount of \$40,000.00 will be used to offset a teacher in 2025/2026. The tuition revenue was increased by \$100,000.00 as the initial estimate allowed for an increase in this with some funds left over in case students leave the district. The following expenditures were reduced: running start dual enrollment fees that are charged for each course taken in excess of two prepaid by the state per student annually. These fees in excess of the two already taken by each student will be the responsibility of the family. The behavioral specialist was removed from the local budget, and it will be paid out of the IDEA Grant, the paraeducator was removed from the student support room and the student staff room will be staffed by existing counselors and other pertinent staff. The Curriculum Director travel was decreased by \$750.00, the principals travel decreased by \$1,000.00, laptops for staff decreased by \$3,500 and decreased the amount requested to be deposited into the school bus expendable trust from \$40,000.00 down to \$20,000.00. Other positions that were removed include the administrative assistant to the guidance counselor and principal's office for \$65,504.00. Data was provided from other schools that have the same number of students and compared how many front office staff there were. These duties will be delegated to the CTE Director for all CTE reporting as well as other office staff in the high school guidance counselor office.

The last position that was cut was the Spanish Teacher which cut \$81,557.00. A language lab will be offered next year which will have a designated space for students to take VLACs online language learning. These classes will be monitored by existing staff. The languages offered will include American Sign Language, French, Spanish, German, Latin and Mandarin Chinese.

The draft that was approved by the board on January 7, 2025, was draft number three which was a decrease of \$181,973.00 and a decrease in revenues of \$183,825.00 the tax rate will remain at \$16.91 which is the same rate as the 2024 school rate.

3.

Hearing of the Public:

The Board Chair opened the hearing of the public at 6:09 pm. Brigid Wonkka-Greene addressed the board first. She is a junior at CAES and Student Council President. She is here to represent the student body and speak about the cuts that have been made within the 2025/2026 budget. She specifically spoke about the cut to the foreign language teacher for next year. She expressed that she and many other students of the student body are very upset with this cut. She explained that not only is Mr. Sanchez-Roosa the Spanish teacher for grades 8 to 12, but he also teaches geography, organizes student trips for the World Language Club, varsity boys' soccer coach, student council co-advisor, senior class co-advisor, a role model and a friend. It is understood that the cuts are from a monetary standpoint and not personal but wonders if they were? She went on to discuss that the teachers at CAES make a difference in the lives of the younger generations they are just not a number in the education system that can easily be disposed of. Discussed the importance of having a foreign language class and that many colleges and universities still require foreign language and how having it on high school transcripts is beneficial for students. She discussed taking foreign languages through online courses but feels they are more difficult than in person classes. She discussed the early college courses offered at CAES and both teachers who teach these classes will be gone next year which means that the current six classes offered under the early college courses will no longer be taught. This will have an adverse effect on the students of CAES. During Mr. Sanchez's time at Colebrook School he has organized trips to Italy, England, France, Spain and Japan. These trips have given students the experience of a lifetime. Now without a foreign language teacher to be head of the World Language Club, these trips will cease for the foreseeable future and deprive upcoming classes of these life-changing experiences. Brigid concluded with her stating that she came to speak to the board this evening on her own free will out of compassion for my peers and teachers. It was her idea and there should be no repercussions that arise.

Debbie Thompson spoke next and stated she has a grandson at Colebrook School and that many of the students are extremely upset about Mr. Sanchez position being cut. Her question to the board is what will happen to the students that are currently taking his classes if he should leave now to pursue other career opportunities? Is there a plan if he leaves prior to the end of the year?

Amber Calhoun - parent and president of the PTO spoke that she understands cuts need to be made however, feels that this particular teacher has created more pushback than any other position. This decision should be reconsidered, and the board should listen to the students and teachers. Feels that this could be the worst decision ever made by the school board.

A petition was started on Friday and currently has 609 signatures to keep Mr. Sanchez and in-person foreign language classes.

