

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, August 11th, 2026, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Kathleen Burant, Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Lenna Ojure, Neil Whitmore, Superintendent Phillip Thompson, and Clerk Heather Bennington.

Absent: Trustee Catie Brown

CALL TO ORDER

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

ORGANIZATION: None

RECOGNITION / SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

Moment of Silence in memory of Mr. Travis Roadcap

Superintendent Thompson recognized the passing of valued Rockbridge County Public Schools' teacher and coach, Mr. Travis Roadcap, honoring him as a dedicated mentor and role model who made a lasting impact on young people in the classroom, on the baseball field, and throughout the community. He noted the strong outpouring of support from students, staff, families, alumni, and community members, highlighting the recent gathering at the RCHS baseball field as a reflection of Mr. Roadcap's profound legacy built through character and strong relationships. On behalf of the Rockbridge County School Board and the school division, Superintendent Thompson expressed deepest condolences to Mr. Roadcap's family, friends, students, and colleagues, thanking him for his years of service before leading the Board and attendees in a moment of silence in his memory.

FCCLA Recognition

Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, recognized and congratulated the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) students and advisors on their recent success at the FCCLA National Conference in Washington, D.C. Mr. Owens requested Maury River Middle School advisor Ms. Shasta Robertson and Rockbridge County High School advisor Ms. McKenzie Robinson, along with students Makenzie Clemmer, Desiree Butler, Taliyah Richardson, and Audrey Ivins share their experience with the board. RCHS students Makenzie Clemmer and Desiree Butler shared details of their national competition experience in Washington, D.C., where their Thompson Turf War Level 3 Event Management project earned a gold medal rating with a score of 93. MRMS student Audrey Ivins recounted her participation in the "Teach and Train" competition, where she presented a lesson on protecting the Chesapeake Bay, earning a bronze medal. Ms. Ivins expressed hope for future middle school participants at the upcoming national competition in San Antonio, Texas. Chairman Burant commended the students and their advisors on their achievements and invited them to present their projects to the board at a future meeting.

Girls' Lacrosse

Athletic Director Anthony Marasco recognized the Rockbridge County High School Girls' Lacrosse program for completing its sixth consecutive regional championship and earning its sixth consecutive appearance in the VHSL state tournament. The Class of 2026 seniors established a 64-9 overall record during their high school careers, securing four region championships along with two state semifinal and two state final appearances. Additionally, a Rockbridge athlete has been named Region Player of the Year for the past four consecutive years, and this season marked a program landmark with its first-ever State Player of the Year.

Mr. Marasco highlighted the players' local roots, noting that several athletes began playing together in 2015 with LexLax before establishing a tradition of athletic excellence for girls' lacrosse in Lexington and Rockbridge County. He also commended Head Coach Susan Nye for her leadership, dedication, and commitment in developing confident young women and building a thriving program. "Her influence extends far beyond wins and championships. She has helped develop confident young women, taught them the value of teamwork and perseverance, and provided the leadership necessary to build a program that will continue to thrive." Student-athletes expressed their gratitude for Coach Nye's support and impact on their lives.

Rockbridge Historical Society

Mr. Eric Wilson, Executive Director of the Rockbridge Historical Society presented on the "Revolutionary Cycles: Evolving Communities" project in conjunction with the upcoming VA 250 commemorations. Mr. Wilson shared details on a grant funded by Virginia Tech and the Virginia Association of Museums celebrating the local portion of the historic 1976 Bikecentennial Trail. The project proposes placing two student-designed, six-foot benches near local schools, such as Lylburn Downing Middle and Mountain View Elementary, along the trail route. Students will submit design proposals featuring local symbols, history, and bicycle themes to be painted or wrapped onto the benches. Installation and community rides are targeted for this fall, with ongoing coordination planned between school leadership, tourism representatives, and local recreational organizations.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Minutes: 1) June 09, 2026 [Regular Meeting] 2) July 21, 2026 [Special Meeting]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraising Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- Religious Exemption
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments**Professional Staff**

Zac Singleton, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Joshua Smith, School Psychologist Intern, Division, effective 2026-2027 school year

Sydney Phillips, Teacher Intern, Rockbridge County High School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Nicole Reeves, Speech Pathologist, Division, effective 2026-2027 school year

Appointments**Support Staff**

Catherine Henderson, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Heather Cline, Food Service, Fairfield Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Garfield Garrison, Custodian, Central Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Theodore Marchand, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Tiffany Smith, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Makenna Newell, Teacher Assistant, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Jeremy Williams, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Wendy Limones, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Rhonda Smith, Teacher Assistant, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Larissa Smith, Food Service, Maury River Middle School, effective 2026-2027 school year

