

The Rockbridge County School Board held a special meeting on Tuesday, October 10, 2017 at the Rockbridge County School Board Office.

Present: Chairman David McDaniel; Trustees Kevin Brooks, Albert Lewis, Wendy Lovell, Laurie Strong; Superintendent Phillip Thompson; Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

School Board Chairman McDaniel called the meeting to order at 5:26 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a Budget Work Session.

BUDGET WORK SESSION

Superintendent Thompson provided budget information stating his goal of receiving direction from the board regarding priorities, which will allow staff to begin collecting information needed to aid the budget development process. Items presented were:

1. Budgetary Considerations:

- Virginia Retirement System (VRS): Superintendent Thompson stated that rates are not expected until December 2017.
- Health Insurance: Superintendent Thompson met with Jim Gordon who has is reviewing numbers with a preliminary projection of 10% increase and will update in January 2018.
 - Chairman McDaniel stated that it cannot be determined until August who uses the plan.
 - Trustee Brooks inquired if Mr. Gordon is also reviewing the prospect of a state pool.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that discussion has been more in direction of pooling with other entities, possible government entities, or other surrounding school divisions. Mr. Gordon will also consider entities outside of Rockbridge County, if they give approval for release of their data. The purpose would be to determine if it would be beneficial for Rockbridge County Public Schools to be a part of that process.
 - Chairman McDaniel cautioned that Rockbridge County Public Schools is the largest component when compared to the county government, and two surrounding school divisions. He is not sure that it would benefit Rockbridge County Public Schools in a local pool.
 - Chairman McDaniel stated that health insurance has been discussed each year during his time serving on the board and he feels that in the future the board will need to lock in how much will be paid. It is a continuous increase to school divisions.
 - Trustee Brooks stated that he feels the board must look at teacher pay before the board determines a lock-in rate for health insurance.
 - Trustee Strong stated that history shows revenue from taxes eight to ten years ago was higher than what is received now and it creates a serious problem impacting what can be done now for teachers and students.
 - Property and Casualty Insurance: Superintendent Thompson will meet with John Minor in October 2017.
 - Governor's Budget: Superintendent Thompson reminded that this is an Election Year and that Governor McAuliffe will create an initial budget but it is anticipated that the newly elected governor will make changes before going to the General Assembly. This could impact a later date in spring 2018 for an approved budget from the Governor's Office.

2. School Board Initial Priorities Draft – draft for consideration:

- Superintendent Thompson reviewed the School Board's priority of improving kindergarten student/teacher ratio.
 - Trustee Strong requested a summary of visitation to kindergarten classes with a follow-up report in November. She requested that the report reflect a job description of how much time is physically in the room how many students and how many adults, teacher and teacher aide, in each room. She stated her concern that there may be kindergarten students with special needs who are not assessed until January because of large class sizes. Her goal is for all kindergarten students, small and large classes, to have the same opportunities.
 - Trustee Lewis stated that the data should reflect not just special needs students but from both spectrums.
 - Chairman McDaniel requested that data also be provided regarding teacher aides and how a typical day would present.