Joey Sweatt - what kind of message are you sending with this cut? We have a hard time filling positions. We've got positions that are not even filled and one that is being cut because the position cannot be filled. What will happen to the teachers that are still here? He stated the school is run like a concentration

	<p>camp and now they will have to worry that they are disposable because of VLACS classes.</p> <p>Ben Young - spoke about his concern about VLACS and students teaching themselves. He is concerned that when you do not have an in-person teacher that will speak the language with the student it will be harder for them to learn.</p> <p>Tanya Young - spoke and brought up that the foreign language teacher position was being cut however, a culinary room was recently approved at \$40,000.00. She also mentioned that the running start classes are grant funded and paid by the state so students should have those classes available to them. Discussed salaries and how much staff is paid because the public is unaware of how much staff is paid.</p> <p>C. Amey/R. Lyons: Motion to end 15-minute public session at 6:28 pm.</p>	
4.	<p>Reading of the Minutes –</p> <p>C. Amey/D. Brooks: Motion to approve the minutes of January 7, 2025, with correction to the motion under #9.</p>	VOTE: Motion Carries
5.	<p>Kim Wheelock – Principal – January Report - No updates</p>	
6.	<p>Dana Hilliard – Superintendent Report January Report – We will have a date regarding the student going to Canaan so that we can move forward with the tuition.</p> <p>D. Brooks/R. Murphy: Motion to approve the itinerary for the senior class trip for the dates of April 11th and 12th to Boston.</p> <p>VOTE: Motion Carries</p> <p>Will be going into non-public to discuss the safety audits.</p>	
7.	<p>Bridget Cross - Business Manager No Updates</p>	
8.	<p>New Business</p> <p>Summary of Compensation Benefit Package - Julie has raised the idea of making a compensation benefits package Summary for staff. We are seeking directions from the board on whether or not you want the SAU Office to proceed forward with this.</p> <p>Dana handed out to the board a copy of what the compensation summary sheet would look like and also a copy of the employee’s current pay stubs to show how they are outlined on their current bi-weekly paychecks. If we move forward with this, it will not be instituted until next year and would most likely be given out in late September or October and done on an annual basis. We are looking for some directions from you here tonight. Julie spoke to the compensation statement and talked about the breakdown giving the employee the cost of what their insurance benefit is including what the employer portion is. It would also give a breakdown of the NH Retirement benefit, educational benefits and health benefits. This will show employees the percentage of benefits they receive that are paid by the taxpayer. This will become an action item on the board agenda.</p>	

9.

Hearing of the Public:

Chairman Stevens opened the hearing of the public up at 6:36 pm. Theresa Deuschle brought up the safety audits that will be discussed in non-public and asked if radio usage would be a part of that plan? Have the radios been received? Tim stated we are waiting on FCC permit for the special channel which requires FCC approval. Dana stated that the radios are working within proper condition, that all members of the staff are able to communicate with each other and the safety of the building has not been compromised with those radios. She then asked if when the license was applied for was it for the simplex or the itinerant? The simplex license means the radios have to stay on school grounds. The itinerant license is if you want to bring them on field trips. Dana reiterated that when it comes to safety, he is not going to discuss it in a public forum due to safety concerns.

Christine Sullivan - brought up stipends and asked when the clubs meet. They can meet prior to school, after school or on weekends. How often do they meet? Tim reminded everyone that this is not a dialogue but a place for the public to make a statement if they wish. She brought up if an advisor had a co-advisor then the stipend is split and Bridget explained how the stipends work and if there is a co-advisor they split the stipend. Bridget also explained that the stipends are part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Tyler Snyder - Spoke about his frustration and stated he may not be here much longer. He asked the board if they really looked at where they were making the cuts that they made. He brought up the culinary room that was just completed but we will still be busing students to Pittsburg. He would like to see our students stay here in Colebrook. He discussed the SAU budget and stated there was no individual line items, it was just one line item. He stated that about 14% of their budget goes to the SAU. He would like to see line items prior to the budget hearing. Tyler expressed to the board that he wished they would have stuck with what they ran for when they ran to be on the board. He voted for many of the members that are here, and he is not sure what has changed. He feels that the board has majority of people's interest in mind or that they did when they got on the board. He then spoke about a past meeting where it was stated that Colebrook was the only school in the state that had a part-time CTE Director all other

