

COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS
COLTS NECK, NEW JERSEY 07722

Mission Statement

The mission of Colts Neck Township Schools is to empower and inspire students to be confident, creative, self-sufficient learners who maximize their strengths and talents and contribute as responsible participants in their ever expanding world.

MINUTES: For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Education, **December 11, 2024**, at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Administration Building at 70 Conover Road, Colts Neck, New Jersey 07722

Public Participation

The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest. Public participation is governed under District Policy 0167 - Public Participation in Board Meetings as follows:

Public participation shall be governed by the following rules:

1. *A participant must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface comments by an announcement of his/her name, municipality of residence, and group affiliation, if applicable;*
2. *Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes' duration;*
3. *No participant may speak more than once on the same topic until all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard; and only then if time constraints and/or the presiding officer allow.*
4. *All statements, questions, or inquiries shall be directed to the presiding officer; and any questions or inquiries directed by a participant to another Board member or Superintendent shall be redirected to the presiding officer who shall determine if such statement, question, or inquiry shall be addressed by the presiding officer on behalf of the Board or by the individual Board member or Superintendent;*
5. *It is the expectation of the Board that communications between participants and the Board will remain positive and focused around the best interest of the student(s) and the district as a whole. All communications from all stakeholders shall be conducted with mutual respect and civility. The Board will not condone communications and interactions that can be perceived as harassing, insulting, threatening, or lacking in respect or civility.*

The presiding officer may:

- a. *Interrupt, warn, and/or terminate a participant's statement, question, or inquiry when it is too lengthy;*
- b. *Interrupt and/or warn a participant when the statement, question, or inquiry is abusive, obscene, or may be defamatory;*
- c. *Request any person to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;*
- d. *Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person prevents or disrupts a meeting with an act that obstructs or interferes with a meeting;*
- e. *Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting; and*
- f. *Waive these rules when necessary for the protection of privacy or to maintain an orderly operation of the Board meeting.*

CALL TO ORDER

President Ramirez called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. Approximately 12 members of the public were present.

ROLL CALL

ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Alison DeNoia, Brenna Dillon, Amy Dimes, Jason Orrico, Jessica Ramirez, Vincent Rugnetta, Angelique Volpe, Kevin Walsh and Richard Wickberg

Board Members Absent: None

LEGAL NOTICE OF MEETING

LEGAL NOTICE

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, this meeting has been duly advertised in the Asbury Park Press in a schedule of meetings dated January 11, 2024 notice of which has been filed with the Deputy Clerk for Colts Neck Township and the requirements of posting of notices have been met.

FLAG SALUTE

FLAG SALUTE

President Jessica Ramirez led the Flag Salute and Angelique Volpe read the Mission Statement.

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION (N.J.S.A. 10:4-9,12)

At approximately 6:38 p.m President Ramirez announced that the Board would move into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation and confidential student matters. She further announced that action would not be taken afterwards and articulated that Executive discussion may be disclosed upon future resolution.

It was moved by Alison DeNoia, seconded by Amy Dimes and carried on a unanimous roll call vote in the affirmative to move into Executive session.

COMMENTS FROM ATTENDING CONSTITUENTS – ALL SUBJECTS

None

PRESENTATION

PRESENTATION

1. Mr. Phil Capasso, Supervisor of Student Information Systems, Innovation, and 21st Century Learning, provided a presentation regarding a proposal for hosting the district website through a contracted provider.

Mr. Capasso stated that the current system involves four separate websites and a complex process for updates and communication. The proposed solution includes integrating social media and developing a parent app for streamlined communication and notifications.

Mr. Capasso mentioned feedback received from the community about streamlining communication across multiple sites. The new system aims to alleviate the frustration of navigating different school and district websites.

Mr. Capasso presented an evaluation of current and potential new communication systems, highlighting the need for better control and integration. He detailed the limitations of the current communication system, including minimal control over unsubscribing parents and outdated content integration. The current system requires manual updates for content across multiple websites, which is time-consuming.

