

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, September 08, 2026, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Kathleen Burant; Trustees Catie Brown, Lenna Ojure, Neil Whitmore, Superintendent Phillip Thompson and Clerk Heather Bennington.

Absent: Trustee Corey Berkstresser

CALL TO ORDER

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: Dr Phillip Thompson, Superintendent stated Action Item 10B, Resolution of Appreciation for Spencer Suter had been added for a roll call vote.

ORGANIZATION: None

RECOGNITION / SPECIAL PRESENTAION:

Resolution of Appreciation for Spencer Suter

Dr. Phillip Thompson, Superintendent reflected on his long-standing personal and professional relationship with retiring County Administrator Spencer Suter, noting that their connection spans decades back to working together in Harrisonburg. He expressed bittersweet congratulations on Mr. Suter's retirement and commended his dedicated efforts over the past 14 years to significantly improve the collaborative relationship between the School Board and the Board of Supervisors. Dr. Thompson emphasized Mr. Suter's accessibility, strong ethical standards, and professionalism, expressing deep appreciation for his enduring partnership with the school division.

Chairman Burant presented the Resolution of Appreciation honoring County Administrator Spencer Suter for his distinguished service to Rockbridge County upon his upcoming retirement on September 10, 2026. On September 8, 2026, the Rockbridge County School Board officially adopted the resolution, extending its sincere gratitude for his contributions and wishing him success, health, and happiness in his retirement.

RCHS SCA Sponsored Blood Drives

Ms. Jessika Crance, Special Education Teacher, Transition Coordinator, and SCA sponsor at Rockbridge County High School presented an overview of the school's ongoing community service project in partnership with the American Red Cross. Revived in 2022 following a COVID-19 pandemic hiatus, the program has grown to include three annual school-day blood drives, a staff blood drive on professional workdays, and a community summer drive, with plans to partner with Lexington City Schools for an end-of-year event. Ms. Crance highlighted strong student participation, noting that donor eligibility begins at age 16 with parental permission and that participants are eligible for graduation cords and American Red Cross scholarships. Since 2023, RCHS has hosted 13 blood drives, collecting 481 units of blood (impacted over 1,400 lives), engaging over 150 first-time donors, and securing nearly \$5,000 in student scholarships, alongside recognition as an American Red Cross "Blood Drive of the Week" in October 2025. Nurse aide and EMT students also gain hands-on experience by assisting during drives. The next SCA sponsored blood drive is scheduled for October 7, 2026, at the Rockbridge County High School Innovation Center.

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) August 11, 2026 [Regular Meeting]; 2) September 01, 2026 [Called Meeting]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraising Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Professional Staff

Philip Shapiro, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective September 9, 2026

Jessica Andrew, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, effective September 9, 2026

Appointments

Support Staff

Laela Bane, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, effective September 9, 2026

Randal Humphries, Bus Driver, Transportation, effective September 9, 2026

Joshua Tack, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School, effective September 9, 2026

Food Service Substitute

Caroline Durkin

Lily Gardner

Rebecca Glass

Kathy Johnson

Jennifer Stanley

Substitute Teacher

Carolyn Davis

Fall Coaches 2026-2027

Maury River Middle School

Cross Country

Alicia Gessell, Volunteer Coach

Professional Staff

Resignation

Alexis Barbee, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, resigning effective September 8, 2026

Support Staff

Resignation

Dawn Martin, School Nurse, Fairfield Elementary School, resigning effective August 31, 2026

Catherine Henderson, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, resigning effective August 21, 2026

Samantha Cramer, Custodian, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective September 25, 2026

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

BUDGET PLANNING: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Trustee Brown provided a committee report regarding the upcoming Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation Cornhole Tournament, now in its sixth year. The event is scheduled for Saturday, September 26th, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Reel Arena at the Virginia Horse Center. Sponsorship levels include \$250 for board sponsors and \$100 for business sponsors, while individual player entry is \$100 for non-board sponsors, with registrations available at the door.

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent presented an instructional report detailing professional learning initiatives undertaken across the division. On August 4, 2026, the special education department held a full-day training covering legal updates and IEP documentation. Subsequent sessions included internal training on the K-5 Amplify reading program for new teachers, de-escalation strategies led by special education colleagues for elementary staff, administrative review of grading practices and parent communication at the middle school, and tiered instruction interventions at the high school led by Mr. Sparks. A Lexia refresher was also provided at the middle school to support the Virginia Literacy Act reading intervention plans. Looking ahead, upcoming professional development includes school-customized sessions on student engagement strategies, as well as, specialized training for special education teachers during early release days.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Capital Improvement Plan 2027 - 2033

Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Officer presented an update on the division's Capital Improvement Plan, highlighting key upcoming projects. For FY27, scheduled capital projects include constructing new tennis courts at RCHS, the Recreation Center at RCHS, and completing

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HVAC system upgrades at Central Office, which will mark the conclusion of division-wide HVAC updates. No projects are currently slated for FY28. Looking further ahead to FY33, the plan adds estimated current-day pricing costs to upgrade kitchen facilities across all school buildings. Mr. Walters will present the Capital Improvement Plan 2027-2033 to the School Board for approval at the next scheduled meeting before submission to the Board of Supervisors.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Brown, passed by a 4-0 roll call vote, the board approved a resolution naming Mr. Jonathan Schwab, of The News-Gazette on the statewide VSBA Media Honor Roll.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Ojure, passed by a 4-0 roll call vote, the board approved a resolution of appreciation for Spencer Suter.

NEW BUSINESS: None

CLOSED SESSION:

Under Virginia Code § 2.2-3711.A(1) of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Chairman Burant recommended that the Board go into a Closed Meeting. The subject of the portion of the session was the discussion of personnel. Motion was made by Trustee Ojure, seconded by Trustee Brown, and passed by 4-0 vote.

The board entered into the Closed Meeting at 6:04 p.m.

(Trustee Berkstresser arrived at 6:12 p.m.)

The Board returned to Open Session at 6:44 p.m.

Trustee Whitmore read the following motion to Certify the Closed Meeting:

Whereas, the Rockbridge County School Board has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and;

Whereas, § 2.2-3712.D of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Rockbridge County School Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered.

Upon initial motion of Certification of Closed Meeting by Trustee Whitmore, and seconded by Trustee Brown, the motion passed by the following roll call vote:

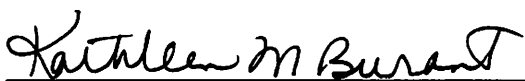
Trustee Whitmore	- Aye
Trustee Berkstresser	- Aye
Trustee Brown	- Aye
Trustee Ojure	- Aye
Chairman Burant	- Aye

SCHOOL BOARD

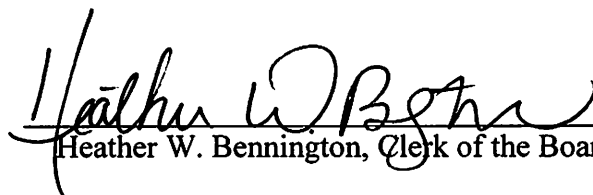
The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, October 13, 2026 / 5:30 PM / Location: Maury River Middle School Library, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Ojure, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.



Kathleen M. Burant, Chairman



Heather W. Bennington, Clerk of the Board