

The Rockbridge County School Board held a special meeting on Thursday, November 29, 2018 at the Rockbridge County School Board Office.

Present: Chairman David McDaniel; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Heather Hostetter, Wendy Lovell, Neil Whitmore; Superintendent Phillip Thompson; Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

Board of Supervisors Members Present: R.R. Campbell, J.M. Higgins, D.W. Hinty, A.J. Lewis, II, D.E. Lyons; Spencer Suter, County Administrator and Clerk to Board.

#### CALL TO ORDER

School Board Chairman McDaniel called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

#### SCHOOL DIVISION FY2019-FY2023 CIP – CONSIDERATION OF FINAL DRAFT

Superintendent Thompson stated that the Capital Improvements Plan is the same that was presented at the last Joint Meeting with the Board of Supervisors. The plan was approved at the Rockbridge County School Board Meeting of September 11, 2018.

- Supervisor Higgins stated that the CIP was approved without knowing where the fund was coming from and referenced the study that will be done inquiring of the status. He further stated he feels there is a need to have a restricted account in place for future use to fund CIP.
  - Spencer Suter stated that the study is underway and will influence further direction of the CIP.
  - Supervisor Hinty stated his sentiment that there needs to be a funding mechanism in place.

Chairman McDaniel provided an update on FY19 projects that are already in place. He stated that the feasibility study will enlighten the costs of the FY20-21 projects for Rockbridge County High School and that the HVAC at Central Elementary School and Fairfield Elementary School are set up for replacement FY21.

Supervisor Higgins requested an update on projects based on last years budget.

- Randy Walters, Director of Operation and Maintenance, provided an update on projects that have taken place during the 2018-2019 school year.
- Chairman McDaniel stated that complete information can be gathered and sent to the Board of Supervisors.
- Superintendent Thompson summarized that no projects have been moved further down on the list.

Supervisor Lyons inquired if the school system is comfortable with the numbers as provided in the CIP; specifically the amount of three million dollars for an auxiliary gym. He also inquired on the need for updated football lights.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that he is comfortable with the dollar amounts originally given although there has been some time passed since the quotes were obtained. The architect gave the amount of three million for full size court, seating, AC, team room space, and bathrooms; noting that the feasibility study will correct estimate amounts. He stated that there may be savings from the updated football field lights but it is more directed to the need for baseball and softball field lights. This will allow for scheduling of better times for games and will allow students to have more instructional class time and less early student departure times.

Mr. Suter provided an update on the restricted account, balance of \$295,668.

Supervisor Hinty inquired on the status of the school system financial software program.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that the process is 2/3 through before implementation, noting there have been a few obstacles to overcome.
  - Supervisor Hinty inquired if MUNIS software program will link with the County of Rockbridge program.
    - Superintendent Thompson stated that there is no direct interface, which is contrary to what was told to Rockbridge County Public Schools by the sales representative.
    - Supervisor Higgins inquired if it was in written in the contact that there would be a direct link.
    - Superintendent Thompson stated that it is not written in the contract.
- Chairman McDaniel emphasized that the MUNIS software program will work well for the school system even though there will still be two programs, noting it is better than having forty excel spreadsheets. He further stated he understands that there is a retired staff member of the BRIGHT software company, who is working to develop a code so the two programs can link.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that the person working on the code is considered a third party entity and he understands that there will be a cost involved.
- Supervisor Higgins requested that a letter be written to the MUNIS company reflecting that the program is not capable of doing what was told.
- Supervisor Hinty added that the letter should also reflect that they should pay to patch the system.
- Supervisor Campbell stated that the supervisors were very clear that the new system would need to communicate with the county program.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that the Vice-President of MUNIS is well aware of the situation. Telephone and written communication has been made expressing concerns.

**PRESENTATION OF POTENTIAL EMT PROGRAM / TRAINING POSITION**

Mr. Mike Craft, Principal, Rockbridge County High School, provided information on the proposed High School Based EMT Program. He stated that the program is modeled after the Massanutten Technical Center Program. The proposed program could give students the opportunity to compete and gain certification for CTE programs and open career pathways as an initial EMT. This would be in addition to the current Health and Medical Sciences Program. The program could use the existing Health and Medical Science room. It is anticipated that if this program becomes a reality, firefighter courses may be in the near future.

