

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, December 4, 2018 at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

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

CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of Chairman McDaniel, Vice-Chairman Lovell called the meeting to order at 4:59 p.m. and presided over the meeting.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

ParaPro Assessment Recognition:

Superintendent Thompson recognized staff members for their outstanding academic performance on the ParaPro Assessment in the areas of Reading, English, and Math Resulting in Highly Qualified status as required under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that includes provisions to ensure success for students and schools:

Ms. Jeannie Hite Central Elementary School
Ms. Kelly Jennings Central Elementary School
Ms. Carolyn Slagle Central Elementary School
Ms. Lorin Wilhelm Central Elementary School
Ms. Lori Bare Fairfield Elementary School
Ms. Brooke Hicks Fairfield Elementary School
Ms. Lori Thomas Fairfield Elementary School
Ms. Christy Ziegler Fairfield Elementary School
Ms. Deb Bolen Mountain View Elementary School
Ms. Krissy Hill Mountain View Elementary School
Ms. Sarah Mayo Mountain View Elementary School
Ms. Theresa Harris Natural Bridge Elementary School
Ms. Pauline Taylor Natural Bridge Elementary School

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon recommendation by Vice-Chairman Lovell, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by a 4-0 vote, the board approved the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: 1) November 6, 2018 [Regular Meeting]; 2) November 8, 2018 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 3) November 27 2018 [Discipline Committee Hearing];
- Field Trips / Bus Use Requests
- Fund Raiser Requests
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- Enrollment Update
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Substitute Teachers

Lynn Clark
Douglas Flora

Substitute Bus Drivers

Rick Fauber
Gary Coburn

Substitute Food Service Worker

Elizabeth Steger

Substitute Custodian

Kristie Higgins

Rockbridge County High School - Girls' Lacrosse

Sammy Moore – Volunteer Coach

Professional Staff**Resigning**

Rebecca Tilson, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective December 31, 2018

Retiring

Mary Jones, Teacher, Fairfield Elementary School, retiring end of 2018 – 2019 school year

Support Staff**Retiring**

Faye Austin, Bus Driver, retired effective November 12, 2018

- Financial Items
 - Approval of appropriations to Fund 50 in the amount of \$79,840.00 of revenues not previously appropriated because the amounts were not known.
 - Approval of debt service payments of \$557,237.14 due January 15, 2019 to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public School VPSA bonds.
 - Approve of Monthly Financials \$2,868,643.66.
- Approval of Religious Exemption Application

BUDGET PLANNING: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

[Chairman McDaniel arrived at the meeting at 5:14 PM]

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORTS:

Mike Craft, Principal, Rockbridge County High School, provided an update on the CTE program at Rockbridge County High School. He expressed appreciation to Magic City Ford of Lexington for the donation of a 2014 Ford Focus to be used in the Auto Body Program for diagnostic testing. He also expressed appreciation to Farmers Insurance for the donation of a car to the Auto Body Program.

Mr. Craft recognized Katie Kirkpatrick, Rockbridge County High School student, for her accomplishment as being named a Virginia Top 5 Finalist in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program for Career and Technical Education.

Mr. Craft introduced Mr. Tate Jarvis, Rockbridge County High School, Electronics/Robotics teacher, and four of his students who are working on this special project. The students are part of a class who are working in a partnership with Dr. Joseph Blandino, Professor, Mechanical Engineering, Virginia Military Institute. The students presented information on their Virginia Space Program Balloon Launch project, which will launch in the Spring 2019.

Mr. Craft recognized Mr. Timothy Tingler, President, Quest Knight Enterprises. Mr. Tingler has donated two, three-dimensional scanners to pair with the Markerbot 3D printing system located at Rockbridge County High School. Mr. Craft stated that Mr. James Gerken, Rockbridge County High School, Drafting and Design Technology teacher, has been a key part of developing a partnership with Quest Knight Enterprises with the intent of having students who are ready to enter the field of drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems (UAV's). Mr. Craft explained that part of the STEM Academy Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems (drones), students design, build, operate, fly, troubleshoot and repair UAV's, working on a pathway to the Dabney S. Lancaster program with possible future dual enrollment.

