

The Rockbridge County School Board held a special joint meeting with the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors on Thursday, November 14, 2024. The meeting was held at the Rockbridge Innovation Center.

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

Board of Supervisors Members Present: Leslie Ayers, R.W. Day, D.E. Lyons, David McDaniel; Spencer Suter, County Administrator and Clerk to Board, Ashton Harrison, Finance Director.
Absent: A.J. Lewis

CALL TO ORDER

School Board Chairman Whitmore called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

RCPS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Superintendent Thompson provided an overview of the FY2025 Capital Improvement Plan as stated below:

FY25 Projects:

- The Natural Bridge Elementary School HVAC Project was completed prior to the beginning of school with work completed during the summer.
- The Rockbridge County High School gymnasium bleachers are coming out this week, with the team being able to continue to use the gym for practices. It is anticipated that the new bleachers will be installed in two weeks, prior to Winter Break.

Superintendent Thompson noted that it is intentional to have projects due to be completed when debt service is falling off other projects to allow for level funding from year to year, as much as possible.

FY26 Projects: None

FY27 Projects: Larger projects such as:

- RCHS: Tennis Court Expansion and lights; RCHS Junior Parking Lot Paving; RCHS Construction of Concession and restrooms at B/S/T area; and RCHS Fieldhouse w/ Locker Rooms/ Remodel weight room.
- CES and RCHS: Construction of Auxiliary Gyms
- Effinger Central Office: HVAC and Associated Parts Replacement

FY28 Projects: None

FY29 Projects:

- RCHS: Building Renovations
Facilities Study has not yet been completed to establish an amount. A Feasibilities Study will need to be completed for that part of the building.
- Supervisor McDaniel inquired when the last Feasibility Study was completed four to five years ago.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the Feasibility Study would only need to be done for that part of RCHS, which would not be as costly.

FY30 Projects:

- All Facilities: Resealing All Parking Lots
- MRMS: Track Resurfacing

FY31 Projects:

- MRMS: HVAC and Associated Parts Replacement; Auxiliary Gym Floor Replacement

The total funding amount for FY25-FY31 is \$54,490,420.

- Trustee Burant inquired when the Feasibility Study for RCHS will happen.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that he feels it should be done sooner rather than later. It may take an extensive time to go through a study of that nature. The project will have to go out to bid.
- Supervisor McDaniel inquired on the FY27 projects, which projects have firm numbers already in place.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the Junior Parking Lot Paving is a solid number at \$235,000, from Randy Hostetter Excavating Company this year. He stated that the estimated cost for lights is around \$315,000 just for the lights, wholesale cost, not retail cost, and does not include labor. He stated that conversations will take place with Dominion and BARC and other private companies to see what they might charge to put lights and poles in. He estimates that additional cost to be around \$300,000; which would then reflect a total of \$650,000-\$700,000.
 - Supervisor McDaniel suggested that Dominion and BARC be contacted as they may have community outreach for time and funds to set equipment and poles in place.

- Supervisor McDaniel inquired when the Athletic Department is changing districts. He also inquired if it will require that school districts have lights on top of the baseball field and noted that the lights will need to be in place by Spring 2026.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that it will not take place this year, but the next year; Fall 2025. He stated that Rockbridge County is going from the Valley District to the Shenandoah District. The games usually begin a half hour later than when the games currently begin. Baseball and softball games would not begin until 5:30 PM. With field lights in place, Junior Varsity and Varsity games can take place on the same nights, and it would only take two umpires as opposed to four umpires. He expressed his sentiment that field lights will be very beneficial.
 - Supervisor Ayers inquired for the reason for change of districts.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that travel was a big factor for the change; competition will likely be better in this district.
 - Mr. Timothy Martino stated that Rockbridge County Public Schools value sports but academics are more important and these students are dedicated to their studies and stay up late into the night to accomplish assignments and study time.
- Supervisor Lyons inquired if the cost of operations to put all this into place and maintained has been factored in.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the CIP mainly focuses on facilities.
- Supervisor Ayers inquired on the Auxiliary Gyms and how they will be used for the community and if they could be sectioned off for use of the community during the day.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that he sent a letter to Mr. Chad Coffey, Executive Director, Rockbridge Area Recreation Organization (RARO) today in support of a recreational center that could be shared with the community. Ideally, something close to the high school where it could be used for PE during the day, etc. He echoed Supervisor Ayers sentiment that there may be a way to work that out on school property.
- Supervisor McDaniel stated that the Rockbridge County School Board got the CIP to the Board of Supervisors early this year and that budget discussion will begin in January. He asked if it would be possible to update the CIP so that the gym for Central Elementary School and Rockbridge County High School is separated.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that from the Feasibility Study CES and RCHS gyms were split out and they were just combined on the current CIP. The CIP can be revised for this purpose.
- Supervisor McDaniel stated that we all are looking for gym space; gym space versus community center. RARO has also been looking for gym space, as well as The Chamber of Commerce, YMCA have also been looking for space. He stated that it may be worthwhile to develop a community committee to develop a plan for community center.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that he does not know the timeline that Mr. Coffey is working with. He suggested that Mr. Coffey make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors and then decide if it is something that should be done.
 - Mr. Suter stated that RARO has been working on a plan for some time and has seen some drafts. He expressed his sentiment that all parties need to get together for discussion. Mr. Coffey is trying to list what they do and when they do it, the deficiencies and barriers that RARO has, while also trying to look at what RCPS does and the competing needs, and what the community needs.

