

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

None.

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, introduced Mr. Robert Thompson, representing AFCEA, (Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association). Mr. Thompson shared highlights from the elementary Code-A-Thon, a statewide event for fifth graders that has been hosted by Rockbridge County Public Schools for the past three years as part of the STEM program. He presented a \$1,000 grant check to Mr. Owens to support STEM initiatives in our schools. Mr. Thompson praised the innovative work of RCPS educators, especially Mr. Joe Hawes, for advancing STEM learning opportunities for students. He also provided a copy of *Signal* magazine, noting that Rockbridge’s commitment to STEM aligns with national best practices in technology education.

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, recognized Ms. McKenzie Robinson, FCCLA advisor, along with students Ms. Mattie Robinson and Ms. Brooke Eichelberger, for their outstanding achievement at the FCCLA National Conference in Orlando, Florida. The students earned first place in the Nutrition and Wellness category, just one-point shy of a perfect score, competing against 120 teams nationwide. Mr. Owens and Ms. Robinson commended the students for their dedication, skill, and ability to apply real-world wellness strategies. He noted this was the first national FCCLA win for RCPS since 2015 and reflected the strong instructional support students receive from staff and advisors.

Mr. Anthony Marasco, Rockbridge County High School Athletic Director, shared that Rockbridge County High School was honored to receive the Claudia Dodson Sportsmanship, Ethics, and Integrity Award from the Virginia High School League (VHSL) for the 2024–2025 school year. This prestigious award is presented to schools that have zero ejections of any player, coach, or spectator by an official throughout the entire school year. Only 52 schools out of 516 VHSL members statewide earned this distinction, underscoring RCPS’s deep commitment to sportsmanship. Mr. Marasco emphasized that the award is about far more than wins and losses — it recognizes how RCHS plays the game with respect for opponents, officials, and each other; with integrity; and with pride in representing the school and community. He credited the dedication of coaches for teaching lessons that go beyond the game, the commitment of student-athletes to represent Rockbridge with class, and the positive support from parents and community members. He stressed that the recognition belongs to student-athletes, coaches, staff, parents, and fans alike, whose collective commitment to “doing things the right way — every practice, every game” made the honor possible. Mr. Marasco thanked the VHSL for the recognition and expressed gratitude to the School Board and Superintendent Dr. Thompson for their continued support of all RCHS athletic programs.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) June 10, 2025 [Special Meeting]; 2) June 10, 2025 [Regular Meeting]; 3) July 10, 2025 [Special Meeting]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Appointments and Resignations
 - Appointments
 - Professional Staff
 - Brian Torrence, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Support Staff

Jacey Croushorn, Teacher Assistant, Fairfield Elementary School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Brittany Schindler, Teacher Assistant, Fairfield Elementary School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Ashley Lotts, Teacher Assistant, Maury River Middle School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Angela Assaoui, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Paul Brenner, Custodian, Rockbridge County High School, effective August 13, 2025

Food Service

Cheryl Noble

Deborah Hawkins

Car Driver(s)

Patricia Coss

Sheena Herring

Fall Coaches 2025-2026**Rockbridge County High School****Football**

Zachary Rhodenizer, Head Coach

Peter Lampman, Assistant Coach

Robert Rhodenizer, Assistant Coach

Isaiah Warden, Assistant Coach

Lyle Pugh, Assistant Coach

Adam Doll-Hennis, Assistant Coach

Bethany Rhodenizer, Assistant Coach

Robert Schwartz, Assistant Coach

Chad Staton, Volunteer Coach

David Wells, Volunteer Coach

Landon Joines, Volunteer Coach

Golf

Garret Huffman, Head Coach

Boys' Cross Country

Julie Tisone, Head Coach

Hallie McMurdle, Assistant Coach

Girls' Cross Country

Julie Tisone, Head Coach

Hallie McMurdle, Assistant Coach

Cheerleading

Shannon Bryan, Head Coach

Alli Thomas, Assistant Coach

Volleyball

Gabriel Wagner, Head Coach

Jaden Harrison, Assistant Coach

Justin Madsen, JV Head Coach

Maury River Middle School**Volleyball**

Graceon Whitesell, Head Coach

Cross Country

Leyna Hansley, Head Coach

Football

Daniel Taylor, Head Coach

Irvine Jones, Assistant Coach

Club Sponsors**RCHS**

Newspaper, Mary Holton

Yearbook, Brian Hamelman

SCA, Jessika Crance

Academic Team, Chris McGrath

Academic Team Assistant, Patrick Bradley

National Honor Society, Stephanie Brooks

MRMS

FFA, Molly Marshall
NJHS, MaryBeth Sandridge
Destination Imagination, Sarah Shultz
Gifted, Lisa Gay-Milliken
Activities Coordinator, Tasha Polly
Yearbook, Erin Jones

CES

Gifted, Elizabeth Schmidt

FES

Destination Imagination, Cathy Whitesell
Gifted, Destinee Kerr

NBES

Gifted, Beth McElroy

MVES

Gifted, Brandon Smith

Resignations

Support Staff

Emily Clements, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, resigning effective end of the 2024-2025 school year
Brian Sheltman, Teacher Assistant, Mountain View Elementary School, resigning effective end of the 2024-2025 school year
Ida Manspile, Bus Driver, Transportation, resigning effective end of the 2024-2025 school year

Retirement

Support Staff

Deborah Day, Teacher Assistant, Maury River Middle School, retiring effective end of the 2024-2025 school year

