

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Neil Whitmore; Trustees Kathy Burant, Wendy Lovell; Superintendent Phillip Thompson, Clerk Rhonda Humphries. Absent: Trustees Corey Berkstresser and Catie Brown.

CALL TO ORDER

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Moment of Recognition for Retirees

2022

Cindy Luck, Bryan Barbour

2023

Tina Bauernfeind, Lonna Dudley, Bill Kessinger, Cynthia Littleton, Monica Rexrode, Larry Sensabaugh, Herman Snyder, Daphne Stickley, Violet Vest, Angela Wilder, Chris Wood, Lisa Zitmore

- Chairman Whitmore reflected that our retirees are not going far as they are colleagues and friends and noted that their impact will be felt for years throughout the Rockbridge County Public Schools division.

Chairman Whitmore stated that the Rockbridge County High School graduation has taken place since the last meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board. There were two hundred forty-three graduates and offered the following statistics of the graduating class: one hundred eleven students were awarded Advanced Studies diplomas; two hundred twenty-seven students completed CTE certification; forty students plan to continue with a two-year program; eighty-five students plan to continue to a four-year program; eleven students will be entering directly into their trade school; three students are enlisting into the military; three students plan to enter the mission field; and thirty-four students plan to enter directly into the workforce.

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, recognized Ms. Robyn Sherman, Work Based Learning Coordinator for Rockbridge County Public Schools, for being awarded the Kathleen C. Buchanan FCCLA Alumni and Associates “In The Classroom Award”. Ms. Sherman continues to support the Virginia FCCLA and our local FCCLA Chapter. Ms. Sherman was recognized at the most recent FCCLA state conference awards ceremony.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) May 9, 2023 [Regular Meeting]; 2) May 17, 2023 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 3) May 24, 2023 [Discipline Committee Hearing]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Professional Staff

Madison Armstrong, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Brianna Rogstad, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Amie Salmon, Art Teacher, Central Elementary School and Mountain View Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Melanie Arritt, Board Certified Behavioral Analyst, Central Office, effective 2023-2024 school year
Heather Mayes, Special Education Teacher, Mountain View Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Brittany Alexander, Special Education Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Ruth Moran, ESL Teacher, Division, effective 2023-2024 school year

Sylvia Powell, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Jon Little, Alternative Education, Maury River Middle School, effective 2023-2024 school year

Support Staff

Joseph Jenkins, Custodian, Maury River Middle School, effective June 14, 2023
Chloe Mahalek, Teacher Assistant, Maury River Middle School,
effective 2023-2024 school year
Amelia Bane, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2023-2024 school year
Dylan Byram, Maintenance, Division, effective 2023-2024 school year

Professional Staff

Resignation

Robin Richarde, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Zachary Dishman, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Emmalyn Dishman, Art Teacher, Central Elementary School and Mountain View Elementary
School, effective end of the 2022-2023 school year
Jessica Chittum, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, Central Office, effective end of
the 2022-2023 school year
Rachel Braun, ESL Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Andrew Bellairs, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Forrest Hundley, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Raegan Paxton, School Counselor, Maury River Middle School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Shelly Carter, Teacher, Central Elementary School, effective end of the 2022-2023 school year
Heather Parks, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
Amanda Perkins, Teacher, Central Elementary School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year
James Gerken, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective end of the 2022-2023
school year

Support Staff

Resignation

Lindsey Morrow, Teacher Assistant, Maury River Middle School, effective end of the
2022-2023 school year

- Business Items
 - Approved appropriation for Fund 50 in the amount of \$688.
 - Approved Monthly Financials for May 24, 2023 in the amount of \$681,452.67.
 - Approved debt service payment in the amount of \$405,813.36 due July 1, 2023, to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public Schools lease for Energy Performance Contract at Rockbridge County High School.
 - Approved debt service payment in the amount of \$2,309,116.55 due July 15, 2023 to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public Schools VPSA bonds.
 - Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for new grants in the amount of \$125,000.00.
 - Approved Monthly Financials for June 13, 2023 in the amount of \$3,530,624.76.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

One patron addressed the board expressing his appreciation to Rockbridge County Public Schools for competency in safety and care of the children of Rockbridge County. He expressed his concern for any possible LGBTQ curriculum including any sexual content, reflecting his care of transgender and love for everyone without discrimination.

