

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, September 9, 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 Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Mr. Shaun Sparks, Assistant Principal, Rockbridge County High School, recognized the members of the 2024-2025 State Champion Academic Team and their coaches, Mr. Chris McGrath, and Dr. Pat Bradley. He shared that students practice their quick response to challenging questions and then compete against other school teams in the areas of English, mathematics, science, social studies, and miscellaneous subjects (which includes fine arts, current events, entertainment/sports, and religion/mythology/philosophy). The team members were Ashley Kauffman, Kellen Foster, Corinna Allen, Elliott Allen, Emil Hierman, Graham Shester, and Maeve McGrath.

Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, recognized Ms. Stephanie Tuttle, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, who received the John Larmer Lifelong Learning Award at PBL World 2025 in California in June 2025. He shared that the John Larmer "JL" Lifelong Learning Award acknowledges teachers who are impacting and expanding the work of Project Based Learning (PBL) for all students. This award acknowledges JL's significant contributions to PBL Works and the field of education, advancing high quality PBL for all students for over three decades. The awards are presented to up to three teachers each year at PBL World, the premier event for Project Based Learning. Recipients receive complimentary registration for a 1-day pre-conference workshop and a 3-day workshop of their choice at PBL World.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) August 12, 2025 [Regular Meeting]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- Religion Exemption Requests
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Professional Staff

Brooke Bolen, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective October 13, 2025

Appointments

Support Staff

Kristen Skiles, Teacher Assistant, Mountain View Elementary School, effective September 10, 2025

Mike Taylor, Teacher Assistant, Maury River Middle School, effective September 10, 2025

Elizabeth Byers, Teacher Assistant, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective September 10, 2025

Dylan Hostetter, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School, effective September 10, 2025

Custodian

Ray Hotinger

Chelsea Chittum

Car Driver

Tammy Cash

Amber Culp

Substitute

Elizabeth Faris
Dalton Benson
Stephanie Hanson
Peter Powell
Sydney Sweet
Isabelle Bushnell
Douglas Bartlett
Abigail Lynch
Lucy Cooke
Wayne Henry
Hailey Crotty

Fall Coaches 2025-2026
Rockbridge County High School
Football

William Ware, Volunteer Coach

Cheerleading
Sarah Parnell, Volunteer Coach
Maury River Middle School

Cross Country
Theresa Bridge, Assistant Coach

Football
Jim Gibson, Volunteer Coach
Troy Wimer, Volunteer Coach
Phillip Clark, Volunteer Coach
Sherrod Butler, Volunteer Coach

Cheerleading
Margaret Clarke, Head Coach

Winter Coaches 2025-2026
Rockbridge County High School
Basketball

Scott Rogers, Head JV Basketball Coach

Support Staff
Resignation

Jacey Croushorn, Teacher Assistant, Fairfield Elementary School, resigning effective August 15, 2025

Professional Staff
Resignation

Riley Yates, Teacher, Rockbridge County Public Schools, resigning effective December 19, 2025

- Business Items
 - Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for new grants in the amount of \$63,666.00
 - Approved Monthly Financials in the amount of \$32,397,843.83

PUBLIC COMMENT:
One patron addressed the board regarding the success of the most recent event of the Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation where they set up a tent at the Rockbridge Community Festival. The raffle prizes that were offered were all student-made, which showcased the students of the Rockbridge Innovation Center. Appreciation was expressed to Dr. Thompson, Mr. Martino, Mr. Paige Owens, and Ms. Robyn Sherman for their assistance with this endeavor.