- Chairman McDaniel inquired if this project is related to the meetings that have taken place in the past with Dabney S. Lancaster in regards to drones.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the past meetings have been more directly involved, but that the connection to Quest Knight came from the meetings.

Mr. Tim Martino, Director of Elementary Education, provided information on the Rockbridge County High School and Maury River Middle School Academic Reviews. He emphasized that both schools are accredited. The focus for Rockbridge County High School will target student attendance. The focus for Maury River Middle School will focus on the achievement gap in math. Rockbridge County High School will develop a School Improvement Plan while Maury River Middle School already has a plan in place. Mr. Martino stated that the Academic Review will be completed internally by Rockbridge County Public Schools administrative staff, having Dr. Thompson certify that schools have active School Improvement Plans.

- Chairman McDaniel inquired about the Rockbridge County High School attendance issue. He also inquired if it is based on attendance per day.
 - Mr. Martino responded that the gap is larger than desired with some students having severe attendance issues.
 - Dr. Thompson further explained that excused and unexcused absences are counted, including medical and college visits.
 - Mr. Haywood Hand, Assistant Superintendent, stated that Melanie Falls, Supervisor of ATSS, has been deeply involved with student attendance and truancy, while noting that the attendance issue is better than school year 2017-2018. He stated that attendance is taken daily during first period.
 - Mr. Martino stated that the attendance focus is taking place at all schools with principals and office staff working diligently on this issue.
 - Dr. Thompson stated that school divisions have been traditionally graded based on SOLs. VDOE is looking at different ways to measure success and that attendance is part of the equation.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. David Daniels, Director of Financial Services, provided information on Section D [Fiscal Management] Policy Update. The revisions will be presented for approval at the January board meeting.

- Chairman McDaniel confirmed that the school board attorneys have reviewed the proposed changes.
- Trustee Hostetter requested clarification in regards to Policy DJ [Small Purchasing], small purchase procedures change for a bid goes to \$60,000 without competitive bids (from \$80,000 to \$60,000).
 - Mr. Daniels confirmed that this is only for professional services, [as defined by the Virginia Procurement Act are accounting, actuarial services, architect, land surveying, landscape, dentistry, medical, pharmacy, and professional engineering], noting that this does not relate to goods and services. He stated that over \$60,000, it must go through the Request for Bid process. He stated that the only change for policy DJ is the amount from \$80,000 to \$60,000. He stated that for professional services, as defined by the Virginia Procurement Act, the RFP method is required and not the bid method. He stated that the school board can authorize small purchasing guidelines for purchase of goods and services up to \$100,000, which relates to Policy DJ-R [Small Purchase Guidelines].
- Chairman McDaniel requested clarification that once the limits amounts of \$100,000 are reached, an RFP must be utilized. He referenced that policy DJ-R will cover items under those limits.
 - Mr. Daniels stated that the Virginia Procurement Act strictly states that anything over \$100,000, the items must go through a bid, RFP process. He also stated that there is an exception for professional services that a school division cannot go beyond \$60,000.

Mr. Daniels stated that with the school board's encouragement of competitive bidding whenever practical, the guidelines are being updated to allow for competition, while not overly hindering the school division with accomplishing goals in a timely and practical manner. The small purchasing guidelines, Policy DJ-R [Small Purchasing Guidelines] reflect a process of how to procure items under \$100,000.

- Chairman McDaniel inquired if there is a reason to have three or four quotes.
 - Mr. Daniels stated this is to allow for the goal of the Rockbridge County School Board to have competition and to show that you are seeking competition.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that there is a two-quote minimum while noting that it allows the school system to get the best price possible and may get more quotes if desired. It allows the school division to be fiscally responsible.
- Trustee Hostetter inquired if there are guidelines that require the school board to approve contracts entered into, above \$50,000, which would affect this policy.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that he will research what the limit is, while noting that school board attorneys have worked in correlation with the Virginia Procurement Act. He also stated that it might not be legally required for the board to be involved regarding contracts, it is prudently important for the school board to be involved.
 - Chairman McDaniel stated that it has been his experience that any large contract entered into has come before the board.
 - Superintendent Thompson agreed that contracts for big price purchases such as TRANE has been brought before the board. Small contracts such as a small program or app purchase has not been brought before the board.
 - Trustee Lovell stated her sentiment that if the school board has to get into the business of approve contracts, it could hold up the running of our schools. If it is for a large item, the board must ensure that there is funding.

