

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, August 10, 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 Tim Martino.

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

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

#### **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:**

Superintendent Thompson requested that "Return to Learn Plan" be added as Action Item 10C.

#### **RECOGNITION / SPECIAL PRESENTATION:**

Dr. Matthew Crossman, Director of School Services, presented Ms. Daphne Stickley, Supervisor of School Nutrition Services, with the "School Meals Hero 2020-2021" Award, on behalf of "No Kid Hungry Virginia". He stated that since March 2020, the school nutrition department has gone through a huge transition of serving and providing student meals whether at-home learning or in-person learning, during the school year and the summer meals program. Ms. Stickley was able to coordinate with school cafeteria workers, food vendors, school transportation, and technology department to totally transform how our students were fed this past year.

Ms. Tracy Hinty, Supervisor of Federal Programs, expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to share amazing things being done through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers in Rockbridge County Public Schools, highlighting the program at Natural Bridge Elementary School. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Learning Center is funded by a federal grant to support opportunities for academic enrichment during non-school hours for children. This includes before and after school, weekends and summer. The program helps students meet state and local standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics; offers students enrichment activities that complement regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children. Natural Bridge Elementary was awarded a grant most recently in August 2018. That grant was written under the focus and vision of former principal Vicki Stevens. SPACE (an acronym for Supporting Parents and Children in All Environments). Highlights from this grant include parenting classes in partnership with Rockbridge Area community services, adult education offerings for adult family members, and multiple family events. (Astronomy, Great American Camp Out, and Drone events). The Virginia Department of Education was so impressed with our program that they chose Natural Bridge Elementary as one of two Virginia programs that were showcased at a National Symposium last month.

She introduced Mr. Rick Bain, Principal, Natural Bridge Elementary School, who has spearheaded the program during the past two years. Mr. Bain stated that Natural Bridge Elementary School was awarded a grant in 2018. The program at NBE was one of two programs in Virginia featured at National Symposium. Mr. Bain expressed his appreciation to School Resource Officer Norris, students and parents who interacted with several types of drones. He provided a history of the drones and stated that there had been collaboration with Natural Bridge State Park this summer which allowed for drones to be flown around the Natural Bridge State Park (sky and underwater). He stated that the program promoted what they did through social media. The goal is to inspire our students to participate in the program.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Seven patrons addressed the board in opposition of teaching the Critical Race Theory.

Eight patrons addressed the board in opposition of adoption of a transgender policy.

Six patrons addressed the board referencing opposition of teaching Critical Race Theory and adoption of the transgender policy.

Three patrons addressed the board in opposition of teaching Critical Race Theory, adoption of a transgender policy, and opposition of wearing a mask.

One patron addressed the board in opposition of requiring the wearing of masks in schools.

One patron addressed the board in support of requiring the wearing of masks in schools.

One patron addressed the board in opposition of a shutdown of schools in the future.

Four patrons addressed the board in opposition of the proposed club policy.

One patron addressed the board in support of transgender rights.

Three patrons addressed in the board in support of adopting the transgender policy.

One patron addressed the board in support of the Rockbridge County School Board.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- Minutes: 1) June 8, 2021 [Regular Meeting]; 2) July 29, 2021 [Special Meeting]
- Field Trip / Bus Use Requests
- Fundraising Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- **Appointments and Resignations**

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

##### **Professional Staff**

Andrew Bellairs, Math Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, 2021 – 2022 school year

Jane Dekle, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, 2021 – 2022 school year

Jatniel Rodriguez, ESL Teacher, Division, 2021 – 2022 school year

Brookney Thomas, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, 2021 – 2022 school year

Destinee Kerr, School Counselor, Fairfield Elementary School, 2021 – 2022 school year

##### **Support Staff**

Amy Sholes, Teacher Assistant, Central Elementary School, 2021 – 2022 school year

Alesa Chaffin, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School, 2021 – 2022 school year

##### **Food Service Workers**

Laura Simmons, Food Service Worker, Central Elementary School, 2021 – 2022 school year

Kathy Doran, Food Service Worker, Maury River Middle School, 2021 – 2022 school year

Pamela Whitlock, Food Service Worker, Fairfield Elementary School, 2021 – 2022 school year

#### **Fall Coaches**

##### **Rockbridge County High School**

##### **Football**

Mark Posten Head Coach

Heath Glass Assistant Coach

Travis Roadcap Assistant Coach

Mat Rapoza Assistant Coach

Zach Rhodenizer Assistant Coach

Stuart Rogers Assistant Coach

Brian Dietz Assistant Coach

Corey Hall Assistant Coach

Robert Rhodenizer, Volunteer Coach

Malik Dunn Volunteer Coach

Derek Carter Volunteer Coach

##### **Golf**

David Miller Head Coach

##### **Cross Country**

Julie Tisone Head Coach

Peter Jetton, Assistant Coach

##### **Cheerleading**

Shannon Bryan Head Coach

Tasha Polly Assistant Coach

Sarah Parnell Volunteer Coach

#### **Volleyball**

Amanda McCoy Head Coach

Michelle Kirby Assistant Coach

Hannah Burch JV Coach

Jaden Harrison Volunteer Coach

Mike Burch Volunteer Coach

**Maury River Middle School****Volleyball**

Candace Camden Head Coach

**Cross Country**

Jenn Ludtke (split position)

