

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Neil Whitmore; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown, Lenna Ojure, Kathy Burant; Superintendent Phillip Thompson, Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Whitmore called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Mr. Rick Bain, Supervisor of Human Resources, introduced employees who received the REDOT Award, [Rockbridge Employees Doing Outstanding Things]. This is an award designed to highlight the great things our employees are doing. This award is given quarterly, with nominations by a co-worker or an administrator. There are fourteen employees to be recognized during the first quarter:

Ashlee Payne- RCHS
Amanda Grimm- RCHS
Deborah Wright- RCHS
Sarah Hockman- MRMS
Lisa Keesee- CES
Karlann Saunders- MVES
Heather Mayes- MVES
Randy Walters- ECO
Mallory Bane- ECO
Kelly Cox- ECO
David Lilly- ECO
Jean Little- FES
Dawn Martin- FES
Haley Roberts- FES
Martha Dudley- NBES
Tiffany Crookshanks- NBES
Lacey Lynch- NBES
Morgan White- NBES
Melanie Hickman- NBES

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Brown, the board approved the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: 1) January 23, 2024 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 2) February 13, 2024 [Public Hearing]; 3) February 13, 2024 [Regular Meeting]; 4) February 15, 2024 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 5) February 28, 2024 [Discipline Committee Hearing]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Support Staff

Cheryl Wright, Custodian, Central Elementary School, effective March 13, 2024

Jessica Irvine, Custodian, Rockbridge County High School, effective March 13, 2024

Food Service

Victoria Murphy

Substitute

Brian Grimmer

Spring Coaches 2022-2023

Rockbridge County High School

Baseball

Travis Roadcap, Head Varsity Baseball Coach

Nick Perlozzo, Assistant Varsity Baseball Coach

Tom Dowdell, JV Baseball Coach

Johnathan Perez, Volunteer Baseball Coach

Spring Coaches 2022-2023 / Rockbridge County High School / Baseball [continued]

Jamie Hostetter, Volunteer Baseball Coach

Justin Wenger, Volunteer Baseball Coach

Greg Shaw, Volunteer Baseball Coach

Softball

Keston Pelter, Head Varsity Softball Coach

Delmas Beverley, Assistant Softball Coach

Jessica Walker, JV Softball Coach

Kaydence Wilson, Volunteer Softball Coach

Sarah Mast, Volunteer Softball Coach

Boys' Soccer

Michael Kelly, Head Boys' Varsity Soccer Coach

Brad Stevenson, Boys' Varsity Assistant Soccer Coach

Adam Alartriste, Boys' Varsity Volunteer Coach

Bright Frimpong, Boys' Varsity Volunteer Coach

Girls' Soccer

Danny Wheeler, Head Girls' Soccer Coach

Carrie Dietz, JV Soccer Coach

Jeffery Tomlin, Girls' Volunteer Soccer Coach

Kevin Kendall, Girls' Volunteer Soccer Coach

Boys' Lacrosse

John Whitelock, Head Boys' Lacrosse Coach

George Ray, Assistant Boys' Lacrosse Coach

Girls' Lacrosse

Susan Nye, Head Girls' Lacrosse Coach

Natalie Rice, Assistant Girls' Lacrosse Coach

Chloe Mitchell, Assistant Girls' Lacrosse Coach

Sammy Moore, Volunteer Girls' Lacrosse Coach

Boys' Tennis

Scott Youngdahl, Head Coach

Brian Barney, Boys' Tennis Volunteer

Girls' Tennis

Mark Sholes, Head Coach

Outdoor Track

Jennifer Showalter, Head Outdoor Track Coach

Julie Tisone, Assistant Outdoor Track Coach

Eric Wilhelm, Assistant Outdoor Track Coach

Maury River Middle School**Outdoor Track**

Paul Spangler, Head Coach

Cynthia Spangler, Assistant Coach

Andrew Ludtke, Volunteer Outdoor Track Coach

Ashley Waterman, Volunteer Outdoor Track Coach

Professional Staff**Resignation**

Kristen Tyree, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, resigning effective March 1, 2024

