

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. The meeting was held at Maury River Middle School.

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

CALL TO ORDER

Superintendent Thompson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and requested that everyone rise of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

A Moment of Silence was observed in memory of Mr. Stuart Rogers, who passed away January 11, 2022. Mr. Rogers taught seventh grade Math at Maury River Middle school and also coached football and baseball at Rockbridge County High School.

Superintendent Thompson stated that the school division has worked extremely hard to keep students and staff safe throughout the pandemic. Mitigation strategies that were put into place have been largely successful to include the wearing of masks during the school day and when in school buildings. Superintendent Thompson invited anyone who missed the opportunity to pick up a mask at the front door to do so now.

Superintendent Thompson stated that the first order of business would be the Board's re-organization for the year 2022 and asked for nominations for Board Chairman. Trustee Burant nominated Trustee Lovell for Chairman and passed by a 5-0 roll call vote, with Trustee Lovell being elected as Chairman.

Trustee Burant	- Yes
Trustee Brown	- Yes
Trustee Whitmore	- Yes
Trustee Berkstresser	- Yes
Trustee Lovell	- Yes

Chairman Lovell asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Trustee Berkstresser nominated Trustee Whitmore for Vice-Chairman, and passed by a following 5-0 vote roll call vote with Trustee Whitmore being elected as Vice-Chairman:

Trustee Burant	- Yes
Trustee Brown	- Yes
Trustee Lovell	- Yes
Trustee Whitmore	- Yes
Trustee Berkstresser	- Yes

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by a 5-0 vote, the Board appointed Rhonda Humphries as Clerk for the calendar year 2022.

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by a 5-0 vote, the Board appointed Timothy Martino as Deputy Clerk for the calendar year 2022.

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by a 5-0 vote, the Board named Timothy Martino as Superintendent's Designee through January 31, 2023.

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by a 5-0 vote, Phillip Thompson, Superintendent; Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent; Jason Kirby, Chief Business Officer; and David Daniels, Director of Financial Services were appointed as School Board Fiscal Agents with the authority to approve the payment of bills if the School Board is unable to meet.

Chairman Lovell announced the following committee assignments:

- Discipline Committee: Trustee Berkstresser, Trustee Brown, Trustee Burant
- Ad Hoc Committee: Trustee Whitmore, Trustee Lovell
- Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation: Trustee Brown

Chairman Lovell announced that the Board will continue to conduct their regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Superintendent Thompson stated that School Board Members will sign the School Board Member Code of Conduct.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Superintendent Thompson provided a reminder that the Omicron variant is spiking across the nation. Virginia Department of Health indicates that this variant is highly transmissible as the rate is currently 45% positivity rate, which is twice as high as this time a year ago. UVA models estimate that the peak of this variant will come on January 23, 2022, noting that the UVA model also shows that it should decline as quickly as it is spiking. This variant is showing extremely mild symptoms for most persons who test positive, especially for those persons who are fully vaccinated. Rockbridge County Public Schools has also experienced a spike in positive cases and quarantines for both students and staff. Staff ViSSTA Covid testing began several weeks prior to the holiday. This is a voluntary program in which staff members are offered the opportunity to test for Covid weekly to help better ensure the safety of our students and staff. There is approximately 25% of RCPS employees are choosing to be volunteer participants. The community is experiencing high transmission rates, but there has still been little school transmissions. This can be attributed to the ongoing mitigation strategies, which include the wearing of masks, extra cleaning, the installation of bipolar ionization units for our HVAC systems in all of our schools, and more. Because of the safety measures in place, schools are still one of the safest places for anyone. One of the greatest challenges facing the school division at this moment is having staff available to operate our buildings efficiently and effectively. The school division stands ready with plans should an occasion occur in which there are higher numbers of employees in quarantine than the school system can account for. Options, if needed, could include sending a class or two to virtual learning for a temporary period of time or may need to send an entire school to virtual learning for a period of time. A last resort would be to revert the entire school division to full virtual if needed. Rockbridge County Public Schools is now into the second semester and has not had to close down or go to 100% virtual.

- Trustee Burant complimented all because even with a high transmission rate, Rockbridge County Public Schools have kept students and staff safe.

Superintendent Thompson stated that Virginia School Principals Appreciation Week has been designated as January 8-14, 2022.

- Chairman Lovell echoed her appreciation to all principals for their leadership.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) December 14, 2021 [Regular Meeting]; 2) December 20, 2022 [Discipline Committee Hearing]
- Field Trip / Bus Use Requests
- Fund Raiser Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- **Appointments and Resignations**
Appointments
Substitute Teacher
 Gilberton Rolon

Resignations

Professional Staff

Karon Harrington, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, resigned effective December 31, 2021

Amber Yohe, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, resigning end of the 2021 - 2022 school year

Support Staff

David Kirby, Teacher Assistant, Mountain View Elementary School, resigned effective December 17, 2021

Katelyn Dudley, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School, resigned effective December 15, 2021

Retirement
Professional Staff

David Alexander, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, retiring end of the 2021 - 2022 school year

Patricia Jennings, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, retiring end of the 2021 - 2022 school year

Retirement
Support Staff

Bonnie Snyder, Cafeteria Manager, Fairfield Elementary School, retiring end of the 2021 - 2022 school year

- **Business Items**

The Board approved carryover grant appropriations to Fund 50 in the amount of \$20,388.00.
The Board approved Monthly Financials in the amount of \$2,816,629.46.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

One Rockbridge County Public School teacher addressed the board with appreciation for approval of workdays added to the schedule and for the recent stipend approval; also for listening to transition stories of how in-person learning has sometimes been difficult and for trying to make adjustments to aide teachers each day; also expressed appreciation to the Rockbridge County High School administrative team for their support encouragement and seeking ways to reduce teacher work load and for all they do for teachers each day.