Paul Spangler (split position)

**Club Sponsors****RCHS**

Mary Holton Newspaper

Brian Hamelman Yearbook

Amanda Burks Forensics

Chris McGrath Academic Team

Patrick Bradley Assistant Academic Team

Jamie Vest SCA

Stephanie Brooks National Honor Society

Ashlee Payne Destination Imagination

**MRMS**

Sarah Schultz Destination Imagination

Erin Jones Yearbook

Courtney Diette National Junior Honor Society

Sarah Edwards Gifted Coordinator

Cyndi Tucker Special Education Coordinator

Tasha Polly Activities Coordinator

**CES**

Elizabeth Schmidt Gifted Coordinator

Michelle Hughes Destination Imagination

**FES**

Christy Imler Gifted Coordinator

Cathy Whitesell Destination Imagination

**MVES**

Gail Clark Gifted Coordinator

**NBES**

Beth McElroy Gifted Coordinator

**Resignations****Support Staff**

Melissa Leonard, Transportation, Transportation Clerk, resigned effective August 3, 2021

Heidi Burrows, Food Service Worker, Maury River Middle School resigned effective  
August 10, 2021**2021-2022 Substitute Teachers, Food Service Substitutes (8-10-2021)****Substitute Teachers**

Lori Apgar

Christian Becker

Jeffrey Black

Jennifer Brown

Jennifer Bushnell

Sean Capps

Craig Carlock

Travis Chaplin

Rebecca Chittum Conley

Lynn Clark

Jeremy Cosgriff

Sharon Creamer

Susan Culpepper

Sara Cunningham

Hilary Dalton

James Dotson

Cynthia Duffield

Adrianna Duran

Debbie Fox

**2021-2022 Substitute Teachers, Food Service Substitutes (8-10-2021) – [continued]**

Diana Hawes  
 Kaileigh Henson  
 Becky Herndon  
 Ashley Hipes  
 Laura Holt  
 Joshua Holton  
 Lamis Hourani  
 Janet Hyden  
 Teresa Irvine  
 Brenda Jackson  
 Jeffrey "Guy" Jackson  
 Cynthia Jones  
 Karl Kimbler  
 Rhonda Lawson  
 Mary LeGrys  
 William LeMert  
 Joy Lively  
 Ron Loy  
 Bridget Marshall  
 Bryant Mason  
 Amy Moore  
 JoAnn Morgan  
 Peggy Nicely  
 Deborah Perlozzo  
 Kelsey Ray  
 Ann Schrader  
 Thomas Scott  
 Alexis Slaydon  
 Charles Smith  
 Rebecca Stratton  
 Sarah Stuttard  
 Jeannie VanNess  
 Amy Walters  
 Deborah Weddle  
 Linda Wood

**Food Service Substitutes**

Doris Buchanan  
 Gloria Clemmer  
 Elaine Higgins  
 Fran Manspile

- **Business Items**

- Approve carryover grant appropriations to Fund 50 in the amount of \$760,623.00.
- Approve new grant appropriations to Fund 50 in the amount of \$2,012,142.00.
- Approve Monthly Financials in the amount of \$1,528,918.98.

**BUDGET PLANNING:** None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** None

**INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:** None

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Mr. Jason Kirby, Chief Business Officer, provided information on New Teacher Orientation. He stated that there are forty-two new staff members with a combined 222 years of experience.

- Chairman Lovell inquired if mentors are paired within discipline and received confirmation from Mr. Kirby.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, the board voted 5-0, to approve the Crisis Plans as presented.

Mr. Tim Martino, Assistant Superintendent, provided the policy for "Student Organizations/Clubs" as an Action Item.

- Trustee Berkstresser stated that he would like to table the policy for a month in order to gain answers to some questions.
- Trustee Burant stated that she feels it is important to: 1) Define curricular versus non-curricular; 2) Define the tiers, as she does not like an upper and lower tier for clubs; 3) Clarify sponsor versus supervisor; 4) Request that all students have permission slips.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that the requests are reasonable and can be discussed. He stated that the policy was not designed to tier clubs; rather to define the lines of what is appropriate and not appropriate. He stated that there is not a problem with behavior of clubs within Rockbridge County Public Schools, referencing that this is the result of not having a policy at all.
    - Trustee Berkstresser expressed his sentiment that the school administration cannot keep the parents from knowing what their child is doing and feels that the board needs to research further.
- Chairman Lovell inquired what would be the impact if the adoption of this policy is tabled.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that he wants to ensure that policies are in place, adding that adoption of this new policy does not have to take place today; in fact does not have to take place at all. The item can be tabled with further discussion during August.
  - Trustee Whitmore inquired if there is a current policy that has been voted on in the past.
    - Superintendent Thompson confirmed that there is no policy currently in the policy manual, noting that there are likely practices in place.

Chairman Lovell asked how the board wishes to proceed.