Physical Therapy Services-Timesheet

Tamara Hattersley

Food Service Substitute

Angelica Mason

Substitute Teachers

Bailey Willden

Josh Tack

Annie Dudley

Sarah Matsumoto

Dawn Rice

Phillip Shapiro

Michael Craft

Fall Coaches 2026-2027

Rockbridge County High School

Football

Zachery Rhodenizer, Head Coach
Peter Lampman, Assistant Coach
Robert Rhodenizer, Assistant Coach
Phillip Shapiro, Assistant Coach
Lyle Pugh, Assistant Coach
Adam Doll-Hennis, Assistant Coach
Bob Harrison, Assistant Coach
William Ware, Assistant Coach
David Wells, Volunteer Coach

Golf

Garret Huffman, Head Coach

Boys' Cross Country

Julie Tisone, Co-Head Coach
Eric Krepps, Co-Head Coach
Andrew Ludtke, Volunteer Coach

Girls' Cross Country

Julie Tisone, Co-Head Coach
Eric Krepps, Co-Head Coach
Andrew Ludtke, Volunteer Coach

Cheerleading

Shannon Bryan, Head Coach
Alli Thomas, Assistant Coach
Sarah Parnell, Volunteer Coach

Volleyball

Graceon Whitesell, Head Coach
Kimberly Beidle, Assistant Coach
Sydney Phillips, JV Head Coach
Grace Cauley, Volunteer Coach
Kaycie Mirance, Volunteer Coach

Maury River Middle School

Volleyball

Claire Harris, Head Coach

Cross Country

Leyna Hansley, Head Coach
Teresa Bridge, Assistant Coach

Football

Daniel Taylor, Head Coach
Chad Staton, Assistant Coach
Jim Gibson, Volunteer Coach
Jason White, Volunteer Coach
Keith Mohler, Volunteer Coach
Irvine Jones, Volunteer Coach

Cheerleading

Margaret Clarke, Head Coach

Club Sponsors

RGHS

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 Schultz
Gifted, Lisa Gay-Milliken
Activities Coordinator, Tasha Polly

CES

Gifted, Elizabeth Schmidt

FES

Gifted, Destinee Kerr

NBES

Gifted, Elizabeth McElroy

MVES

Gifted, Brandon Smith

Professional Staff

Resignation

Paul Gundacker, Teacher, Rockbridge County Public Schools, resigning effective August 14, 2026

Support Staff

Resignation

Anikka George, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective end of the 2025-2026 school year

Bruce Dinges, Custodian, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective July 16, 2026

Brigitte Staton, Teacher Assistant, Natural Bridge Elementary School, resigning effective July 30, 2026

Support Staff

Retirement

Lewis Austin, Bus Driver, Transportation, retiring effective July 1, 2026

• **Business Items**

- Approved Monthly Financials for 6-25-2026 in the amount of \$632,174.50
- Approved Monthly Financials for 7-15-2026 in the amount of \$514,008.82
- Approved Monthly Financials for 8-11-2026 in the amount of \$2,016,787.94
- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for carryover grants in the amount of \$346,145.00.
- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for new grants in the amount of \$1,231,075.00.
- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for carryover grants in the amount of \$351,746.00

PUBLIC COMMENT:

A representative of the Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation addressed the board to outline recent foundation activities and support. He highlighted visits with school principals and faculties to discuss grant opportunities that fund classroom and school needs outside the standard budget, noting high teacher enthusiasm ahead of the new school year. It was reported that the foundation has awarded tens of thousands of dollars in teacher grants over recent years, alongside providing over \$600,000 to equip the Innovation Center at Rockbridge County High School. Additionally, the representative announced the Foundation's annual cornhole tournament fundraiser scheduled for September 26, 2026, from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the Virginia Horse Center, catered by Pure Eats, and encouraged community members and board representatives to register teams online.

A patron addressed the board regarding student health and safety concerns. The patron expressed apprehension over vaccines they characterized as inadequately tested.

BUDGET PLANNING: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Officer, delivered a facilities report detailing summer maintenance and renovation projects across the division. Key highlights included: upgrades to the athletic field, featuring new LED lighting installation and preparation for turf delivery and installation. Additional completed or ongoing projects include: newly constructed PE and coaching staff offices in the locker rooms at RCHS, solar-powered speed limit sign installations at MVES, renovated facilities for the Pathways program at the FES annex building, prior spring lighting upgrades for the baseball and softball fields at RCHS, and continued planning for the proposed recreation center at RCHS. In addition, Mr. Walters described routine district-wide general maintenance on all buildings and grounds in preparation for the new school year.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. Rick Bain and Ms. Erin Poulin presented an overview of the district's redesigned new teacher orientation and three-year mentoring program. The onboarding process was expanded from a single week into a multi-phase program, including three summer business orientation days for administrative onboarding. Phase two consisted of a two-day academic orientation covering school safety and core subject strategies, and a two-day "Academic Boot Camp" tailored around feedback from the previous year's teacher cohort. Sessions led by field experts focused on data analysis, SOL unpacking, classroom management, scaffolding, co-teaching, special education procedures, and hands-on training with classroom hardware and administrative systems. In total this year, Cohort 2 consists of 27 new educators: 14 elementary, 7 middle school, and 6 high school teachers. This includes 11 first-year teachers and 16 experienced teachers, with 12 being Rockbridge County Public Schools alumni. Grounded in a newly developed handbook and "pillars of success," the three-year mentoring strategy provides weekly check-ins for first-year teachers, individual mentoring plans, and monthly theme-based professional development open to all division staff.

