

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Neil Whitmore; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown, Kathy Burant, Wendy Lovell; 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: None

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) June 13, 2023 [Regular Meeting]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Professional Staff

Erica Morris, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year

Leyna Hansley, School Counselor, Maury River Middle School,
effective 2023-2024 school year

Lily Hays, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective 2023-2024 school year

Brianna Cash, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year

Kristen Floyd, Special Education Teacher, Central Elementary School, effective
2023-2024 school year

Jaylen Clark, Special Education Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective
2023-2024 school year

Sylvie Slusser, Alternative Education, Maury River Middle school, effective
2023-2024 school year

Support Staff

Mallory Bane, Receptionist, Central Office, effective July 14, 2023

Bridget Ramsey, School Secretary, Rockbridge County High School, effective July 14, 2023

Professional Staff

Resignation

Brooke Bolen, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, resigning effective end of
the 2022-2023 school year

Jennifer Whitmer, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, resigning effective end of
the 2022-2023 school year

Support Staff

Resignation

Justin Bundy, Technology, Division, resigning June 30, 2023

- Business Items
 - Approved Monthly Financials for EOY June 27, 2023 in the amount of \$3,704,194.80.
 - Approved appropriation for Fund 50 in the amount of \$430,166.00.
 - Approved Monthly Financials for July 11, 2023 in the amount of \$2,615,036.66.
- Trustee Burant commented that it is exciting to see young first year teachers choose Rockbridge County Public Schools and to choose a profession in education.
- Trustee Lovell stated that she saw that there is quite a bit of alumni returning to Rockbridge County Public Schools. She also inquired if these new hires were a product of the program at the high school or are we just lucky that people want to come home to work.
- Superintendent Thompson expressed his sentiment that Rockbridge County Public Schools is fortunate that alumni want to come home.

- Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, stated that he has participated in interviews and has heard many times from interviewees, that this is where they grew up and where they want to be.
- Chairman Whitmore stated that he has heard that the measure of a community is the school system.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

One patron addressed the board expressing his appreciation to Rockbridge County Public Schools for competency in safety programs, nutrition, school busing, and policy security. The patron expressed concern regarding the emotional and psychological safety of children regarding new curricula involving sexual content as it relates to psychological readiness, mental health and children's sense of security and stability, specifically grades K-6. The patron relayed the following questions for the board's consideration:

- *Do you have a policy in the Rockridge County school system regarding LGBTQ education, either formal or informal, regarding gender fluidity, sexual orientation, and transgenderism.*
- *Are there any teachers in your system teaching such an LGBTQ curriculum in these three areas? Are they authorized to do so, to teach such a curriculum? If not, what would you counsel any such teacher?*
- Trustee Berkstresser inquired, and received confirmation, that the questions only pertain to grades K-6.

BUDGET PLANNING: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Superintendent Thompson, provided information on the review of schools' Crisis Plans by local School Boards which is an annual requirement of the Virginia Department of Education. Plans will be presented as an action item at the August 2023 board meeting.

- Trustee Lovell inquired if there are any significant different changes. She also expressed her appreciation to the Board of Supervisors for helping to ensure that our schools are safe as possible.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that personnel changes have been made within the plans, and that other parts of the plans will be presented for approval at the August 2023 board meeting for approval.
- Chairman Whitmore inquired if are any changes reflecting that a School Resource Officer is now at each school.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that new SRO personnel of a school will be incorporated into the plan.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Brown, the board voted 5-0, to approve Policy GAB / IIBEA / RCPS Acceptable Computer Use, as presented.

Superintendent Thompson stated that the last several years have been spent discussing the need for an updated career and technical education facility at Rockbridge County High School. The last approximate two years have been spent working with our A & E Firm, Spectrum Design, in the design and planning phase, and working through the process of getting to where we are today. A request for bid was put out for a contractor, approximately a month and half ago. Once the design was finished, representing a great product for our students and our community, a request for bid was put out to try to attract a general contractor to build our renovated CTE Center. The bids were opened on July 6, 2023. The low bidder was KNA Contracting out of Roanoke, Virginia, with a bid of \$14,097,696.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Brown, the board voted 5-0, the board gave approval to offer a notice to proceed to KNA Contracting, pending final funding approval from the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors at their meeting on July 24, 2023. Should the Board of Supervisors offer their approval on July 24, 2023, and any contract between KNA and RCPS has been finalized, KNA Contracting will be approved to proceed with the project effective July 25, 2023.

NEW BUSINESS:

Trustee Lovell shared that the General Assembly requested a study of school funding from JLARC (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission). JLARC does work on behalf of the General Assembly, which is bi-partisan and completely fair to support the needs of the General Assembly. Trustee Lovell stated that the study just came out and that she is very encouraged by the study as it provides a clear picture of the challenges that we have in our funding system. She stated that she has focused on the SOQ funding formula for several years as a member of the Rockbridge County School Board. The report summarized that in Virginia, school divisions receive less K-12 funding per student than the fifty-state average, the regional average, and three of Virginia's five bordering states (Kentucky, Maryland, and West Virginia). This equates to about \$1,900 more per student than Virginia. The study is very clear on the challenges of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) Funding Formula, while noting that it can be fixed, can be adjusted to be more accurate to reflect the true needs of our school systems. She proposed that, on behalf of our school board, a letter be generated to our legislators, the governor, and the Virginia Department of Education, to encourage action on the recommendations in the study. She also proposed to encourage the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, sister school divisions and their governing bodies, and the Rockbridge-Lexington Teachers Association. She offered to draft a letter that could be shared with others. It was the consensus of the board that Trustee Lovell draft the letter. Key points of the letter will be:

- Thank the General Assembly for directing JLARC to conduct the study and urge them to advocate for action on the recommendations;
- Advocate for a revision to the education funding formula based on the evidence in the report, specifically a major overhaul of how SOQ is calculated;
- Provide recipients with the percentage of SOQs in each of our divisions to show local impact;
- Encourage consideration of a well-designed, student-based funding model that would be more accurate, more transparent and easier to maintain;
- Assert that acting on this study will support the governor's goal to raise the bar for academic excellence but also positively contribute to teacher recruitment and retention.
- Chairman Whitmore expressed his hope that all school divisions have this same type of perspective in looking at the findings, the data, the research completed, and to see where we are as a state, and then to hone it down to a division that we have a lot of things to focus and concentrate on. It is the future of our state, our localities, our communities, and things are based on public education and that is where the bulk of our young people attend.
 - Trustee Lovell expressed that it is her hope that since the General Assembly requested this, they are looking for solutions and that there is now a roadmap. She realizes that taking all of the recommendations is likely not possible but thinks that there is certainly enough there that will help us, as well as the state of Virginia.

Chairman Whitmore stated that a groundbreaking ceremony for the Rockbridge Innovation Center is tentatively set for Thursday, July 27, 2023 at 10:00 AM. He expressed his sentiment that listening to Trustee Lovell and to other board members, it is hard to imagine anything more exciting than the groundbreaking for a new facility, and what that does for a community, and young people who are not even in our school system yet. Looking ahead, in the great history that the center has had thus far just as a facility, and what it will become with an entirely new structure and new systems, is exciting for the community.

SCHOOL BOARD

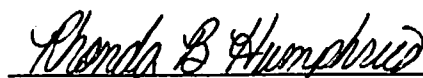
The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, July 11, 2023 / 5:30 PM / Location: County of Rockbridge Administration Building, 150 South Main Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Neil D. Whitmore, Chairman



Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board