

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Wendy Lovell; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown, Kathy Burant, and Neil Whitmore; Superintendent Phillip Thompson, Deputy Clerk Timothy Martino.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Lovell called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

Chairman Lovell offered the following statement:

*"On behalf of the Rockbridge County School Board, I'd like to acknowledge the passing of Delegate Ronnie Campbell early this morning following a long battle with cancer."*

*A longtime resident of Rockbridge County, Ronnie served this community in so many ways. He was a Virginia State Trooper for more than twenty years. He served on the Rockbridge County School Board for eleven years and as a member of the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors for seven years, before his election as a delegate to the Virginia General Assembly in 2019.*

*We offer our deepest condolences to his wife, Ellen, and their children. Ronnie's death hits particularly close to home as his daughter, Michelle Kirby, and her husband, Jason Kirby, are long-time employees of Rockbridge County Public Schools. Michelle is a school counselor at Rockbridge County High School and Jason is the Chief Business Officer in our Central Office.*

*Ronnie loved this community and we are grateful for his service in so many ways."*

**CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:** None

**STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:** None

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- Minutes: 1) November 2, 2022 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 2) November 8, 2022 [Regular Meeting]; 3) November 10, 2022 [Special Called Meeting]; 4) November 15, 2022 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 5) November 30, 2022 [Discipline Committee Hearing]
- Field Trip and Bus Use Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- Religious Exemption Application
- Appointments and Resignations

#### **Appointments**

#### **Winter Coaches 2022-23**

#### **Swimming**

Anna Morrison, Assistant Coach

Catherine Hofley, Assistant Coach

#### **Support Staff**

#### **Resignation**

Jeffrey Blalock, Alternative Education Assistant, Maury River Middle School, resigned effective November 10, 2022

#### • **Business Items**

- Approved debt service payments due January 17, 2023 to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public School VPSA bonds in the amount of \$430,373.35
- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 in the amount of \$24,500.00.
- Approve Monthly Financials in the amount of \$3,698,000.70

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**BUDGET PLANNING:** None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** None

**INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT: None****INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, provided information on the 2023-2024 school calendar. He stated that the calendar is very similar to the 2022-2023 school calendar. The workdays have remained intact that were put in for COVID as the days were found to be beneficial. There are also some workdays that will be marked as unencumbered days. One new change that was made is to extend the new-teacher day from one whole day to one and a half days. The Administration found that there is a need to provide more time for our new employees as they transition into Rockbridge County Public Schools. The exam schedule is included in the calendar as well. It is critical that the high school has early release days so that the teachers can administer exams.

Mr. Martino also presented information on Policy EFB – Food Services. There was a need to change some of the federal language, which was very basic changes.

- Chairman Lovell expressed her appreciation to Ms. Daphne Stickley, Supervisor of School Nutrition Services, and her team. Ms. Lovell stated that they provide the foundation as they provide food for our children and that it is an important piece of the process of the school.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, the board voted 5-0, to approve the Rockbridge Church Lease to run from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Burant, the board voted 5-0, to approve the VSBA IIA and IIAB policy.

- Chairman Lovell read the following statement, which is not a representation of the full board:  
*"I firmly believe that parents have an important role in the education of their children. It has never been the expectation that public educators should carry the weight of this important task alone; however, let us keep in mind they are the professionals who have prepared for this important job and bring that expertise to bear in supporting our students.*  
*It is my hope that this policy will not lead to teachers censoring their syllabi. The human experience is fraught with challenge and as a parent of two students who were educated in this division, I am grateful that my children were exposed to books that introduced them to some of those challenges and helped prepare them for the world they have entered as adults. Discussions of some of the books they read in our schools led to opportunities for rich conversations at home.*  
*It is also my hope in adopting this policy that parents who might object to a resource deemed sexually explicit will first read it themselves before asking that their students not. A full exploration of the resource might lead to an understanding of why it is part of a teacher's syllabus or an option for students to read. Let us give our teachers credit for the professionalism they bring to their jobs. Let's also give our students credit for the ability to learn while following their values."*
- Trustee Burant read the following statement:  
*"I'm hopeful my comments will help our fellow board members and constituents understand the process by which I reviewed the policy changes before us tonight regarding parental rights to have their student opt-out of specific instructional content and parental rights to review curriculum of any kind which is available to their student.*  
*The policy to have instructional materials available for parents to view is already in place and I know parents have used this option in the past. If a parent has asked for their student to opt-out of a certain unit or activity, permission has been granted. What hasn't been previously in our policy manual has been the term "sexually explicit material." So I researched the origin of the term and why the state legislature in April 2022 required us to add this term.*  
*Looking at the Virginia Code, this language comes from a section under "Information Infrastructure" and the use of state-owned communication systems. The Code says it forbids state employees from accessing "sexually explicit material" (and defines what sexually explicit material is) on state-owned computers and equipment. Ok, this makes sense. What doesn't make sense is what this has to do with education? Why add this type of incendiary language into policies in which the rights of parents already existed?*  
*So then I read the definitions put forth by the state legislature and the Code of Virginia. Why would a legislative body or the Department of Education ever think it was necessary to include these terms in an educational setting? They certainly got my attention and I'm sure many of yours as well. I can tell you as an educator myself serving in many different capacities, I have never once had a curriculum discussion with a fellow educator about these terms. Never ever.*