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, the board voted 4-1, with Trustee Hostetter voting nay, to table the item until the September board meeting.

Superintendent Thompson presented "Return to Learn 2021-2022". The following are highlights of his presentation:

- **In-Person Learning:** Since the beginning of the global pandemic, a primary goal of Rockbridge County Public Schools (RCPS), has been to safely return all of our students and staff back to five days of full-time, in-person instruction. During the 2020-2021 school year, we were able to take some steps toward this goal. We recognize that most students and families want to get back to in-person learning as soon as it is safe to do so. It is for this reason, following the most up to date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), RCPS will be offering in person learning for five days a week at the start of the 2021-2022 school year.
- **Mitigation Efforts:** RCPS will continue to follow CDC mitigation guidelines in an effort to keep our students and staff healthy as they return to school, including: • Masks/face coverings • Upgraded air filtration systems in all schools (bipolar ionization/MERV-13 filters) • Cleaning and disinfection • Handwashing • Contact tracing • Quarantine/isolation • Social distancing We ask that everyone please self-check your temperature at home before coming to school. If it reads above 100.4° or you are feeling ill, please stay home.
- **Social Distancing:** Students will be required to maintain 3 feet of physical distance at all times to the greatest extent possible. Greater social distance will sometimes be required. For example, 6 feet of distance to the greatest extent possible when participating in music/band activities.
- **School Transportation:** Bus capacity will return to pre-pandemic levels, but parents are still encouraged to drive their students to and from school when possible. A federal order requiring masks to be worn on public transportation remains in effect, and applies to buses operated by VA public schools. In compliance with the federal order, all students and drivers are required to wear masks while riding RCPS transportation.
- **School Meals:** Meals (Lunch and Breakfast) will continue to be free to all students, due to an extension of the USDA waiver through June 2022. The logistics of serving and eating are still under development and may vary from school to school.

- **Cloth Face Coverings/Masks:** The health and safety of our students and staff remains a consistently high priority in our school division. As the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus spread continues, the most recent (July 27, 2021) guidance from the CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors in schools, regardless of vaccination status. The Virginia Department of Health and our regional district make the same recommendation. On August 6, 2021, Governor Northam announced that due to a State law (SB 1303) that passed in March, all public schools must follow CDC guidance regarding mitigation strategies to include the wearing of masks. Based upon Senate Bill 1303, information from our local health district, our legal counsel, and our liability insurer, it is necessary that we change our mask policy released in late July and now require masks for all students, teachers, staff, and visitors (aged 2 and above) while indoors in our facilities.
  - Trustee Hostetter addressed the audience requesting them to respect the meeting portion as the board respected their public comment time.
- **Athletics and Extracurricular Activities:** RCPS will operate all approved athletic practices and events and all extracurricular activities in alignment with the participation guidance provided by the Virginia High School League (VHSL). Athletics, Clubs, and all other extracurricular activities at middle and elementary schools will return to pre-pandemic norms as long as proper mitigation strategies can be implemented to ensure safe participation for all involved.
- **COVID-19 Monitoring:** While we are hopeful that COVID-19 transmission rates remain or better yet decrease from the current moderate level in our area, please know that all plans are subject to change based upon local transmission rate data and up to date guidance from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and CDC. **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*** If needed, individual schools may transition temporarily to fully virtual instruction for a length of time determined in coordination with our local health department. Such a decision would be made in response to case numbers and evidence of transmission at that particular school. While we hope to avoid this, families are asked have a plan in place should this need to occur.
- Chairman Lovell expressed her sentiment that we all fight COVID and not each other; our children cannot get the vaccine so if wearing masks helps our schools stay open then that is what we do.
- Trustee Berkstresser noted that Augusta County and Botetourt Public Schools are changing to masks for all.
- Chairman Lovell inquired how schools make sure that parents know, with clarity, our policies.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that things change daily but information will be released.
- Trustee Whitmore inquired if HVAC upgrades are on schedule.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that bipolarization and MERV13 filters are in.
- Trustee Burant inquired about status of Fairfield Elementary School HVAC.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that the HVAC system is in good shape, noting that the intercom system still has some work to be done reflecting a hard time in getting parts.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Hostetter, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, the board voted 5-0, to approve "Return to Learn 2021-2022" as presented.

- Chairman Lovell expressed her appreciation for all that has been done to keep our kids learning in hopes that this school year will be smoother than last year.
  - Superintendent Thompson reflected that the staff is tremendous in trying to work hard in getting ready for this year, along with summer school programs. The teachers have been amazing in what they did last year and this summer in trying to get ready for this year; all in hopes of getting back to normal as soon as we can along with being safe.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

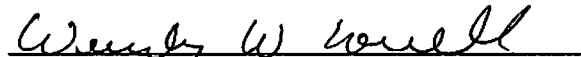
Trustee Burant inquired how the clubs will start the school year since there has not been a policy. Superintendent Thompson stated that they will start the school year the same as they did last year.

**SCHOOL BOARD:**

The next regular monthly meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, September 14 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 Burant, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

  
Wendy W. Lovell, Chairman  
Timothy J. Martino, Deputy Clerk of the Board