BUDGET PLANNING: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Dr. Angela Wilder, Director of Alternative Education, provided information on the Alternative Education Program. She offered the following highlights of the two sites for the Alternative Education Program:

- Maury River Middle School
 - The program began October of 2022 with four students.
 - Seven students were served in the MRMS Alt-Ed program by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. These students recovered and/or passed ten classes total. Two of the courses were SOL related courses.
 - Introduced S.E.L.F. program: Social, Emotional, Learning, Family environment
 - Positive personnel changes for students.
 - Mr. Clay Burch, Teacher Assistant, nurtured the students and spent time building trust with his students. By December of 2022, the students were leaving personal appreciation notes at the end of day.
- Rockbridge County High School
 - Strategies employed to reach the most at-risk students:
 - Small group settings, one-on-one counseling, emotional support, referral to supporting agencies to help find a home, food bank access, cooling off periods, frequent breaks, parental involvement, court appointment, career counseling.
 - The program began with a goal of serving thirty students for the 2022-2023 school year. A total of forty-six students were served grades 9-12. Forty-one students finished the entire school year. Some students took only one or two periods of Alt. Ed. Classes and the majority of the students were served for the entire seven periods.
 - The total number of courses recovered by students in this program was two hundred forty-nine.
 - Of the two hundred forty-three graduates, seventeen were students from the Alt. Ed. Program.

Dr. Wilder expressed her sentiment that “The graduation stage is not The End. It is the springboard for the beginning of their futures.”

- Trustee Lovell expressed her gratitude that the Alternative Education program became a reality for changing lives. She expressed her appreciation to the administration, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and all staff involved with the program. She noted that this was a vision of Superintendent Thompson, Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, and Dr. Mike Craft, Principal, Rockbridge County High School. She referenced that in the early years of discussion, the initial vision included building it somewhere else.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that this was a School Board budget priority this year and we have recently hired one teacher for the Maury River Middle School alternative education program. He also noted that this initiative has been twenty-eight years in the making.
- Trustee Burant stated that the credits recovered was amazing and expressed her appreciation to Dr. Melanie Falls, Director of Testing and Instructional Data, and to all who were involved, with emphasis of appreciation to Dr. Angela Wilder.

Dr. Angela Wilder provided information on the Rockbridge County High School 2023-2024 Community Schools Grant. She offered the following highlights:

- **Statement of Need:**
It is recognized that for student success, every child should feel safe, supported, inspired, and confident at school. Through the development of a community school, the hope was to address three areas, which are identified in this grant, as needs for our school. These include addressing student mental health, reducing chronic absenteeism, and increasing parent involvement in the school.
- **Three Goals of the Grant:**
 - Goal One: By June of 2024, Rockbridge County High School will decrease the number of students due to social and emotional struggles by 10%;
 - Goal Two: By June of 2024, Rockbridge County High School will reduce the percentage of students who are identified as Chronic Absentees by 5%;
 - Goal Three: By June of 2024, Rockbridge County High School will increase the percentage of parent partnerships by 5%.
 - Virginia Department of Education / Community School Grant was written to address the three goals;
 - Funding received by Rockbridge County Public Schools = \$338,527