*And I would never expect to.*

*I don't have all the answers. I just know as a governing body sworn to uphold the Constitution and the Code of Virginia, we must revise our policies to reflect the requirements laid out before us. We have to include these explicit terms in our definitions. But we would never expect them to be explored in our educational community. Our teachers are better than that. Our community is better than that. Our students deserve more than that".*

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

#### **SCHOOL BOARD**

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 / 5:30 PM / Location: Maury River Middle School, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, VA.

#### **CLOSED MEETING**

Under Section 2.2-3711.A (8) of the State Code, Chairman Lovell recommended that the Board go into a *Closed Meeting* to discuss one matter. Motion was made by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by 5-0 vote.

The Board entered into the *Closed Meeting* at 5:47 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 6:52 p.m.

Trustee Whitmore read the following motion to Certify the Closed Meeting:

WHEREAS, the Rockbridge County School Board has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rockbridge County School Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered.

Upon initial motion of Certification of Closed Meeting by Trustee Whitmore, and seconded by Trustee Burant, the motion passed by the following roll call vote:

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Trustee Berkstresser | - Aye |
| Trustee Brown        | - Aye |
| Chairman Lovell      | - Aye |
| Trustee Whitmore     | - Aye |
| Trustee Burant       | - Aye |

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Wendy W. Lovell  
Wendy W. Lovell, Chairman

Rhonda B. Humphries  
Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board

The Discipline Committee of the Rockbridge County School Board held a special meeting on Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at Maury River Middle School.

Present: Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown and Kathy Burant; Randy Walters, Chief Operations Officer; Angela Wilder, Discipline Committee Liaison.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Trustee Berkstresser called the meeting to order at 4:59 p.m.

Under Section 2.2-3711.A (2) of the State Code, Trustee Brown recommended that the Board go into a *Closed Meeting* to discuss two student discipline matters. Motion was made by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by 3-0 vote.

The Board entered into the *Closed Meeting* at 5:00 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 6:27 p.m.

Trustee Berkstresser read the following motion to Certify the Closed Meeting:

WHEREAS, the Rockbridge County School Board has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rockbridge County School Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered.

Upon initial motion of Certification of Closed Meeting by Trustee Berkstresser, and seconded by Trustee Brown, the motion passed by the following roll call vote:

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Trustee Brown        | - Aye |
| Trustee Burant       | - Aye |
| Trustee Berkstresser | - Aye |

Upon motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by unanimous vote, the following action was taken regarding student case number 2223-086-10 as a result of a violation of the student code of conduct.

1. Student will be required to attend VAPE awareness group sessions, to be announced at a future date.
2. Student will begin riding assigned bus to and from school and will be seated in the first or second seat at all times while on the bus.

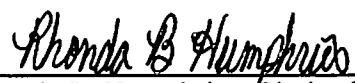
Upon motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by unanimous vote, the following action was taken regarding student case number 2223-085-10 as a result of a violation of the student code of conduct.

1. Student will be required to attend VAPE awareness group sessions, to be announced at a future date.
2. Student will return to RCHS on Monday January 9, 2023.
3. Student will report to in school suspension, room 200, on January 9 where student will be required to successfully complete the VAPING awareness educational modules for vaping and Marijuana. While student is in in- school suspension, student will complete any make up exams or classwork.
4. Student will meet with school counselor to pick up amended schedule, that will reflect new classes which replace two (2) teacher assistant class periods, on January 17, 2023.
5. Student may be subjected to random drug searches as deemed necessary by the administration of Rockbridge County High School.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by 3-0 vote, the meeting adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

  
Corey W. Berkstresser, Trustee

  
Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board