Mr. Capasso reported that the committee has explored various options, with the first option offering full access control, social media integration, and shared resources. The first option also allows for cross-posting and multimedia banners, making updates more efficient.

Mr. Capasso provided a breakdown of the costs for the three options, with the first option being the most cost-effective at just under \$13,500. The second and third options are more expensive, with the third option being the most itemized, with a cost of \$14,800. Mr. Capasso also noted that there is a setup fee, which was not included in his presentation for the new system. The set up fees for the three options are \$5,000, \$11,000 and \$4,500, respectively. The setup fee would be covered by the ADA compliance budget.

It is the recommendation to move forward with the first option, which would include an app for easier communication and updates, which is a significant improvement over the current system. The timeline for implementation is proposed to be January to June, with a soft rollout in June and a full launch on July 1.

COMMITTEE/BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

COMMITTEE /BOARD
LIAISON REPORTS

Ad-Hoc Committee for the Arts, Sports, & Extracurricular Activities - Vincent Rugnetta

- December 7th was the Christmas Tree Lighting; the Conover Road Elementary School Choir performed. Thank you to Mr. Willis and all of the students who performed.
- Cedar Drive Middle School Spring Musical this year will be Matilda; the dates are March 14 & 15, 2025.
- Cedar Drive Middle School Hershey Trip Fundraising will be on Monday, December 16th, from 4-8 pm at Chipotle in Eatontown
- Cedar Drive Middle School winter concert is tomorrow, December 12th at 7pm.
- Conover Road Primary School 1st Grade winter show is next Wednesday, December 18th at 9:30 am.
- Registration for Live Like Corey 6th Annual Memorial Football tournament has been extended through December 16th; it will take place on December 31st at Bucks Mill at 10 am. Please visit livelikecorey.foundation to sign up.
- Auditions for the CRES Players are currently taking place. The play this year will be Annie Jr.

Board Member Liaisons:

Amy Dimes - Colts Neck PTO

- Very successful Frosty's Holiday shop.
- General meeting is scheduled for December 11th at 9:30 at the Administration Building.
- Looking for volunteers for 8th Grade Breakfast,
- March 27th is the Spring Gala at the South Gate Manor. The theme this year is Enchanted Garden.

Kevin Walsh - Colts Neck Township Senior Citizens

- Dr. Garibay, Dr. Rigby and Principal Osmond met with Shirley Anderson, prior Principal at the Conover Road Elementary School for over 20 years. She belongs to Seniors and will be working with the administration as a liaison for the Seniors.

Brenna Dillon/Alison DeNoia - Parent Advisory Committee

- Committee met several weeks ago. Two meetings scheduled for Monday at 7 and tues at 10 will report out next week.

Jessica Ramirez - Colts Neck Township Committee

- Public Hearing and Reorganization meeting in January.
- December 14th at 9am and 11am is Breakfast with Santa at the Colts Neck Volunteer Fire Department.

Alison DeNoia - State & County School Boards Association Representative

- County met on December 5th; spoke about AI and the reports that are going to the State regarding incorporating AI into districts. Dr. Richens discussed new board members and the importance of their role in working with administration during budget season.
- Next meeting will be February 4th; the meeting is virtual and NJ Senator Vin Gopal will be in attendance.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS/SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. Recommendation of capital items / LRFP projects for FY 25-26.

Mr. Marasco reported that the administration has reviewed the LRFP in addition to current facilities needs and identified two (2) projects that are priority to be recommended for the 2025-26 budget. The two recommended projects include roofing improvements at Cedar Drive Middle School and the replacement of the main switch gear at Conover Road Elementary School. It is further recommended that the cost of projects would be funded as part of the 2025-26 budget utilizing Capital Reserve funds, and/or Impact Aid or Maintenance Reserve funds.

2. Recommendation to proceed with district alarm system replacement in '24-25.

Mr. Marasco discussed the need to replace the district alarm system due to outdated components and security concerns. The new system would be integrated with existing security equipment and funded through reallocated funds.