Sylvia Powell, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, resigning effective March 8, 2024

Jacob Wheeler, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, resigning effective April 5, 2024

Professional Staff**Retirement**

Laurie Brooks, Reading Specialist, Fairfield Elementary School, effective end of the 2023-2024 school year

Deborah Wright, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective end of the 2023-2024 school year

- **Business Items**

- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for new grants in the amount of \$799,224.00.
- Approved Monthly Financials for March 12, 2024 in the amount of \$5,686,773.67.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Two persons addressed the board expressing the desire for Rockbridge County Public Schools to establish a middle school football team program.

BUDGET PLANNING: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Ms. Lauren Fauber, Principal, Fairfield Elementary Schools, provided the report "Living Our Mission". Ms. Fauber provided an overview of how Fairfield Elementary School staff and students work with everyday activities to achievement their mission and vision.

Mission: Fairfield Elementary School's mission is to provide students with an opportunity to discover their full potential by providing them with a safe and caring environment that fosters creative learning experiences in a rigorous instructional setting. Through diverse learning opportunities, students participate in activities that promote social, emotional, and academic growth, which will assist in developing an enthusiasm for learning, a positive self-image and cross-cultural understanding. Fairfield Elementary works with the community to include all stakeholders in developing productive, responsible citizens who seek to discover their role in society.

Vision: Fairfield Elementary School creates a safe and positive environment that encourages collaboration to promote a community of life-long learners. Achievements are celebrated to prepare and motivate students to acquire, demonstrate, articulate, and value knowledge and skills that will support them in contributing to the global world. In order to enhance communication, collaboration, and prepare students to be contributing members of society, Fairfield Elementary strives to develop core values such as respect, tolerance, inclusion, and excellence.

Safe and Caring/Positive Self-Image:

- Awards and Recognitions such as Attendance Awards, Positive Office Referrals, and Character Trait Awards.
- People of influence involved with Fairfield Elementary School: School Resource Officer, School Counselor, School Psychologist, Administrative Team, Staff Members, and Project Horizon.
- Chairman Whitmore inquired if there is a time of year that leads to better attendance.
 - Ms. Fauber stated that attendance seems to be down during the flu season, which typically begins in November. She feels that illnesses are trending down leading to current better attendance.

Conscious Discipline: Morning Announcements, reinforcing via verbal exchanges with students reassures a safe place within the school environment

Rigorous Instructional Setting: There are many activities that involve students, staff, and community stakeholders. Students are provided field trip opportunities within Rockbridge County and nearby destinations. Project Based Learning activities utilized are Starbooks, topographical maps, and projects that allow students to become producers and consumers. There are many family engagement events that engage all stakeholders throughout the year, which include student services and support.

Ms. Fauber stated that Fairfield Elementary School provides enthusiasm for learning which provides a solid foundation for students to become productive and responsible citizens.

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, shared celebratory news that the Annual Performance Report reflects that this is the third year in a row that RCPS has met all of the benchmarks with one hundred percent across the board, which is a testament to the teachers and students.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that this is based on last year's data.
- Mr. Owens provided information on the application for the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Funds Grant. The Board will be requested to approve the submission of the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Funds Grant at the April meeting.
- Trustee Burant offered her congratulations on the one hundred percent benchmarks. She inquired how the advisory committee is involved.
 - Mr. Owens stated that the information is given to teachers, and that feedback information is shared with the Advisory Board who then looks at the information when planning for the next year.

Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Officer, provided an update on the Rockbridge Innovation Center and the Transportation Office. He stated that the project is half way through with another eight months to go. He stated that classrooms are now identifiable on a walk-through and that it will take approximately another six weeks for exterior brickwork. The wire for communication are beginning. The project is still ahead of schedule. The Transportation Office should be complete within a month or two.

Ms. Ashley Rhodenizer, Director of Special Education, provided a first reading of the Rockbridge Area Special Education Advisory Council 2024-2025 members who the Board is required to formally approve. The Council is still meeting virtually. This will be presented for approval at the April board meeting.