schools have a full-time CTE Director. Tyler stated he made one phone call and found out that is not true. He called White Mountains and found their CTE Director is split with Dean of Students. and the CTE Director in Canaan is part time as well. Asked if you do not know the answer to a question just to say that not tell people what you think they want to hear. Bridget responded to Tyler and let him know that the SAU Budget is posted on the website for anyone to review.

Ben Young - spoke regarding the extracurricular clubs and stipends. He feels that these clubs should not be cut. He feels we do not do enough for our students who are looking to better themselves and go on to college and get into top tier colleges like Ivy Leagues. Coming from this school it is very difficult to get your kid into Ivy League and cutting the extracurricular activities is not going to help them when they apply for college.

Elizabeth Griffin - spoke about the stipends and different clubs. She stated that many teachers take on a lot. She does the drama club and states that depending on how close they are to a show they could meet 5 times a week. They do two shows a year with dress rehearsals. She does the ski program for free, and it is a lot of extra work. She was a senior class advisor, which is a lot of coordinating, calling, planning and then you have to go on the trip. If you want to calculate the hours that are spent with the kids it's a lot. She was also on the leadership team, yearbook and a lot of the work is done by the advisor.

Coaches put in a lot of work. There needs to be stipends with these positions. She also spoke about the afore-mentioned benefits package stating employees do receive breakdowns currently on their paystubs. Is this just for the board to know how expensive staff is? Maybe we are the next ones on the chopping block. I'm not really sure what the motive is behind that. The taxpayers are paying it. Every employer pays Social Security Tax. We are not self-employed we should not be paying our own Social Security Tax.

Unfortunately, yes you do cover a lot of our retirement. That is something that has changed. In 2011 it became more on the taxpayers, the local government's responsibility and that is unfortunate. I don't like my taxes going up either. This is something people need to talk to our state representatives about.

Mikhail Young - He stated how horrible he thought the board's decision was to cut Mr. Sanchez's job. Growing up here, the opportunities are already hard enough especially for me since I am looking to go to a higher college. The timing of this decision as we are also losing Mrs. Dorman who is one of the only teachers who can teach running start classes. By cutting Mr. Sanchez that is our final teacher that can teach those classes. Without those classes our GPA's do not look good, so we do not look good on applications. Not to mention colleges like seeing foreign language on our applications because it shows you are a well-rounded student. He brought up how there was money to do a \$40,000 renovation for the culinary room but are now scrambling to make ends meet by cutting all these teachers. How many people benefit from the culinary room as compared to the students who benefit from Mr. Sanchez's position. What will all the students who take Mr. Sanchez's class do for the rest of the year?

This gap will show on their transcripts.

Tom Allin - Discussed how the area has had many closings, and the population has plummeted. He stated we should have regionalized 10 years ago.

C. Amey/D. Brooks: Motion to end public session at 7:56 pm.

VOTE: Motion Carries

10.	<p>Non-Public Session – <u>C. Amey/D. Brooks:</u> Motion to go into non-public RSA 91-A:3, II (i) at 7:58 pm Superintendent Hilliard, Business Manager and Principal Wheelock, Diane Little and Kristin Brooks were invited to stay in non-public session <u>C. Amey/J. Brunault:</u> Motion to come out of non-public session at 7:35 pm</p>	<p>VOTE: Motion Carries VOTE: Motion Carries</p>
11.	<p>Meetings: SAU School Board Meeting Thursday, January 30, 2025, CAES Library at 6:00 pm</p>	
12.	<p>Adjournment: <u>C. Amey/J. Brunault:</u> Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm.</p>	<p>VOTE: Motion Carries</p>

Respectfully Submitted,
Billie Paquette

Board Approved: Feb. 4, 2025