One patron addressed on behalf of the Rockbridge Area Ministerial Association reflecting on the recent incidents of violence in the school system, communities, and in the world around us in the last year. The patron stated that the association holds fast to the standards of behavior that build up neighbors, pledging to work with one another, to work with the Rockbridge County School Board as needed, and to work within the communities to be better neighbors and advocates of justice in support of the education of our students.

One patron addressed the board stating that parental rights have been denied in the decision of their children wearing a mask; stated that the mask policy should be changed or done away with.

BUDGET PLANNING:

Superintendent Thompson stated that the school division is in the midst of FY23 budget planning. Governor Northam did release his proposed budget in the middle of December, which appears to be a good budget with respect to what would be provided for Rockbridge County, if it were to happen; Governor Northam is only in office for a little while longer. Proposed budget does have a 10% salary increase for SOQ teaching positions across the biennium, which is approximately only 45% of current positions in Rockbridge County Public Schools. The proposed budget does include funding for Capital Improvements, which could potentially be used for HVAC renovations coming in the future. Superintendent Thompson stated that it is important to remember that this is Governor Northam's proposed budget and that Governor-Elect Youngkin may amend once in office. The Senate and the House versions of the budget are yet to be released. This is early in the budget process as the Governor and General Assembly move forward to reaching a final budget in the next few months.

- Chairman Lovell reflected for newly elected Trustee Brown that school finances is one of the most challenging aspects of being a school board member and that it does take quite a bit of work with the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, as they have to put up a good amount of funds that help fill the school division's budget. She stated that the budget is a long process that has just begun and expressed appreciation as the administration works towards that in the coming months.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None**INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:**

Dr. Angela Wilder, Supervisor of Secondary Special Education, provided an update on the ESL Program. Dr. Wilder provided an overview of the ESL Team and their wide-range responsibilities and the number of students at each school.

- Chairman Lovell inquired how many languages are served in the program.
 - Dr. Wilder stated that there are eleven, with two being different dialects.

Ms. Lindsey Flint, Coordinator for Gifted Programs, provided an update on the Gifted Program and offered the following data:

- There are 104 identified gifted students within Rockbridge County Public Schools.
- The "Math 24 Challenge" will have an Elementary Tournament on March 24, 2022 at Central Elementary School.
- Chairman Lovell inquired if the Math 24 Challenge is open to all students.
 - Ms. Flint stated that enrichment is offered to all students. Grades 3, 4, and 5 are invited to participate.
 - Destination Imagination teams were formed in October and began practices in November. These DI students will participate in the state tournament on March 19, 2022.
 - Information on the 2022 Summer Residential Governor's School and 2022 Governor's Foreign Language Academies. Rockbridge County High School will have students applying to attend programs in Humanities, Fine Arts (Music), Spanish, and Latin.
- Trustee Burant inquired where the Governor's Foreign Language Academies are held.
 - Ms. Flint stated that the Spanish Foreign Language Academy is held at Washington and Lee University and other academies are held across the state.
 - Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, stated that Andy Martin coordinates the Independent Study Program in our schools. He stated that each student has a teacher mentor, noting that teachers do that on their own time.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Ms. Vicki Stevens, Principal, Maury River Middle School; Hillary Camden, School Counselor, Maury River Middle School; Paige Owen, Director of Technology and Career, and Technical Education, provided information on the Mary River Middle School Program of Studies 2022-2023 and provided a summary of changes that have been made.

- Chairman Lovell inquired if a course leads into high school course.
 - Mr. Owens stated that a student does not receive high school credit at the middle school level but can continue with the next level of the CTE course at high school level.
- Trustee Burant inquired if students continue to take a middle school class even though there is no credit given and then continue with the class at the high school level.
 - Mr. Owens stated that he has no doubt that middle school students will continue taking the class but will continue to monitor.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by a 5-0 vote, the Board approved the Rockbridge County High School Program of Studies 2022-2023, as presented.

- Trustee Burant inquired if the evening courses are for high school students only or is the community invited to take courses.
 - Dr. Craft replied that it is not anticipated that the community will take the evening courses. It could be open to the public if dual enrollment courses are offered through Dabney S. Lancaster Community College.

NEW BUSINESS: None

SCHOOL BOARD

There will be a joint meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board and the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors on Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. for the purpose of discussion. The meeting will be held at Maury River Middle School, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, Virginia.

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be on Tuesday, February 8, 2022. The meeting will be held at Maury River Middle School, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Wendy W. Lovell
Wendy W. Lovell, Chairman

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