ANY ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Suter stated that Capital Improvement Building Assessment for the Courthouse began today. He stated that the Contract of Power with Municipal Software has begun and expressed the need to get RCPS administration involved in discussion.

- Superintendent Thompson asked for dates to be conveyed to him so that a meeting can be scheduled.
- Mr. Harrison stated that if the Board of Supervisors approve the new software, it will not go live until 2026. This timeframe will allow time for training and implementation at a comfortable pace for all involved.

Supervisor McDaniel stated that at their meeting this past Tuesday night there was a lot of discussion about the Veterans Memorial at Courthouse Square in downtown Lexington. It was brought to their attention that the land had been sold and the Veterans Memorial area was in need of maintenance as far as keeping the leaves cleaned out, etc. He stated that Mr. Suter was going to reach out to Lexington Public Works and see if they could offer assistance, while noting it is county property. He offered the idea that possibly clubs at the Maury River Middle School or Rockbridge County High School may be looking for civic activities to take part in and this could

be beneficial. If the BOS offered funding for materials and equipment (not heavy duty equipment, but rather a leaf blower etc.) to clean the area, if there could be some type of cooperation from the school system to provide students three or four times a year to go there and maintain the area. He expressed his sentiment that this Veterans Memorial project could also be a time that the older generation could interact with the younger generation.

- Mr. Suter offered that he had approached Lexington City with this same idea some time back, and it did not work out. He spoke with Mr. Tom Carol, Lexington City Town Manager, this morning and he is very open to scheduling meetings for discussion for this project. The cautionary is the use of a pressure washer on the stones and will need to be well supervised.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that The Drew Ross Memorial Foundation has reached out to him as they want to do some annual projects with our schools and they may be interested in this project as well. He stated that he knows there are students who would love to take on this project.

Supervisor Lyons stated that some of the CIP projects can be combined with community organizations to save money. He stated that VMI has some very nice tennis courts but no tennis team; he does not know if the tennis courts have lights. He expressed this may be an area where community efforts can be combined to benefit all by providing a service to the schools, the community, and save a little bit of money. He expressed his sentiment not to get hung up on building but rather see what the needs are.

- Supervisor Ayers stated that she feels when the community thinks of recreation, they see one building or core complex.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that he will reach out to VMI.
 - Chairman Whitmore stated that if there was a joint committee of RARO and community, including the county, then there could be discussion of how to share expenses.

Supervisor Lyons stated that some groups have already done a study of what is needed and could be compared to what is needed in the schools.

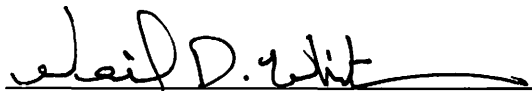
- Mr. Suter stated that RARO is involved, as of 2016, also with Buena Vista City Schools. He mentioned that because in his discussions with Mr. Coffey, he is looking at the entire envelop of the county.
- Supervisor Ayers reflected that instead of looking at one facility, Rockbridge County could travel to Buena Vista for a particular program.

TOUR OF ROCKBRIDGE INNOVATION CENTER

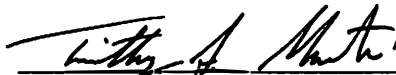
Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, provided a tour of the Rockbridge Innovation Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Brown and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m.



Neil D. Whitmore, Chairman



Timothy J. Martino, Deputy Clerk of the Board