ACTION ITEMS:

Mr. Jason Breeding, Division Safety Coordinator, presented the final working draft of the school division's crisis plans for the 2026–2027 school year, noting that the content remains largely unchanged from the initial June review, with minor updates limited to standard contact phone numbers and evacuation site point contacts.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, the board voted 4-0 to approve the School Crisis Plans as presented.

Mr. Jason Breeding, Division Safety Coordinator, presented the final draft of the Student Health and Safety Handbook, noting that the content remains unchanged from the initial June presentation. Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Ojure, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, the board voted 4-0 to approve the Student Health and Safety Handbook as presented.

Superintendent Thompson presented an update on the proposed Recreation Center at Rockbridge County High School, a collaborative facility designed to serve as a joint recreation, community, and school center to meet multiple county needs under a single roof. He noted that while the Board of Supervisors previously approved the construction of the building, they have not yet finalized a funding mechanism, following an unsuccessful 2–2 vote during the Virginia Public School Authority (VPSA) spring bond sale attempt. Working with Davenport, the county's financial advisor, officials determined that participating in the upcoming fall bond sale is the most viable path forward. To proceed, Dr. Thompson requested that the School Board adopt a formal resolution authorizing an application to the VPSA fall 2026 pooled bond sale, officially requesting the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors to issue general obligation school bonds in an amount not to exceed \$18 million.

Upon recommendation by Superintendent Thompson, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, the board voted 4-0 to approve the "Resolution Requesting the Board of Supervisors to Issue General Obligation School Bonds for School Purposes and Consenting to the Issuance Thereof". The motion passed by the following roll call vote:

Trustee Whitmore	- Aye
Trustee Ojure	- Aye
Trustee Berkstresser	- Aye
Chairman Burant	- Aye

Chairman Burant shared remarks regarding the ongoing discussion for the proposed Recreation Center at Rockbridge County High School, noting that a public hearing before the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors has been set for September 14, 2026. She highlighted the long-standing need for additional athletic space, recalling that when Natural Bridge, Rockbridge, and Lexington High Schools consolidated, the division lost two gymnasiums while tripling the student population and expanding athletic programs. Consequently, an auxiliary gym has remained an unmet capital improvement priority for over two decades.

Addressing financial concerns, Chairman Burant noted that building the recreation center will not require tax increases, as regional partners will share operational contributions and current interest rates remain reasonable. She emphasized the economic benefits highlighted by RARO leadership, explaining that hosting regional tournaments and camps locally would keep travel spending within the community while drawing outside revenue to local businesses. Ultimately, she urged citizens to contact their Board of Supervisors representatives to advocate for funding, framing the project as a necessary and timely investment in the community's current youth and families rather than a cost to be deferred to future generations.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Burant reported on the ongoing superintendent search, noting an outstanding response with 15 total applicants from Virginia and five other states. The applicant pool consists of eight men and seven women, comprising three current or former superintendents, three assistant/associate/deputy superintendents, four central office administrators, and five principals. Candidate interviews are scheduled to begin in September in coordination with the Virginia School Board Association. Chairman Burant also reiterated the Board's deepest condolences to the family, colleagues, and students of the late Travis Roadcap, reflecting on the profound impact coaches and mentors have in shaping young lives. Additionally, Chairman Burant shared reports from recent community outreach events, including her presentation at the Rockbridge Area Prevention Coalition's ninth annual prevention forum on June 18 and a July 7 ribbon-cutting tour at the Work Skills Training Center for Youth in Goshen—a non-profit facility designed to empower students with disabilities ages 14 to 22. Lastly, Chairman Burant extended her gratitude to staff for their summer preparations and wished all students, families, and personnel a successful first day of school.

Assistant Superintendent Martino shared personal reflections on the profound impact of division staff and programs, noting firsthand how leadership from educators like Travis Roadcap and advisors in programs like FCCLA directly benefits students' personal growth and future opportunities. He emphasized the tradition of excellence across the division, including the long-standing success of the girls' lacrosse program, noting that such achievements do not happen by accident. Assistant Superintendent Martino expressed deep gratitude to colleagues and coaches throughout the division, acknowledging the countless unpaid hours they dedicate to guiding, mentoring, and supporting students beyond regular school hours.

SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, September 08, 2026 / 5:30 PM / Location: County of Rockbridge Administration Building, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Kathleen M. Burant, Chairman

Heather W. Bennington, Clerk of the Board