

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. The meeting was held using a virtual format.

The format for the June 9, 2020 meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board was modified to help mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus or COVID-19. The changes were designed to accommodate public input while encouraging residents to continue to stay at home and practice social distancing, as ordered by the Governor and state health officials.

Present: Remote participation from individual locations: Chairman Wendy Lovell; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Kathy Burant, Heather Hostetter, and Neil Whitmore; Superintendent Phillip Thompson and Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lovell called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Chairman Lovell read the following statement:

Phillip Thompson, Ed.D.
Division Superintendent



Haywood Hand, M.Ed.
Assistant Superintendent

June 9, 2020

To the Rockbridge County Community,

Racism in all forms is deeply rooted in our nation's history, and prejudice and injustice persist today. Through the media, we have recently witnessed violence and harassment against members of the Black community not only in Minneapolis with the horrific death of George Floyd, but all across our nation. These events are felt personally, and in different ways by our students, staff, and community in Rockbridge County.

The Rockbridge County School Board continues to be committed to equity and the inclusion of all individuals. We stand in solidarity with our African American community members and grieve the killing of George Floyd and far too many other American citizens like him. As we continue to serve students throughout our community, these acts of violence are critical reminders that we need to remain focused on and committed to the changes that need to happen to support our shared conviction that racism must end. We will continue to ensure that our schools are safe places for all students, staff, parents and community members.

Our school division is just one part of our larger community; however, we play an important role in its present and future. Education is the best tool for fighting all forms of racism, and Rockbridge County Public Schools is committed to this goal. We are stronger when we are together.

Wendy Lovell, Chair
Buffalo District

Heather Hostetter, Vice Chair
Kerns Creek District

Corey Berkstresser
South River District

Kathy Burant
Natural Bridge District

Neil Whitmore
Walkers Creek District

Phillip Thompson
Division Superintendent

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

RECOGNITION / SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

Superintendent Thompson stated that the Retirees of Rockbridge County Public Schools will be recognized at a future meeting in person for their service to the students and schools of Rockbridge County.

- Chairman Lovell expressed appreciation for all that the retirees have done and for their enriched careers.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public comments were submitted via email. Mr. Jason Kirby, Director of Personnel and Technology read the following statements:

- One patron expressed appreciation for the addition of gender identity and sexual orientation into the non-discrimination statement of Rockbridge County Public Schools.
- One patron stated that he attended the community gathering at Richardson Park on June 6 and conveyed that a common refrain was the need for better education in the schools and asked that consideration be given by adopting improved racial justice curriculum in the schools.

- One statement was representative of the Rockbridge County High School PTSA 2018-2019 Executive Committee that referenced the non-discrimination statement that was previously presented to the Rockbridge County School Board in 2019.
- One patron inquired if there are job searches currently resulting in persons of color. The patron offered that if an update is desired on the Irma Thompson Grant, to contact the Rockbridge NAACP.
 - Chairman Lovell stated that information has been received on the Irma Thompson Grant available from NAACP. She stated that she is grateful for the opportunity to offer available grants from the NAACP, if the school division successfully hires a candidate of color. She also expressed her sentiment that it is a wonderful initiative.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) May 12, 2020 [Regular Meeting]
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- **Appointments and Resignations**

Appointments

Professional Staff

Janet Buchheit, School Counselor, Rockbridge County Public Schools, 2020 - 2021

Andrew Vest, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, 2020-2021

Resignations

Professional Staff

Morgan McCown, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, resigning end of the 2019 – 2020 school year

Amanda Gardner, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, resigning end of the 2019-2020 school year

Retirement

Support Staff

Peggy McCormick, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School retiring end of 2019 – 2020 school year

Lori Thomas, Teacher Assistant, Fairfield Elementary School, retiring end of 2019 – 2020 school year

• **Business Items**

- Approve debt service payment in the amount of \$405,769.84 due July 1, 2020, to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public Schools lease for Energy Performance Contract at Rockbridge County High School. The Treasurer's Office will wire the funds to US Bank.
- Approve debt service payment in the amount of \$2,454,891.38 due July 15, 2020 to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public School VPSA bonds.
- Approve Monthly Financials in the amount of \$5,909,539.11

BUDGET PLANNING:

Superintendent Thompson provided an update on the budget. He stated that the Pandemic Covid-19 resulted in an economic crisis and has affected the fiscal standing of the budget for Rockbridge County Public Schools. He stated that this has been a challenging year in respect to budget and business operations with the lack of tax revenues coming into Rockbridge County. July will begin a new fiscal year. School will begin in the fall with many unanswered questions in correlation to the budgetary impact. He stated that the budget was cut over \$600,000 when compared to the 2019-2020 fiscal year but that the mandatory increases to VRS and health care remain. Budget priorities for the 2020-2021 school year were not able to be put in place. He emphasized that the school division will get ready for the 2020-2021 school year and it will go well.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT: None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. Haywood Hand, Assistant Superintendent, provided information on the VSBA Policy Manual Updates, which are now in effect.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the Board approved the 2020-2021 Local Consolidated Application and 2020-2021 Title III Statewide Consortium Application Applications. (Note: Trustee Whitmore was not online at the time of the vote due to internet connectivity; confirmation of approval was obtained post-meeting.)

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Hostetter, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the board approved the Carl Perkins Grant as presented. (Note: Trustee Whitmore was not online at the time of the vote due to internet connectivity; confirmation of approval was obtained post-meeting.)

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Hostetter, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the board approved the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted, as presented. (Note: Trustee Whitmore was not online at the time of the vote due to internet connectivity; confirmation of approval was obtained post-meeting.)

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Burant, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the board approved the Updated Non-Discrimination Statement, as presented. (Note: Trustee Whitmore was not online at the time of the vote due to internet connectivity; confirmation of approval was obtained post-meeting.)

Rockbridge County Public Schools are committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of all members of their community. Rockbridge County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, age, marital status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or status as a veteran.

- Trustee Burant expressed her sentiment that the approval of this item is timely and inclusive and expressed her appreciation.
- Chairman Lovell expressed her sentiment that there are concerns about sexual orientation and gender identity, while noting that to some degree, some patrons consider those subsets of existing words in the statement. She also stated that she feels this is a good change for the division.
- Trustee Berkstresser stated that he feels it is the current policy of Rockbridge County Public Schools not to discriminate against anyone for any reason.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Hostetter, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the Board approved for the request of Heritage Hall to extend the current agreement through June 30, 2021 to use Maury River Middle School as an evacuation shelter. (Note: Trustee Whitmore was not online at the time of the vote due to internet connectivity; confirmation of approval was obtained post-meeting.)

NEW BUSINESS:

Trustee Lovell expressed her appreciation to all who worked to hold the graduation ceremony at Hull's Drive-In, noting "Rockbridge Rocks".

- Trustee Berkstresser conveyed his hope that the students enjoyed the event noting that it was incredible to hear the excitement when senior names were announced with their picture on the movie screen. He expressed appreciation to Dr. Craft for creating a traditional graduation in an untraditional setting.
- Trustee Whitmore expressed appreciation to Trustee Berkstresser for providing the firework display enjoyed by all in attendance of the graduation celebration.

Trustee Berkstresser stated that he attended the Black Lives Matter event at Richardson Park on June 6, 2020.

SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular monthly meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting location and format will be determined and advertised.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Wendy W. Lovell
Wendy W. Lovell, Chairman

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