Nathan Ramsey, Rockbridge County Director of Fire and EMS, provided extensive information on the Fire and EMS Agencies of Rockbridge County, noting his department provides oversight to volunteer Fire and Rescue operations in Rockbridge County. There are currently fifteen employees, both part-time and full-time within the department. He stated that the proposed goals are:

- To form a partnership with Rockbridge County Public Schools to recruit potential volunteers for our communities;
  - Increase the interest in rescue services;
  - Create a smooth transition to higher level of EMS training/certification, i.e. Paramedic
- Supervisor Lyons inquired if there are age requirements.
    - Chief Ramsey stated that a student must be 16 years of age to begin the class and that very little equipment is used or needed.
  - Chairman McDaniel inquired if there is a cost to the student and if it is ok for students to run calls.
    - Chief Ramsey stated that the agency covers the cost of the course but that there is a testing fee of \$75 at the end of the course that is the responsibility of the student/parent. The non-monetary cost to the student is the amount of time involved outside of school. He stated that students may run calls but they are to stay back and observe, not be active. He feels it is important for students to be aware of the reality of answering calls and what is involved as it may help the student determine if it something they are passionate about and want to follow.
  - Chairman McDaniel inquired if a physician must sign off for students to participate.
    - Chief Ramsey stated that Dr. Sheridan, Operational Medical Director for Rockbridge County, has signed off and will cover the students in the program.
  - Supervisor Lyons inquired on the class size and how students would be screened for the program.
    - Mr. Craft stated that it is anticipated that the program will have 6-8 students. The screening process is still under discussion.
  - Mr. Suter expressed his sentiment that it is important to get students who are interested, market the program to those students, and to screen to obtain the students who are truly interested.
  - Supervisor Lyons expressed his support to the program.
  - Supervisor Campbell expressed his support for the program.
  - Chairman McDaniel expressed his appreciation to Mr. Craft and Chief Ramsey for their presentation and work being done to make this a possibility for Rockbridge County Public Schools. He further expressed his support to the partnership with the county and schools for the good of the community.
  - Mr. Suter stated that there is another good component to consider with this program that it may provide resource within the Fire and Rescue system.
  - Supervisor Lyons inquired if the class will transfer to grades.
    - Mr. Craft anticipates the class operating on a rubric system. Massanutten Technical Center has offered their assistance in the initiation of the program.

- Chief Ramsey stated that the program will follow guidelines for high school programs with SOL.
- Supervisor Higgins reflected that the cost would be minimum but must have an instructor.
  - Chief Ramsey stated that there are currently three staff members with certifications who may be interested in the position. The new position of Educational Coordinator will be for two block sessions per day. The new position will be full-time employee of the Fire and Rescue Department.
- Trustee Hostetter requested confirmation that Rockbridge County Public Schools would provide compensation for time.
  - Chief Ramsey confirmed that it has been discussed but the percentage has not been finalized.
- Trustee Lovell stated that she feels there is a great need for this in the community.
- Chairman McDaniel expressed his sentiment that not all students excel in academics and could allow students to excel in this area.
- Chairman McDaniel stated that the Educational Coordinator would be employed by the Fire and Rescue Department and housed in the Rockbridge County High School and inquired who would be in charge of the program for student issues.
  - Chief Ramsey stated that the Educational Coordinator will be housed in the Rockbridge County High School and would report to Mr. Craft. Policies and procedures of Rockbridge County Public Schools would be followed.
- Supervisor Higgins expressed his sentiment that he feels it is important to help with this program.
- Supervisor Hinty expressed his sentiment that even though there will be instructor cost for Rockbridge County, it could help in preparing for college as well as gaining community volunteers.
- Mr. Suter stated that there is not a lot of start-up cost involved but there will be more cost for a fire fighter program if it comes to fruition. He also reminded that this program will not guarantee a flood of volunteers because students may go to college or move out of the area.
- Mr. Craft stated that he would like to add it to the Rockbridge County High School Program of Studies, even if it is not offered for the 2019-2020 school year.
  - Trustee Lovell confirmed that the Rockbridge County High School Curriculum Night is January 15, 2019.
  - Chairman McDaniel stated that the Rockbridge County High School Program of Studies is on the agenda for school board approval at their meeting of December 4, 2018.
- Mr. Suter requested that Mr. Craft and Chief Ramsey present the costs at the next Executive Committee meeting so that figures can be placed into the budget.