- Funds will be utilized to hire a School-Family-Community Coordinator to:
 - Coordinate community agencies
 - Conducts home visits
 - Connects families to community resources
 - Address truancy with the Department of Juvenile Justice and Rockbridge County Juvenile Justice and Rockbridge County Juvenile and Domestic Court
- Funds will be utilized to develop a Community School Team, which consists of a twelve-member team including the SFC Coordinator, School Administrators, School Counselors, and Teachers. This team works together to develop tiered ways to address chronic absenteeism, improve communication with families, and identify RCHS families whose basic needs may be the barrier keeping students from attending school, and to promote incentives for attendance, grades, or "just doing the right thing".
- Funds will be utilized for events such as assemblies, family meals and if needed, transportation when attending open houses, curriculum nights, and other events, and for Teacher Book Study.
- Chairman Whitmore inquired if the grant is renewable and if there are metrics in place to gauge success.
 - Dr. Wilder stated that eighteen months is the grant span and will be reviewed again at the end of that time. She stated that this grant did not require matching funds. She also stated that administration will be looking for other grants as well. She stated that there is a quarterly report.
- Trustee Burant expressed her sentiment that some Alt. Ed. students may meet the requirement as well.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the grant may reach all students.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, provided a first reading of Policy GAB / IIBEA. He stated that the RCPS Technology Team has worked to update the form to accurately depict the current computer use practices. The Technology Team works extremely hard to screen all applications and programs that are available to our students and staff. The information added to the Computer Use Agreement essentially says if we screen the application or website and approve it to be acceptable for use, then the parent is agreeing to allow their student to use it. RCPS runs all of the applications and websites used through a portal called the LearnPlatform. The LearnPlatform provides information and insight as to whether an app or website is safe and acceptable for use by RCPS. Teachers and staff submit a request for access to an application or through the LearnPlatform. RCPS has an application approval team that meets every other week to approve or deny any app requests that have been submitted through the LearnPlatform. LearnPlatform looks at things such as content and data sharing to make sure it is safe for our students.

- Trustee Burant inquired if LearnPlatform spans K-12.
 - Mr. Owens stated that it does cover K-12. LearnPlatform breaks it down and is restrictive on what is available for elementary, middle, and high school.
 - Mr. Martino stated that it has helped to clean-up after Covid.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Lovell, seconded by Trustee Burant, the board voted 3-0, to approve the Early Retirement Incentive Program as presented.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Lovell, the board voted 3-0, to approve the Applications for Federal Funds, as presented.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Lovell, seconded by Trustee Burant, the board voted 3-0, to approve a request for reimbursement from the state in the amount of \$206,000 for technology purchases made by Rockbridge County Public Schools.

- Mr. Owens stated that \$50,000 is received for division expenses and \$26,000 per school.
- Mr. Jason Kirby, Chief Business Officer, stated that there is hope that the amount may increase next year.

NEW BUSINESS:

Superintendent Thompson stated that this is an exciting time as we are deep into the renovation process for the Rockbridge Innovation Center, with the RFP going out on June 1, 2023. He stated that assuming all goes well, he will be asking for approval to proceed at the July 11, 2023 meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board. He stated that a tentative date for a groundbreaking ceremony is July 18, 2023, contingent upon the bid process.

Chairman Whitmore inquired on the status of the Bermuda Turf on the football field at RCHS.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that the irrigation system is almost complete; plugging of new natural turf should be complete by the end of June. A fresh field should be ready by September 15, 2023. This new durable turf is at a savings of 1.9 million.

Trustee Burant expressed her congratulations to the retirees for their service to Rockbridge County Schools. She stated that there are several groups of retirees in the county who meet a couple of times a year; i.e. Rockbridge Retired Teachers Association as well as CTE retired teachers.

Trustee Burant expressed her appreciation to principals and staff for the invitations that are extended to board members. She also expressed her appreciation to parents for getting their children to school and thanked all for a great year.

SCHOOL BOARD

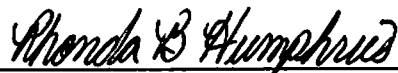
The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, July 11, 2023 / 5:30 PM / Location: County of Rockbridge Administration Building, 150 South Main Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Lovell, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by 3-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:24 p.m.



Neil D. Whitmore, Chairman



Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board