The Board agreed to proceed with the recommendation for the district alarm system replacement.

3. Colts Neck Twp. Affordable Housing Obligation

- [2014 Utilization & Capacity Study](#)
- [2022 Demographic Study](#)

Kevin Walsh suggested inviting the demographer from Sundance to discuss future student growth and affordable housing. The Board agreed to having Sundance Associates attend a future COW meeting of the Board.

4. Update to Student Liaisons' Proposals

No updates.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Recommendation on 12.18.24 RAM Agenda Board Website transition to Finals site (website / mass communication / app)

Amy Dimes addressed Mr. Capasso's presentation on a new website proposal. She reported that the communication committee has been addressing the challenge of better informing parents, aiming for a system where information is actively pushed to them rather than requiring manual searches on the website. A web-based app was introduced last year, though it functions more like a downloadable web page rather than a dedicated app. Mr. Capasso's presentation on a new website proposal offers enhanced access and features such as app integration and calendar synchronization, which would be particularly beneficial for managing the schedules of children involved in various activities. She believes that the proposed solution is cost-effective, remaining within the current budget, which was positively surprising compared to expectations.

2. Committee name change : Additional Goals

- a. [Local BOE Committees](#)
- b. Assist in parental access to digital resources
- c. Stay current with technology trends in education (ie: A.I., screentime, etc.)

Amy Dimes discussed the proposal to rename the Communication Committee to "Communications and Technology" which would reflect a broader focus on staying updated with technological advancements in education. This recommendation is anticipated to be on the next Board agenda.

3. Restarting Board Newsletter

- a. Focus on ESIP
- b. Include recap of activities: include pictures?

c. Veterans Day presentation

Amy Dimes reported that the committee is discussing plans to restart the board newsletter. This would need to be delegated as a task to new board members. This initiative is aimed at keeping the community informed about significant projects and achievements, such as the ESIP (Energy Savings Improvement Plan). This would also help to include the senior community members and update them on school activities, fostering greater community engagement.

4. BOE Meeting Live Streaming
a. Protocol

Amy Dimes also reported that the responsibility for live streaming Board of Education meetings is still under discussion. After some discussion, it was determined that the need to finalize the protocol and assign clear responsibilities remains a point for future deliberation.

CURRICULUM

1. Continuation from 11.13.24 - Consideration for SEC Advisory Opinion on CHPE Lessons, continued from 11.13.24 COW

Brenna Dillon discussed that currently the district has adjusted its process over the past two years to reflect an approach where parents must actively sign a form to either opt their child in or out of certain curricular content. Despite the procedural changes, the terminology and implications of the model remain a point of discussion.

The conversation revolved around whether the district should seek an advisory opinion from the School Ethics Commission (SEC) to clarify the appropriateness of formally adopting an "opt-in" model. Seeking the advisory opinion seems beneficial since it incurs no cost to the district and could provide clarity on whether a shift to a purely "opt-in" model aligns with regulatory guidelines. A straw poll was taken and it was determined that the Board would seek an advisory opinion. After some discussion, there was uncertainty about what specifically the advisory opinion should address, given that operationally, there are no further changes anticipated beyond the current practice of soliciting parent responses. Further discussion is required.

2. District Comprehensive Health & Physical Education - Health Lesson Opt Out Update

Dr. Garibay provided the Board with an update on the Opt Outs, there have been sixth grade and kindergarten. No parents opted out of the 6th grade lesson and one (1) parent opted out of one lesson in kindergarten.

3. SEL Program / K-5 Positive Action Update

Dr. Garibay reported that the letter of introduction went out from the school counselor regarding positive action, which also had a link that invited parents if they didn't want their child to participate. She further noted that to date, the district has not received any communications from parents not to participate.