#### **FY2020 FUNDING PRIORITIES: SCHOOL DIVISION**

Chairman McDaniel provided an overview of the document "Rockbridge County Public Schools Budget Preparation for the Joint Meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board and the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors Fiscal Year 2019-2020". He stated that the Rockbridge County School Board reviewed their budgeting practices for FY19 and were able to reduce the original budget request by \$204,919. He further stated that in trying to be clear with sources of revenue, Rockbridge County Public Schools plan to budget the following items for FY20: E-Rate, Sale of Other Equipment, Sale of retired school buses, tuition students, summer school, donations, private contributions, special gifts, other funds (transcripts, etc.).

Chairman McDaniel reported that the FY19 budget is based on Average Daily Membership (ADM) of 2540 and that Rockbridge County Public Schools had an ADM for March 31, 2018 of 2574, which is not the norm. Rockbridge County Public Schools will use the current VDOE projected ADM for FY20 of 2557. He further stated that if the ADM is higher than projected, funding can change and it is better to be conservative.

- Supervisor Lewis stated that he knows the school system has been conservative for a number of years in the ADM number used for budget projection purposes.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that he is comfortable using that figure as it does not put Rockbridge County Public Schools at risk for budgeting purposes, noting that enrollment numbers are monitored closely.
  - Supervisor Higgins stated that if the enrollment is more, there will be more revenue generated.
    - Chairman McDaniel explained that this is not always the case in that if ADM is higher, the funding may vary. Enrollment numbers are not known early enough to meet the budget deadlines and requirements.

Chairman McDaniel provided information on the FY20 budget considerations for VRS and VRS associated charges for group life and health care credit. Jim Gordon of OneDigital has estimated a 12% increase at this point. The open enrollment period is in May.

- Supervisor Lyons inquired when the last time insurance was put out to bid.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that it was put out to bid last year but no bids were submitted.
  - Trustee Lovell stated that Jim Gordon will explain plan changes that will be offered earlier to employees and give more time to make their decision.
- Mr. Suter stated that the County of Rockbridge had two plans: 1) standard \$1,000 deductible; 2) high deductible HSA. The County of Rockbridge made a contribution to each employee to go into their account as an incentive, noting that the contribution was basically the balance of what would have been paid for the employee share by the county.
- Chairman McDaniel requested that information on the HSA be presented at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Supervisor Lyons inquired if the early retirement program will continue.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that there is a substitute teacher shortage as well as other positions and it has been helpful to have retired teachers to provide assistance.

Chairman McDaniel stated that the Rockbridge County School Board was able to help with teacher salary ranges for FY19.

- Supervisor Campbell expressed his appreciation for the data utilized on the salary comparison sheet.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that he feels the Rockbridge County School Board met the goal of getting teacher salaries "to the middle".
- Chairman McDaniel stated the salary comparison reflects that Rockbridge County is not a cheap place to live but feels the objective of the Rockbridge County School Board has been met in regards to teacher salaries, and wants to keep going in that direction.
- Trustee Lovell stated that neighboring localities also continue to move in the same direction, which means Rockbridge County, needs to continue with the goal.

Chairman McDaniel expressed his appreciation to the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors for providing the School Resource Officers at Rockbridge County High School and Maury River Middle School. He also referenced the School Resource Officer assigned at Natural Bridge Elementary School through grant funding. He stated that he would like to encourage a partnership with Rockbridge County Public Schools, the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, and Rockbridge County Sheriff's Department for School Resource Officers.

Chairman McDaniel expressed his appreciation to Rockbridge County High School administrators, staff, and teachers citing that in the spring of 2018, of the 145 RCHS students who took the Advanced Placement exam, 90% scored a three or higher, compared to the state average of 69%. He stated that these students will have the skills and knowledge to invest in the community. He reflected that a partnership has been developed with Byers for the welding program and administration continues to look for other businesses to partner with.