Ms. Ashley Rhodenizer provided detailed information on the Annual Special Education Grant 2024-2025, which is based on last year's amounts, at this moment. It is anticipated that updated information will be presented in April. She also presented ongoing initiatives for 2024-25. Ms. Rhodenizer stated that she will be attending training next week. The Rockbridge Area Special Education Advisory Council will review all documents at their March 2024 meeting, as required. This will be presented for approval at the April board meeting.

- Chairman Whitmore inquired who would be conducting the training that she will be attending.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that the training is conducted by the Virginia Department of Education.
- Chairman Whitmore inquired what the crossover is of federal requirements and the Virginia Department of Education requirements and asked where they intercept. He asked if it begins at the federal government level and gets filtered through the VDOE.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that there are many crossovers. She confirmed that it does begin with the federal government and is filtered through the VDOE. She also stated that VDOE had their federal monitoring review this year. She stated that there were some concerns that were not good within the state of Virginia, which led to policy changes. VDOE is tightening their attention to all of the indicators.
- Trustee Burant inquired what the ages are for residential placement and for clarification of parentally placed students.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that residential placement includes elementary, middle, and high school students. Ms. Rhodenizer stated that if a student lives in Rockbridge County and their parent wants to provide home instruction, they go through a process in which the parent is given permission to do so. It is the same process if a parent wants to place their child in a private school. If a parent has a concern about their child's development, Rockbridge County Public Schools is the LEA for the child, and will have a Child Study at their child's school and talk about interventions and options that can be offered.
- Trustee Ojure inquired how much of the special education budget are the 611 and 619 funds.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that it is not all of the special education budget.
 - Superintendent Thompson confirmed that it could potentially six special education teachers, which is not a large chunk of the budget.
- Trustee Ojure asked for, and received, confirmation from Ms. Rhodenizer, that if a parent decides to send their child to private school, it is the financial responsibility of the parent. It would be the responsibility of the school division if the school division determined that it is the best environment for the child.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that the request for a private day setting, which is a special education school, goes through FAPT (Family Assessment and Planning Team) for out-placed services. Rockbridge County Public Schools has many students who are out-placed.
- Trustee Berkstresser inquired if there is any type of appeals process.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated there can be an email of inquiry requesting information. She stated that she will learn more at the training next week.
- Chairman Whitmore requested and received, confirmation from Ms. Rhodenizer, that the federal government sets FAPT and that the Virginia Department of Education interprets the parameters that make sure that divisions are meeting FAPT.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that the federal government is measuring Virginia's alternate assessment number against what their expectation is, which is very small. The state takes the federal requirements, makes it into a procedure or a policy, and passes it to school divisions.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that is similar to when the school board creates a policy and then the administration comes in and figures out a way to effectively enact that policy. The federal government comes out with IDEA law and the states have to figure out how to implement this in school divisions. Everyone has to follow IDEA but the state has to dictate how it is done.

- Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, stated that the challenge is that, for the longest time, it was wide open, there were not a lot of requirements and there were not a lot of monitoring and the number got super high. When the Leave No Child Left Behind initiative came along, a lot of people were using that as there were a lot of students because it was a better alternative. This was once used for ESL students as well.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that it was a better alternative to get students to pass, but not necessarily better for the student.
- Chairman Whitmore inquired if the state looks at the number of students with disabilities per capita and do they compare regions of the state and say that Virginia has a certain number per capita in the southwest area.
 - Ms. Rhodenizer stated that every data point and indicator that they have is compared to each other. She emphasized that this is not part of the indicator for Rockbridge County but it can be used to compare to other divisions. She compared this to the budget factor of comparing salaries to other localities in Virginia, but not per capita.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that special education, and every part of education, leads to information and data being gathered in this digital age, to justify policy and to justify change/no change. He stated that Ms. Rhodenizer and her team do an excellent job of looking out for students and making sure students get what they need. It is hard enough when there are students with individual needs, and cubby holes of needs to try to figure out the right pattern of what every child needs to make it work, and all of a sudden the rules are changing. It is difficult for our team; it is difficult for our teachers; and difficult for a lot of our students. Change is rarely easy, but it is necessary and it is what is best for students, but it is a challenge for everyone across the state and country in order to do what is best for our students.