- Business Items
 - Approved Financials for 6-25-25 in the amount of \$1,010,144.93.
 - Approved Financials for 7-8-25 in the amount of \$6,437,617.98.
 - Approved Financials for 7-28-25 in the amount of \$1,751.48.
 - Approved Financials for 8-12-25 in the amount of \$1,219,117.04.
 - Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for the new grants in the amount of \$113,448.00.
 - Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for carryover grants in the amount of \$785,095.00.
 - Approved Monthly Financials in the amount of \$1,532,687.11

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dr. Harper Donahoe, a resident of the Natural Bridge District, provided an update on the Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation. He noted that last spring he visited every school in the division to encourage principals to apply for grants and to reintroduce them to the funding process. He also met with nearly every faculty last week to share the same message and to highlight that foundation grants can fund projects and resources beyond what is included in the school budget. To date, the foundation has awarded more than \$400,000 in grants over the past 20 years and has raised over \$500,000 for the Rockbridge Innovation Center. Upcoming events include having a booth at the Rockbridge Community Festival on August 23, 2025 in downtown Lexington and hosting a cornhole tournament at the Virginia Horse Center on September 20, 2025. Dr. Donahoe encouraged community participation, emphasizing that these efforts directly benefit teachers and students across Rockbridge County Public Schools.

BUDGET PLANNING: No reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: No reports.

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Officer, reported that although no major capital improvement projects were scheduled for 2025–2026, numerous smaller projects were completed to enhance school facilities. He recognized custodial and maintenance staff for their exceptional work in preparing buildings for the new school year and thanked Dr. Crossman for his leadership in coordinating with principals on facility priorities. Highlights included:

- MVES: Renovated original reading nooks, working on installing solar traffic signs and initiated replacement of the well. The engineering and permitting stages for the well have been completed, and scheduling for drilling is in progress.
- CES: Converted a closet to a conference room, added hallway storage cabinets, and completed exterior improvements.
- FES: Refinished the front canopy and façade, continued work on the drop-off area and courtyard, and began constructing a new staff break room in the library.
- NBES: Repaired the front awning, replaced carpet in the main office, and repainted the library.
- MRMS: Repainted hallways.
- RCHS: Renovated stadium concession stand, repainted the gym, refinished gym floors, and prepared for installation of a new sports banner system.

Mr. Walters also reported a smooth opening day of school, with only one transportation delay, and noted that two bus driver positions remain unfilled. Recruitment efforts are ongoing in partnership with Mountain Gateway Community College. Trustees commended the well-maintained facilities, with Chairman Burant remarking on the “beautiful and inviting” appearance of each school.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. Rick Bain, Supervisor of Human Resources, summarized the three-day New Teacher Orientation which took place July 29–31, 2025 and was held at the Rockbridge Innovation Center. Twenty-five new hires participated, including ten first-year teachers, fourteen experienced educators, and one new administrator. Seven participants are Rockbridge County High School alumni.

The orientation was structured around three themes:

- **Day 1:** Equipping teachers with essential tools and information to begin confidently.
- **Day 2:** Focusing on instructional excellence, with sessions on compelling reading and math instruction, project-based learning, and best practices in special education. Mr. Bain thanked Lauren Fauber, Kelly Jones, and Ashley Rhodenizer for providing these presentations.
- **Day 3:** Reviewing divisional systems and supports, including safety procedures and mentoring programs, and providing opportunities for new hires to engage with experienced RCPS educators through a Q&A panel.

Mr. Bain shared that exit survey responses were overwhelmingly positive, reflecting strong preparation and support for new staff.

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, provided an overview of the division’s work to develop a flexible, responsive AI policy, following participation in state-led training sessions. He recognized the contributions of Ms. Becky Bennett, Ms. Shauna Palmer, and Ms. Amy Hinkle, noting that Ms. Palmer drafted much of the initial policy, which was then reviewed by legal counsel. The policy aims to guide both instructional and student use of AI in ways that enhance learning while addressing ethical considerations. Mr. Owens discussed the balance between responsible use and innovation by explaining that teacher training will take place on early-closing days. Chairman Burant commended the clarity of the policy’s intent and complimented the updated RCPS webpages.

ACTION ITEMS:

Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Officer, requested approval of updated 2025–2026 School Crisis Plans, which have been reformatted using templates provided by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. He credited Mr. Jason Breeding, Division Safety Coordinator, with leading the conversion and collaborating with principals to ensure accuracy and usability. Chairman Burant praised the plans for their clear procedures, helpful definitions, and well-organized links to resources. Mr. Breeding discussed potential ways to share safety information with parents and noted that standardized response protocols and available training modules could be adapted for family outreach.

NEW BUSINESS:

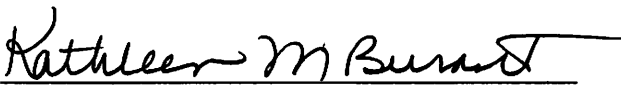
Chairman Burant expressed gratitude to Dr. Thompson and his team for continuing to provide free student meals (through the CEP program - Community Eligibility Program). Chairman Burant also thanked staff across the division for preparing clean, welcoming schools. She wished all staff and students a successful and productive school year, noting that Rockbridge County Public Schools is well-positioned for achievement in 2025–2026.

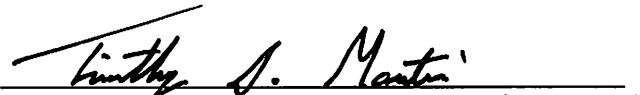
SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, September 9, 2025 / 5:30 PM / Location: County of Rockbridge Administration Building, 150 South Main Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.


Kathy M. Burant, Chairman


Timothy J. Martino, Deputy Clerk of the Board