- Superintendent Thompson confirmed that administration will continue to work closely with Byers Institute, and Modine in relation to the HVAC program.
- Chairman McDaniel also stated that they will continue to work closely with the Diesel Mechanic program, noting that there is a cost but believes it is an investment for the community.
  - Trustee Berkstresser stated that there are two students participating in internships at White's Truck Stop. As a result of opportunities such as these, curriculum and student policies have been developed with Rockridge County High School.

Supervisor Lyons inquired as to the percentage of special education students included in the student enrollment. He also inquired as to the number in private day placement.

- Christine Wood, Director of Special Education, stated that as of November 28, 2018, there are 423 special education students; of those 39 are private day or residential that equates to 9%.
  - Supervisor Higgins inquired if there is a statistic to reflect if children who are placed at private or residential placements return to Rockbridge County Public Schools.

- Ms. Wood stated that students do not return to Rockbridge County Public Schools as often as desired. There is ongoing conversation with staff to keep students in Rockbridge County Public Schools by looking at existing placements, looking at scheduling to better meet student needs in our schools and recognizing the importance to utilize local resources. She cited that there are a few placements by DSS, which Rockbridge County Public Schools has no control over.
- Supervisor Higgins inquired if there is any program that could be incorporated into our school setting that could be offered.
  - Ms. Wood stated that she would research the issue, realizing that mental health needs are a factor. It is a statewide issue, not just with Rockbridge County.
  - Superintendent Thompson stated that he realizes the cost involved needs to be considered, but that specialized training of staff is needed. He stated that he understands other localities are dealing with the same issue. Rockbridge County does have the PETC program, self-contained programs at Maury River Middle School and Rockbridge County High School.
  - Chairman McDaniel stated that part of the decision is up to the parent. If a parent decides not to send a child to private day or residential, there is a chance it could cause disruption to other children in the regular education classroom.
    - Superintendent Thompson confirmed that the child's placement could be dictated by their IEP.
  - Trustee Lovell expressed her sentiments that these students will be taxpayers one day and that it is her hope that we can work together and solve educational issues, not acting as separate entities.
    - Supervisor Lewis agreed that we are all stakeholders.

#### **FY2020 FUNDING PRIORITIES: COUNTY**

- Mr. Suter stated that one priority that is relevant to what has been discussed is the funding for public education, coupled with associated economic development initiatives and fire and EMS services, as well as follow-up on solid waste management and emergency communications.
- Chairman McDaniel stated that the school board members will review the document and forward questions to Mr. Suter. He requested that Mr. Suter notify the school board of a timeline of when certain data is needed.
- Mr. Suter stated that it was beneficial that the Estimate of Needs from the Rockbridge County School Board was received earlier in the process last year.

#### **SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER DISCUSSION**

Supervisor Hinty stated that the School Resource Officers will be a joint venture between the Rockbridge County School Board and the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, noting that the supervisors understand the need for it. He stated that it will be a priority to figure out funding. He further stated that there may be other variables with the Sheriff's Department to be determined.

- Chairman McDaniel stated that it has a great benefit to the Rockbridge County Public Schools system. He cited the School Resource Office at Natural Bridge Elementary School has generated positive comments from the community.

#### **ADDITIONAL COMMENT OR DISCUSSION**

Supervisor Campbell stated that a citizen had contacted him with a request to re-name the loop in front of Mountain View Elementary School to include the name of Charles Bartlett, who passed away during the 2017-2018 school year. Mr. Bartlett was a former custodian of Mountain View Elementary school who was much loved by the school and community.

- Chairman McDaniel agreed that Mr. Bartlett had a huge impact on many lives over the years.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that he will begin working on it and will research VSBA policy.
  - Mr. Randy Walters, Director of Operations and Transportation, stated that the Mountain View Elementary School interior courtyard is named in his memory.

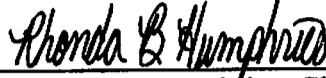
Chairman McDaniel provided the document "School Board Legislative Priorities" and stated that the Rockbridge County School Board would appreciate the support of the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Lovell and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.



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David B. McDaniel, Chairman



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Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board