- Trustee Berkstresser expressed his sentiment that is important for oversight and transparency, but not to micro-manage and that the board needs to trust the Superintendent and staff.

Chairman McDaniel expressed his sentiment that there is sometimes limited time to get jobs complete in the summer and inquired if the \$10,000 for one quote high enough for some of the work that may need to be done in the facilities or would getting three quotes slow down the process or effect the limited window to get work done.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that they try to plan for upcoming jobs and to obtain quotes with a set time frame so it does not inhibit the project; for example, obtain a quote that is good for 180 days. This would fulfill the obligation of attempt to obtain quotes and document if quotes do not come in. This would apply to normal projects and not emergency needs. Superintendent Thompson stated that he feels the \$10,000 is high enough to get the best price possible and not hold up the project.
 - Chairman McDaniel confirmed that it is the attempt to request three quotes but not to slow down the process if a total three quotes are not submitted.
 - Mr. Daniels stated that the word "attempt" is in the policy because the bid window cannot be held open for someone to submit a bid. If a bid is not received in a timely fashion, it would not meet the qualifications and will not be considered.
 - Trustee Hostetter summarized that the school system will make attempts to obtain a quote for anything under \$100,000; also that anything over \$100,000 will go through the RFP process.
 - Mr. Daniel stated that an RFP is a formal request item and normally takes one to three months to procure through the process.

Chairman McDaniel expressed his sentiment that he understands the need for competition, but in trying to keep things simple, inquired if there a need to separate the number of quotes desired.

- Mr. Daniels stated that legally the school system is not required to do so but that the Virginia Procurement Act requires state agencies to obtain four quotes.

Trustee Berkstresser inquired what the qualifications are when submitting for an RFP.

- Mr. Daniels stated that the RFP is required to be advertised in newspaper and posted to the Rockbridge County Public Schools website where individuals will see the initial request and submit.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that parameters are stated in the RFP for each project.
- Trustee Hostetter requested clarification that if a project is below \$100,000, the project must be advertised.
 - Mr. Daniels stated projects under \$100,000 do not require advertising in local paper; bidders may also be obtained through resources.

Superintendent Thompson stated that these policies will be presented to the board for action at the January meeting.

Rhonda Pedigo, School Counselor, Rockbridge County High School, provided information on the Rockbridge County High School Program of Studies. She stated that this will be presented for approval at the January 2019 school board meeting.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that there are not a lot of changes from last year.
- Trustee Berkstresser referenced that there were patrons who addressed the board during the Public Hearing on budget held prior the regular meeting, who spoke on behalf of the Arts and Theater program at Rockbridge County High School. He asked if this is a budget concern.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that it has proven to be difficult to find the right licensure for this program but they continue to search when interviewing applicants.
 - Chairman McDaniel stated that he would encourage the search of licensure to benefit the program.
 - Mr. Mike Craft, Principal, Rockbridge County High School, stated that he is hopeful that Theater may be offered for two periods next year, if licensed staff is obtained. He anticipates that Rockbridge County High School will re-enter theater arts competitions. The current teacher was not hired until July and the teaching load was difficult for the 2018-2019 school year.
 - Trustee Lovell expressed her sentiment and hopes that there may be creative ways to tap the creative resources of the community until we are fortunate enough to find a more permanent solution.
 - Trustee Berkstresser referenced the students who spoke during the Public Hearing and shared how the program had personally helped them. He feels the Project Based Learning would be a part of the program.