4. "Being A Writer" Pilot, K-5 - Collaborative Classroom (Spring 2025)

Dr. Garibay reported that the "Being A Writer" pilot was in response to some of the things we were looking at with regards to our student data. It is currently being implemented in one classroom in Kindergarten to 5th Grade. These teachers volunteered for this. Dr Reynolds was very instrumental in getting all the pilot materials for free. Will be monitoring the writing benchmarks as they go across in the pilot classrooms to see what skills are being identified and being enhanced through the benchmark writing tasks. We will potentially be making a recommendation for the 25-26 budget for this program. She noted as a reminder that the district currently uses Lizzie Calkins Teachers College Writers Workshop. This resource is more comprehensive, which encompasses all aspects of language arts, which includes grammar, punctuation, etc.

5. Pilot of Class-Shelf Plus, classroom library workflow system, with community access.

Dr. Garibay reported that this pilot is something that the district is looking into. It is an instrument that is not just cataloging the classroom libraries, but also making them available to all of the parents as well. Stay tuned for more information.

FINANCE

1. Budget '25-26 Calendar.

Mr. Marasco distributed to each Board Member a draft Budget Calendar for the 25-26 fiscal year, noting that it is a requirement of QSAC that he distribute and discuss it with the Board and stakeholders. The first draft includes some dates that are subject to change since the official Department of Education School Election Calendar hasn't yet been issued, which provides all the statutory dates of the election cycle, from the Board Reorganization all the way through the election and the Board Organization in the next calendar year. The process starts with meetings amongst administration and department heads where department budgets are developed and reviewed. There is a review of projected enrollments, class sizes, educational programming, facility needs, pre-k staffing, structure, etc. Several Finance Committee or Committee of the Whole meetings will be necessary during February and March, as those are the key months to determine the District's tentative '25-26 budget. The Tentative budget is submitted around March 20th for the County Department of Education to review and approve. Prior to that date, we

have the Governor's budget address and generally after that, within 48 hours, the Department of Education releases State Aid figures to all school districts. State Aid is a key component of the revenue side of our budget that we will know at that time. As we approach April, the county office concludes its budget reviews and then we are required to advertise publicly for a Public Hearing, which has to be done by certain dates in May. Generally, this is usually around May 6th. Moving beyond that, there's some statutory dates for giving staff, non-tenured teaching staff, contracts for employment. These are all statutory dates. Operations for the 2025-26 fiscal year begin July 1st.

Mr. Marasco further commented that for the first time in history, the State Board of Education is having a public hearing comment on the state fiscal year 2025 budget. As lawmakers are looking to revamp the state funding formula, they are inviting public comment for input. He will be sending that information out for anyone who wants to provide testimony. Professional organizations including NJASBO will be weighing in and have spokespeople there speaking about budgeting, as well as the funding formula.

2. Review of Fund Balance

Mr. Marasco provided the Board with a brief review of the district's Fund Balance. The District has utilized fund balance as revenue in its budget over the years. Fund balance is an accumulation of surpluses built up over time. Surplus in a given fiscal year is generated in two ways - by either unexpired appropriations or unanticipated revenues realized. The District is allowed by statute and board resolution to designate such surplus funds to restricted reserves at year-end. Restricted Reserves are categorizations of Fund Balance. We have Capital Reserve fund balance, Impact Aid rReserve fund balance, Maintenance Reserve fund balance, and then what is left is referred to as 'Unassigned' fund balance. Currently, we have a balance in our Capital Reserve of approximately \$1.6 million. Our Impact Aid Reserve is approximately \$2.4 million, Maintenance Reserve is approximately \$1.3 million and Unassigned fund balance is approximately \$2.1 million.

Mr. Marasco addressed Mr. Walsh's previous question on how the district would fund the two particular projects that the administration is recommending for the budget next year. He noted that we are able to authorize the use of both the Capital Reserve and the Impact Aid Reserve. He also suggested that Maintenance Reserve can be deemed an appropriate use of one of the projects. He concluded by summarizing that the district has approximately \$5.3 million in those types of Reserves.

POLICY

1. [Revised Policy 9240 - Rights of Parents](#)
 - [Current Policy 9240 - Rights of Parents](#)

Jessica Ramirez reported that she has not received any feedback from board members regarding either one of these. Therefore, these items will be moved to the December 18th agenda for a First read.