ACTION ITEMS:

Superintendent Thompson stated that school divisions are required by the Code of Virginia to provide our locality, Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, with a Categorical Estimate of Needs every year prior to the end of March. The budget presented is the same budget document that was presented at the Public Hearing on February 13, 2024. The budget presentation was based on the Governor’s calc tool as the House and Senate had not presented their budgets at that time. They have now presented their budgets and have sent a budget amendment to the Governor. However, the Virginia Department of Education has not yet released any calc tools on those budgets so the RCPS administration is still working with the Governor’s budget. He expressed his sentiment that this budget is a worst-case scenario as what the Governor provided for public education is not good; it does not feel as though public education is a priority. The budget that came out of the House of Delegates and State Senate is much better. He stated that he is hopeful that now all three budgets are out and they will have a combined General Assembly budget that the two bodies will get together in April and negotiate a budget that is good for everyone and added that he will continue to advocate for our schools. The Rockbridge County School Board may have to come back again in May or June when the hard numbers are available and give the budget to the Board of Supervisors at that time. He stated that as of now, the ask is as follows:

Fund 50 – Categorical Estimate of Needs – FY25:

<u>Categories</u>	<u>FY25 Projected</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Instruction - 61 (Fund 50)	\$26,898,521	71.2%
Administration & Health – 62 (Fund 50)	\$2,661,926	7.0%
Pupil Transportation – 63 (Fund 50)	\$3,237,816	8.6%
Operations & Maintenance – 64 (Fund 50)	\$3,473,536	9.2%
Facilities – 66 (Fund 50)	\$20,000	0.1%
<u>Technology – 68 (Fund 50)</u>	<u>\$1,486,793</u>	<u>3.9%</u>
Fund 50 Site Operating Budget	\$37,778,592	100.0%

Fund 50 – Expected Revenue Sources – FY25

<u>Revenue Source</u>	<u>FY22 Projected</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Estimated State Revenue Funding (FY25)	\$17,769,514	47.0%
Estimated Local Revenue Funding (FY25)	\$18,247,686	48.3%
Estimated Tuition Revenue Funding (FY25)	\$1,600,800	4.2%
<u>Estimated Other Revenue Funding (FY25)</u>	<u>\$160,592</u>	<u>0.4%</u>
Fund 50 Site Operating Budget	\$37,778,592	100%

- Trustee Burant inquired as to what percent increase this is from last year.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that it is an increase but that he did not have the number readily available. It is more from the locality, primarily because the Governor's budget did not give a lot of money from the state. The House and the Senate made the "pot" a little bit larger, which could potentially enable a lower ask from the locality.
- Chairman Whitmore stated that he was encouraged to see the additional funding to K-12 and the timeliness of coming together on that. He is hopeful that it may impact at the local level and some of our FY25 priorities.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Ojura, the board voted 5-0, to approve the Categorical Estimate of Needs – FY25 in the amount of \$37,778,592

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education presented the two nominations for the Virginia School Boards Association Business Honor Roll. This recognition is one way in which Rockbridge County Public Schools can recognize and honor these businesses and thank them for their support. Local businesses offer support in many ways to include financial, in-kind contributions, donating to a scholarship program, supporting extracurricular activities, internship opportunities for RCPS students, volunteer in our schools, and sponsor field trips. There are many other ways that businesses contribute to our schools that are valuable in adding to the experience that students may not otherwise be able to do.