- Trustee Whitmore inquired if Maury River Middle School has a Theater Arts program.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that there is not currently a program at Maury River Middle School. The former (retired) Rockbridge County High School teacher shared her time between Maury River Middle School and Rockbridge County High School.
 - Mr. Hand stated that rather than risk having some students who would not be able to take the class, the decision was made to consolidate the class so that interested students could take the class.
- Chairman McDaniel stated that in his years serving on the Rockbridge County School Board, this is the first time that a student has addressed the board in regards to a program and he feels that the board should do all they can to try to help the program. He expressed his sentiments that not every child is interested in English, Math, or Science; students may be interested in other things whether it is sports, arts, music, band, or whatever it may be to grasp the student and keep them in school and help with their attendance. He also stated that there are challenges to help the program if there are no candidates for the positions but they will continue to try to fill the need, even if it means moving staff internally. The other obstacle is adding staff because that involves adding cost.
 - Trustee Lovell expressed her sentiments that she understands the constraints but added that we live in a community with a lot of resources in the arts to help in the interim.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the administrators look at creative staffing early and will continue to do so.

Mr. Billy Thomas, Principal, Mary River Middle School, and Allison Mock, School Counselor, Maury River Middle School provided information on the Maury River Middle School Program of Studies. This will be presented for approval at the January 2019 school board meeting.

- Trustee Lovell requested a brief description for the course offering "Teachers for Tomorrow".
 - Ms. Mock explained that it will essentially give students an introduction to teaching careers; it is a foundation class only that they would continue at Rockbridge County High School where they will work with teachers learning what it entails to see if it is something they want to pursue.
- Chairman McDaniel inquired why it is necessary to transport Latin/French course students to Rockbridge County High School and not transport a teacher at Maury River Middle School. He also inquired if the Chromebook would help.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the course is not offered throughout the day at Maury River Middle School and teacher would need to load projects and transport to Maury River Middle School. He stated that if they will research on how to make it work with the Chromebook. Student enrollment for courses may not be known until March or April, which make it difficult to plan early staffing. Ms. Mock stated that there were five students last year who took Latin; two students this year who are transported to take Geometry Honors.
 - Mr. Hand stated that Latin is being offered to students as an alternative to Spanish.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Chairman McDaniel, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Whitmore, and passed by a 5-0 vote, the board approved the Director of Financial Services, Superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent to make payment of bills received between November 30, 2018 and December 18, 2018 due to the calendar change of the December 2018 School Board meeting from December 11 to December 4, 2018.

Superintendent Thompson stated that the legislative priorities have been discussed during the past several meetings to determine the direction of our school board with respect to communicating with our legislators, primarily in Richmond, and locally, to gain assistance if at all possible. He reflected that he had worked with Trustee Lovell and Trustee Hostetter to develop the FY20 School Board Legislative Priorities.

- Trustee Lovell stated that some items have been a priority for several years.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that he is seeing more and more advocacy from other school divisions in this manner, primarily regarding the lack of increased funding.
- Chairman McDaniel inquired to the status of the Resolution to Support the Creation of a Small and Rural Schools Coalition that the school board adopted in 2017-2018 school year.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that the Coalition is focused primarily on the at-risk feature as they feel it should be part of the calculation with respect to basic aid; if a school division has more at-risk students, they are advocating for a little more money. He stated that as a result of that, he feels it could also help our division.
- Chairman McDaniel expressed his appreciation to Trustee Lovell and Trustee Hostetter for the work generated on this project.

Upon recommendation by Chairman McDaniel, motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Lovell, and passed by a 5-0 vote, the Board approved the FY20 School Board Legislative Priorities as presented.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman McDaniel wished all employees, students, and faculty a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and expressed his appreciation for all hard work done for a successful first semester.

SCHOOL BOARD:

There will be a special meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board to meet with Senator Creigh Deeds on December 7, 2018 beginning at 11:30 AM. The meeting will be held at Rockbridge County High School, 143 Greenhouse Road, Lexington, Virginia.

The next regular monthly meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, January 8, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the County Administration Offices, 150 South Main Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Whitmore, seconded by Trustee Hostetter, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.



David B. McDaniel, Chairman



Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board