- Superintendent Thompson stated this will be discussed at the next elementary principals' meeting. He verified that he will request Tim Martino and Jason Kirby to include teacher, teacher aide, of special needs classes as well as intervention and enrichment data to the November report.
 - Superintendent Thompson reviewed the School Board's priority of improving teacher pay.
 - Trustee Lovell stated that she feels progress has been made with the funding body and wants to gain momentum.
 - Superintendent Thompson referenced the comparison chart they received in 2016 of the 20 surrounding school divisions. The chart compared local composite index and Rockbridge County was ranked fourth highest with the ability to pay and ranked 11th or 12th in comparison with respect to pay with the other 20 school divisions. It is his intent to update the comparison chart with hope that Rockbridge County will rank higher for FY19.
 - Trustee Lewis expressed his sentiment that the Rockbridge County School Board has worked with this topic improving teacher pay for three years and has given the Board of Supervisors schedules detailing the status for Rockbridge County Public Schools but that the School Board has not suggested what would be the ideal funding level.
 - Chairman McDaniel requested that Superintendent Thompson find out how surrounding areas incorporated the 5% VRS increase-inquiring if it is part of their yearly increase.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that he will generate a comparison chart that will assist in determining what funds it will take to improve salaries in comparison to surrounding school divisions.
 - Superintendent Thompson reviewed the School Board's priority of an additional CTE position in correlation to program expansion.
 - Superintendent Thompson reviewed the School Board's priority of an elementary Spanish position in correlation to program expansion
 - Superintendent Thompson explained the School Board's priority to increase contract time of high school counselors from 220 to 240 days. Superintendent Thompson clarified that counselors would work 200 days plus 40 days that are worked out with the principal; benefits are the same as teachers with no vacation days. [Supplementary time sheet] He stated that the proposed increase in contract time and working from a time sheet would provide more flexibility for the counselor.
 - Chairman McDaniel asked if the cost is more if counselors are paid by the hour.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the overall cost is less using hourly time sheet to supplement 200 day contract.
 - Trustee Brooks stated that he feels it is advantageous for the use of time sheet, as it does not involve additional VRS payment.
3. Rockbridge County Public Schools Studies
- Superintendent Thompson stated that in regards to Comprehensive Planning, he would like to see the focus on programming, what we have now, what direction to go and how to get there.
 - Superintendent Thompson provided an overview of the division-wide feasibility study, which he hopes will begin January 2018, and will look at our facilities and efficiency of our use of facilities.
 - Trustee Brooks requested that Superintendent Thompson share the proposed scope of work of products being looked for.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that an RFP will be developed, with input from the board, and the scope will be included with an estimate of one year for completion.
 - Chairman McDaniel stated that he feels it is beneficial to have an outside source to look at the whole division, through feasibility of buildings, or comprehensive planning program, and to develop a plan. He feels it may give an additional perspective other than just board members and school administrators.
 - Trustee Brooks requested that alternative education be considered.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that Randy Walters will look at the downstairs of Rivermont and make a determination if this is a possibility for our use.
 - Chairman McDaniel clarified that this could fall under the feasibility study.
 - Trustee Lewis reflected that the feasibility study will respond only to need.
 - Trustee Brooks requested that there be an interim approach to help students currently until feasibility study is complete.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that a short-term option will be looked at that may help the current issue.

- Superintendent Thompson provided an overview of the AdvancEd Division Accreditation Study, which will result in a wrap-up visit in April 2018, and will reflect a look at programming, communication, community involvement.

4. Superintendent Recommendations

- Superintendent Thompson stated his recommendation to reduce funding for utility lines in accordance with expected savings from performance contracting for FY19 in the amount of \$242,640. This recommendation is per the Performance Contracting MOU the School Board entered into with the Board of Supervisors.
- Superintendent Thompson stated his recommendation to request that Chromebook funding be moved from CIP/Escrow to the Operating Budget, most recently in the amount of \$40,000.
 - Trustee Brooks inquired if Lexington City Public Schools has been made aware of our plan so they can prepare their students of working with Chromebooks and the fact that when a student arrives with no computer in hand, that Lexington City will be responsible.
 - Chairman McDaniel requested that an update on digital conversation be presented to the Rockbridge County School Board at their December 2017 or January 2018 meeting.
- Superintendent Thompson stated his recommendation to request funding for an ITRT (Instructional Technology Resource Teacher) at Rockbridge County High School in the amount of \$69,000 – salary/benefits.
- Superintendent Thompson stated his recommendation to allow the division studies to take place allowing the horse to get back in front of the cart with respect to proper planning and decision making.
 - Trustee Lewis expressed his sentiment that the studies will show that Rockbridge County Public Schools need what has been requested.
- Superintendent Thompson stated his recommendation to take this year to concentrate on teacher / employee pay and ensure that they receive a salary increase in an attempt to elevate our ranking in comparison with our surrounding school divisions.
 - Trustee Strong requested that data be presented reflecting a study of Central Office Staff similar in size and the number of staff members.
 - Trustee Lovell inquired if schools will be making recommendations as she feels schools are also equipped to give recommendations of need.
 - Superintendent Thompson verified that recommendations are being currently being submitted for the operating budget.
 - Chairman McDaniel requested that Superintendent Thompson address this at the next Administrator's Meeting and ask for feedback.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that there have already been discussions but that he will share a summary of this meeting and it may provide clarification for the administrative staff.
 - Chairman McDaniel reflected that this is election year and there could be a drastic change in the budget recognizing that there may be a need for a plan B if more funds are needed.
- Superintendent Thompson provided the following summary from his recommendations:
 - Scenarios for teacher pay
 - Moving forward with studies and re-evaluating once complete
 - Reduction in FY18 utility lines in the amount of \$242,640.
 - Transfer of Chromebook initiative to operating budget
 - Chairman McDaniel requested that this cost be reviewed.

Chairman McDaniel expressed his appreciation for the good information, good discussion and requested that Superintendent Thompson let the board know when to schedule the next budget work session once all requested data is complete.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Lewis, seconded by Trustee Brooks, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.


David B. McDaniel, Chairman


Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board