BUDGET PLANNING: None
COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Ms. Melanie Hickman, Principal, Natural Bridge Elementary School, provided an overview of the NBE "Early Back" Program. This program was offered to students K-5 as an opportunity to enjoy unique learning experiences that were grade level specific, as well as SOL aligned. The program began on July 14, 2025, with teachers utilizing this as a day to prepare for students. Students began the seven-day program on July 15, 2025. She expressed appreciation to the dedicated custodians who worked long before that date, to ensure the building was ready to welcome students. There were nine rising kindergarten students, fourteen rising first grade students, nine rising second grade students, six rising third grade students, five rising fourth grade students, and six rising fifth grade students. She expressed appreciation to Dawn Hetrick, Cafeteria Manager, for providing breakfast for all students. The program was for seven days, with the program beginning at 8:00 AM and ending at 12:00 noon. Ms. Hickman and Ms. Hayley Roberts, worked to ensure that each grade level had one hour of Math instruction, one hour of Reading instruction, and one hour of Science instruction each day. There was a built-in time for snack and recess during the morning. She expressed appreciation to Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Manager, and Ms. Kirstie Campbell, Supervisor of Transportation, who worked to ensure that transportation was provided to the approximately forty students who utilized RCPS transportation. She stated that if the opportunity is provided to offer the program again, she believes that attendance will increase as students talk with one another about how much fun they had during the seven days.

- Trustee Ojura inquired what the criteria is for students to participate.
 - Ms. Hickman stated that the program was open to all students.
- Trustee Whitmore inquired if this type of program has been done before and if the students who participated are being followed to see how they are doing. He also inquired what the main reason for families to participate in the program.
 - Ms. Hickman stated that it has not been offered in Rockbridge County Public Schools previously. She stated that the students were monitored and are doing well. Ms. Hickman stated that she feels the main reason is that parents feel it is something to get their student back into a routine.
 - Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, stated that parents believe in Natural Bridge Elementary School. He also expressed that it is a positive reflection to the commitment of teachers who were willing to come back two weeks prior to the work week before the beginning of school. In a program such as this, it would be positive note if there was 10-15% participation; Natural Bridge Elementary School had 25% participation.
- Chairman Burant inquired if this was funded by grant money.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that it was not funded by grant money, but rather funding set aside for this purpose.
- Trustee Ojura inquired if this program will take place at other schools since this was successful.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that other principals have expressed interest and appreciates the fact that it is a positive move to get students in school sooner and in a routine.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Superintendent Phillip Thompson provided information on the Capital Improvement Plan 2026-2032. He noted that it is an annual process of talking to teachers and making observations on what larger ticket items need to go into the CIP. This is a fluid document and can change quickly. Once the Rockbridge County School Board approves the CIP, it is then presented to the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors as they are a funding body. He stated that this will be presented to the school board as an Action Item at the October 14, 2025 meeting. He stated that there are only three changes to the CIP and they are as follows for year 2032-33:

- Updates are needed to RCHS upgrade electrical service at stadium
- Paving Transportation and Bus Garage Lots
- NBE Bus Lot Canopy

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Brown, passed by a 5-0 roll call vote, the board to approved two resolutions naming Mr. Scotty Dransfield, of The News-Gazette, and Mr. Doug Harwood, of The Rockbridge Advocate, on the statewide VSBA Media Honor Roll.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojura, the board voted 5-0, to approve the Artificial Intelligence in Rockbridge County Public Schools policy, as presented.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Burant offered congratulations to Mr. Troy Wimer, former School Resource Officer, Maury River Middle School, and wished him well in his new job.

Chairman Burant expressed condolences to the family of two educators who recently passed away: Mr. Wayne Flint, former school board member for Buena Vista City Public Schools, and Ms. Sherry Wilhelm, former educator, who taught in Rockbridge County Public Schools for thirty-four years.

Trustee Brown shared that the Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation will hold the Annual Cornhole Tournament on Saturday, September 20, 2025 from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the Virginia Horse Center.

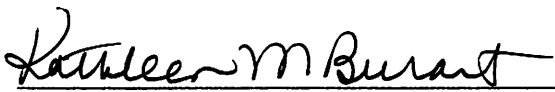
Trustee Berkstresser shared that there was Moment of Silence for Ms. Sherry Wilhelm at the Rockbridge County High School home JV football game on August 28, 2025.

SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, October 14, 2025 / 5:30 PM / Location: Maury River Middle School Library, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, VA 24450

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.


Kathy M. Burant, Chairman


Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board