2. [New ByLaw # \(# pending\) - Community Liaisons Roles and Responsibilities](#)

Jessica Ramirez reported that she received a little feedback regarding one of the liaison roles, which has been incorporated. This new Bylaw will also be moved to the December 18th agenda for a first read.

NEGOTIATIONS

None

TRANSPORTATION

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Draft 2025 Board of Education Meeting Schedule for Consideration
 - [Draft 2025 BOE Meeting Schedule](#)

Jessica Ramirez reviewed the draft 2025 Board of Education meeting schedule. The Board discussed changing the meetings so as not to conflict with the Township meetings and accommodate those residents who wish to be able to attend both meetings if they so desire. The Board decided to alternate Wednesdays based on the Township Committee's meeting schedule. However, It was also determined that the Organizational meeting would not change.

She also discussed the request that she received from a Board Member to have the board attorney at the Organizational meeting. She noted that unfortunately Mr. Dasti is not able to be in attendance, but indicated someone else from his firm could attend.

PERSONNEL

1. Employee retirement - 2
2. Employment: Guidance Secretary replacing Dawn Deluca
3. Employment: Payroll Manager replacing Kathleen Condron
4. Employment: Instructional Assistant replacing Lori Press
5. Continuation of probationary employment - 2
6. Employee transfer
7. Employee amended medical leave - 4
8. Employee medical leave of absence - 3
9. Winter intramurals - CRES and CDMS

No Discussion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION (N.J.S.A. 10:4-9,12)

At approximately 8:40 p.m President Ramirez announced that the Board would move into Executive Session to discuss confidential personnel / employment matters. She further announced that action would not be taken afterwards and articulated that Executive discussion may be disclosed upon future resolution.

It was moved by Alison DeNoia, seconded by Amy Dimes and carried on a unanimous roll call vote in the affirmative to move into Executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 9:41pm, it was moved by Amy Dimes, seconded by Brenna Dillon and carried on a unanimous roll call vote to adjourn the meeting.

Yes: Alison DeNoia, Brenna Dillon, Amy Dimes, Jason Orrico, Jessica Ramirez, Vincent Rugnetta, Angelique Volpe, Kevin Walsh and Richard Wickberg

No: None

Absent: None

BOARD MEETINGS*	
December 18, 2024	January 8, 2025 @ 6:00 (Organization Meeting)

* All Regular Board Meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Administration Building unless otherwise noted and advertised.

2024		
Friday	December 20	Short Session Day - Students and Staff - Start Winter Recess
Monday-Tuesday	December 23-31	Winter Recess – Schools/Central Office Closed
2025		
Wednesday	January 1	Winter Recess - Schools/Central Office Closed
Thursday	January 2	Schools Reopen for Students and Staff
Monday	January 20	Martin L. King's Birthday – Schools Closed for Students Professional Development Day – Full Day for Staff
Thursday	February 13	Short Session Day for Students Full Day for Staff with In-Service After Student Dismissal
Friday - Monday	February 14 - 17	Presidents' Day Weekend – Schools/Central Office Closed
Wednesday	February 26	Short Session Day – Parent/Teacher Conferences (Afternoon)
Thursday	February 27	Short Session Day – Parent/Teacher Conferences (Afternoon & Evening)
Friday	February 28	Short Session Day – Students & Staff

Friday	April 11	Short Session Day - Students & Staff - Start of Spring Recess
Monday - Monday	April 14 - April 21	Spring Recess – Schools/Central Office Closed
Tuesday	April 22	Schools Reopen
Friday	May 23	Short Session Day for Students Full Day for Staff with In-Service After Student Dismissal
Monday	May 26	Memorial Day - Schools/Central Office Closed
Monday	June 23	Short Session Day for Students / Full Day for Staff
Tuesday	June 24	Last Day of School - Short Session Day for Students and Staff

Respectfully Submitted,

Vincent S. Marasco

Vincent S. Marasco

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary