

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, October 12, 2021. The meeting was held at Maury River Middle School.

Present: Chairman Wendy Lovell; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Kathy Burant, Heather Hostetter, and Neil Whitmore; Superintendent Phillip Thompson and Deputy Clerk Timothy Martino.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lovell called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Hostetter read the public health order and asked that all wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status and encouraged those who do not want to wear a mask to participate virtually.

Chairman Lovell directed people's attention to available masks if they did not have one.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

RECOGNITION / SPECIAL PRESENTATION: None

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Hostetter, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, the board voted 5-0, the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: 1) September 14, 2021 [Regular Meeting]; 2) September 16, 2021 [Joint Meeting with the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors]
- Field Trip / Bus Use Requests
- Fundraising Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

APPOINTMENTS

Support Staff

Tracy Dunlap, Transportation Clerk, Transportation Office, 2021 – 2022 school year

Haley Showalter, Teacher Assistant, Mountain View Elementary School,

2021 – 2022 school year

Robert Gay, Transportation, Bus Driver, 2021 – 2022 school year

Car Driver

Michael Huffman, Sr.

Substitute Teachers

Austin Taylor

Jennifer Morais

Maria Chase

Food Service Substitutes

Kendell Painter

Winter Coaches 2021-2022

Rockbridge County High School

Girls' Basketball

Andrew Bellairs Varsity Head Basketball Coach

Penni Allen Varsity Assistant Basketball Coach

Keston Pelter JV Basketball Coach

Wrestling

Aaron Bruce Head Wrestling Coach

Swim

Elle Boyd Head Swim Coach

Leslie Ayers Volunteer Swim Coach

Winter Cheer

Shannon Bryan Head Winter Cheer Coach

Tasha Polly Assistant Coach

Indoor Track

Jennifer Showalter Head Indoor Track Coach
 Amy Zickafoose Assistant Indoor Track Coach
 Tiffany Mohler Volunteer Indoor Track Coach
 Taylor Tyree Volunteer Indoor Track Coach
 Chris Crawford Volunteer Indoor Track Coach
 Julie Tisone Volunteer Indoor Track Coach
 Gloria Brown Volunteer Indoor Track Coach
 Mike Brown Volunteer Indoor Track Coach

Maury River Middle School**Boys' Basketball**

Ron Clark Head Basketball Coach

Girls' Basketball

Rebecca Stratton Head Basketball Coach

Wrestling

John Campbell Head Coach
 Joshua Holton Volunteer Coach
 Stuart Brown Volunteer Coach

Resignations**Professional Staff****Retirement**

Laura Thomas, Teacher, Central Elementary School, retiring end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Resignations**Support Staff**

Lorin Wilhelm, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, resigning effective October 15, 2021

Coach

Misty Armstrong, Girls' Basketball Head Coach, Rockbridge County High School, resigning end of 2020-21 season

Business Items

- Approve new grant appropriations to Fund 50 in the amount of \$1,970,828.00
- Approve Monthly Financials in the amount of \$3,192,026.90

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Vice-Chairman Hostetter stated that according to the Governor's guidelines, this is a business meeting and there is a mask mandate in place.

One Rockbridge County Public School teacher addressed the board advocating that the wearing of masks at a public meeting is practicable, stating that non-mask wearing puts people at risk and liability.

Four Rockbridge County Public School teachers addressed the board and expressed their appreciation and gratitude to Superintendent Thompson and the Rockbridge County School Board for their support and enduring challenges, working tirelessly, and keeping the school environment safe and positive, and putting learning and students first.

One Rockbridge County Public School teacher addressed the board and stated that lesson plans have been published for the past year on Google Classroom. Also reflected that there will always be political and philosophical differences but all care about the children and should put children first.

One Rockbridge County Public School teacher expressed appreciation to Superintendent Thompson and the Rockbridge County School Board for their support as the 2021-2022 school year opened up. Also expressed appreciation and support to Dr. Thompson's initiative to add five additional workdays and asked that they be unencumbered.

One Rockbridge County Public School teacher expressed gratitude for support from the Rockbridge County School Board. Also expressed sentiment that in regards to the CRT debate, this teacher is not forced to teach it, does not have it as part of curriculum, and does not agree with it. Further stated sentiment of not liking to wear a mask but wearing it allows for all to be in school. Expressed embarrassment at the treatment of the Rockbridge County School Board and added that the Rockbridge County School Board members are respected and admired and it is evident that the Superintendent and board members care for all students and staff.

One patron addressed the board and stated that mask wearing is not a law; feels the Rockbridge County School Board is hiding information from parents; parents need to be the ones to decide about education; if the Rockbridge County School Board wants to make a difference in the communities, the dialogue has to continue; stated that when attacks are made, at the end of the day, you will stand before God.

One patron read the First Amendment and stated that she is attending the meeting to peacefully assemble; referenced immoral sanity playing out with CRT, child pornography and offered prayer asking that students be protected and to remove CRT.

One patron addressed the board saying all is not well and read the definition of a victim. Stated that the board has done well of playing a victim instead of being transparent; referenced SOL scores being down and that students are graduating with less education; lies are being spread and administration is promoting these things; kids look victimized by teachers and exploiting their problems; asked who approved tolerant week and gay pride week; stated possession on cell phone of a picture of a boy washing his hands in the restroom but wasn't dressed like a lady.

One patron addressed the board stating that Critical Race Theory would overturn the principles of the Declaration of Independence and asked why do you want to give power to the government; why do you give FBI permission.

One patron addressed the board stating that the School Board should be a wall of protection for staff and students; stated that males cannot be females; females cannot be males; males cannot give birth; feels we are setting ourselves on a course of corruption; feels we have indulged our sinful desires and we have all fallen sinful; God came as a man and was nailed to the cross, surrender yourself to Him; He is the fountain of life.

One patron addressed the board expressing happiness that the Board has enabled these teachers to feel support and referenced the utmost respect for teachers; apologized for teachers feeling like they have been victimized; the issue is that the people from Richmond and Washington DC have edicted that teachers teach new ideologies and that the public is not happy about that and the public have put board members in charge of protecting students; stated the focus should be on reading and calculating numbers and true history, just the facts; asked the board to open their thinking and understand that "we are here for children and to take the CRT bologna and transgender policies out of the picture"; submitted a resolution to the board from Russell County and asked the Board to read it and consider.

One patron addressed the board regarding their lack of communication; asked why CRT ideology is being brought to RCPS; asked if there will be monitors in the same sex bathrooms; bathroom policies won't change the bullying; mandate and law are two different things; masks affect the emotional and mental well-being of students and asked why spectators at football games do not have to wear masks but children do in school.

One patron addressed the board expressing appreciation for the job that teachers do while having lower appreciation for the board because they have not stood against policies. Stated that it is about the children, not really about the teachers, emphasized that the job teachers do must be fortified. Stated that this is a farming community and provides the perfect opportunity to tell how to teach sexuality.

One patron addressed the board expressing empathy to all teachers reflecting that all do not agree and not all have the same opinions but believes that all believe in the preciousness of our future and is perplexed why there is such controversy; the parents, the teachers, the board all need to be on the same team; focus needs to be on academics, social skills and how to get along; if we need to fight what's coming down from Richmond, we need to do it together; shouldn't be teaching color differences.

One patron addressed the board and expressed appreciation to the new audience members who haven't been at a meeting before; stated that there are BLM stickers in the high school and they advocate for defunding police.

One patron addressed the board citing that the community outcry has increased stating that home instruction has increased 28% in Rockbridge County and 50% in the state of Virginia; asked when the board will act on benchmarks of the comprehensive plan; stated expectation that the board be gatekeepers of community; sad that teachers are weaponized; stated that they have asked to be involved and the need for transparency.

Trustee Berkstresser stated that when board members have been contacted, contact information is not always included. He requested that patrons send an email or bring a letter to a board meeting while emphasizing that patrons should feel free to bring issues to the board members reflecting that there are no questions that won't be answered. If a patron feels an answer is incorrectly given, he requested they attend a board meeting. In regards to the library books with pornography, the vulgarity in the books is being addressed. He requested that patrons communicate with principals and to let the board members know if there is no resolution.

BUDGET PLANNING:

Superintendent Thompson provided a brief overview of preparation for the next fiscal year being a new biennium there are many unique challenges including an updated Local Composite Index, VRS, and healthcare changes. He stated that much of the budget is based on enrollment and that is always a moving target. School divisions are mandated to have a budget in April/May, which is well before the factors mentioned are known. Superintendent Thompson will be reaching out to board members to generate a budget work session.

- Chairman Lovell inquired if VRS is on the positive side this year.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that VRS investments have done well but that it is not a guarantee of a lower cost to school divisions, however, he remains hopeful.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Dr. Angela Wilder, Supervisor of Secondary Special Education, provided a report on English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). She stated that there are currently fifty-five current EL students. This program helps students who may struggle to achieve the standard diploma. Dr. Wilder stated that it is the responsibility of RCPS staff to identify students who are failing. She stated that there are students who are involved in internships and reflected that it is the hope to expand the program.

- Chairman Lovell inquired as to what internships are available.
 - Dr. Wilder stated that The Georges Hotel, The Vineyard, and several other local businesses participate.
- Trustee Berkstresser inquired what age students are involved in the program.
 - Dr. Wilder stated that the students are mainly juniors and seniors, however, there are possibilities of expanding in the future.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None

ACTION ITEM:

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, the board voted 5-0, to revise the 2021-2022 School Calendar to include five (5) additional workdays, unencumbered. These days were taken from student days.

- Trustee Berkstresser expressed his appreciation to Dr. Thompson and administration for coming up with this plan.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Hostetter, the board voted 5-0, to approve the Comprehensive Improvement Plan as presented.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by a 5-0 roll call vote, the Board approved to waive the required thirty (30) days advance notice and agree to vote on the renegotiated Superintendent's contract during this meeting, as provided for under Virginia Code section 22.1-60(D).

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Hostetter, and passed by a 5-0 roll call vote, in recognition of Dr. Thompson's exemplary performance and his concurrence, the Board unanimously approved to terminate his current appointment and contract effective June 30, 2022, and simultaneously reappoint and employ him for a new term of four (4) years as Division Superintendent beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2026 and that the board direct the Chairman to execute the contract.

- Superintendent Thompson expressed his appreciation to the Board, administrators, teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria, and all staff and stated that he is honored to serve Rockbridge County Public Schools.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Lovell stated that with the approval of the CIP Plan, there is a need for board members to serve on the Floyd S. Kay renovation project.

- Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Hostetter, the board voted 5-0, to approve Trustee Berkstresser and Trustee Burant as board representatives on the Floyd S. Kay renovation project.

SCHOOL BOARD:

The next regular monthly meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at Maury River Middle School, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT:

Upon motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.


Wendy W. Lovell, Chairman


Timothy J. Martino, Deputy Clerk of the Board