Superintendent Thompson previously had requested Rockbridge County Public Schools administrators to submit businesses who they would like to nominate for this VSBA recognition. There are two winners this year:

Mountain Gateway Community College (MGCC) is an exceptional recipient of the VSBA Business Honor Roll for a multitude of reasons. They are an instrumental part of the daily instruction at Rockbridge County High School (RCHS). RCHS has 229 dual enrollment students accounting for 43 total MGCC classes taught. RCHS students account for 47% of all MGCC's dual enrollment students. Our dual enrollment program is not the only way RCHS is partnering with MGCC. During the Rockbridge Innovation Center (RCHS CTE wing) renovation, MGCC has been generously allowing the RCHS Culinary Arts students to use the MGCC culinary lab in Buena Vista. This has been an amazing situation while our students have been displaced due to the renovation. As a result of being able to use the MGCC culinary lab, the RCHS Culinary Arts program has been able to continue moving forward with our standard Culinary Arts curriculum and provide our students with a quality educational experience. MGCC is also a consistent and active participant in many other educational events held for Rockbridge County Public Schools (RCPS) students. They are major partners in the CareerFest event for middle school students, which we have been hosting for the past several years. They also participate in the RCHS career fair, mock interviews, and college fair. MGCC's significant impact and meaningful partnership with RCPS is undeniable, allowing our students to thrive academically and develop essential life skills for their future endeavors.

Ms. Kasey Potter, owner of Pure Eats Restaurant, is an avid supporter of the RCPS/RCHS CatCrew Works High Quality Work-Based Learning Program. She has supplied delicious food for numerous HQWBL events before furthering her involvement. After learning more about the HQWBL program, Ms. Potter has participated in both of our CatCrew Works Career Fairs by creating an engaging vendor booth for students to visit. While visiting the booth, students learn about her background in CTE which began at the New Horizons Educational Center located in Newport News, Virginia. At that time, Ms. Potter was interested in pursuing a career in Early Child Care so signed up to take courses in that career pathway. She also was an active member in FCCLA in her local chapter and competed at the State Leadership Conference. Students can feel her enthusiasm as they visit her booth and her passion for CTE while they enjoy one of Pure Eats delicious Cinnamon Sugar Doughnut Holes. Ms. Potter did follow her career plan and worked in child care, but later became an entrepreneur by opening up her restaurant Pure Eats. While owning this restaurant, Ms. Potter participated in the Food Network Doughnut Challenge with her delicious recipe that so many of us are lucky to enjoy. This recipe was handed down to her by her grandmother. Ms. Potter's further support of our HQWBL program has led her to employ four of our interns this year as well as two last year. She also employs former RCHS students upon graduation. While they are employed with her she assists in furthering their training by ensuring they have their ServeSafe certifications, taking part in professional development, attending food shows, and assisting with

catering events. She forms relationships with each of the employees and serves as a mentor to the CatCrew Works Interns. We are very fortunate to have a business and owner that supports not only our HQWBL programs and events, but also others for our school community.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Ojure, and roll call vote, the board voted 5-0, to approve the resolutions to nominate Mountain Gateway Community College and Pure Eats Restaurant for the 2024 Virginia School Boards Association Business Honor Roll. The recipients will be recognized at a later meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Trustee Burant shared that she enjoyed her visit at the Brownsburg Museum and expressed her hope that all students get to take a tour, as well as residents of Rockbridge County.

Trustee Burant stated that Natural Bridge Elementary School has begun their One School One Book project. She expressed her appreciation to all the school principals for inviting the school board members to participate in activities and opportunities at their schools.

Trustee Berkstresser expressed his support of a establishing a middle school football team and that he would like to see \$50,000-\$60,000 be set aside to move forward with this initiative. He reflected that the surrounding areas do have middle school football programs and that there used to be a middle school program in Rockbridge County. He stated that there are details that will have to be worked out as in play facilities, scheduling, etc.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that administrators will do their due diligence in looking into this program. There are a lot of factors, with budget being the primary factor. He noted that if this were to happen, it would need to be done in a creative manner, and be done quickly in a relatively short timeframe, in working with our coaches. If the program comes to fruition, it must be a feeder program where middle and high school coaches are talking to one another and doing very similar things.

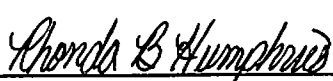
SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 / 5:30 PM / Location: County of Rockbridge Administration Building, 150 South Main Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m.


Neil D. Whitmore, Chairman


Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board