

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Kathy Burant; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown, Lenna Ojure, Neil Whitmore; Superintendent Phillip Thompson and Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Dr. Mike Craft, Principal, Rockbridge County High School recognized the Academic Team who won a State Championship. Representing the team were Nicholas Faulds, Captain and Thomas Ayoub-Winder.

Dr. Craft recognized the National Merit Scholarship Finalists: Nicholas Faulds and Thomas Ayoub-Winder. This distinction will qualify them for scholarships and grants.

Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, introduced Ms. Erin Allen, Art Teacher, Rockbridge County High School. Ms. Allen introduced Katherine Holston, Rockbridge County High School, Grade 11, who submitted artwork for the VSBA Student Art Contest. Ms. Holston received a second-place recognition. Ms. Allen also stated that Camila Vassey, Grade 8, Maury River Middle School also participated in the Artwork Contest. The contest was held in conjunction with the annual VSBA Spring Regional Network Forum on May 5, 2025. Ms. Courtney Jarvis, Art Teacher at Fairfield Elementary School and Natural Bridge Elementary School, shared that Carly Kessinger, Grade 2, Natural Bridge Elementary School also participated in the Artwork Contest.

Mr. Rick Bain, Supervisor of Human Resources, introduced employees who received the REDOT Award, [Rockbridge Employees Doing Outstanding Things]. This is an award designed to highlight the great things our employees are doing. This award is given quarterly, with nominations by a co-worker or an administrator. There are thirteen employees who were recognized during the third quarter:

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|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Beth Jones | - Central Elementary School |
| Brandy Montgomery | - Central Elementary School |
| Teresa Torrence | - Central Elementary School |
| Hailey Crotty | - Central Elementary School |
| Shannon Hepner | - Fairfield Elementary School |
| Andrea Harris | - Mountain View Elementary School |
| Becky Bennett | - Maury River Middle School |
| Tracy Shafer | - Maury River Middle School |
| Hillary Camden | - Rockbridge County High School |
| James Slagle | - Rockbridge County High School |
| Tracy Hinty | - Central Office |
| Britney Beverley | - Central Office |
| Cecilia Fencer | - Central Office |

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, the board approved the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: 1) April 8, 2025 [Regular Meeting]; 2) April 23, 2025 [Discipline Committee Hearing]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Professional Staff

Professional Staff

- Graceon Whitesell, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective the 2025-2026 school year
- Kendall Oswald, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective the 2025-2026 school year
- Jennifer Havird, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective the 2025-2026 school year

Alex Morrow, Part-Time Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, effective the 2025-2026 school year

Support Staff

Melissa Wallace, Food Service, Rockbridge County High School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Garrett Huffman, Head Golf Coach, Rockbridge County High School, effective 2025-2026 school year

Support Staff

Resignation

Ashley Waterman, Teacher Assistant, Mountain View Elementary School, resigning effective April 30, 2025

Christopher Braun, Custodian, Central Elementary School, resigning effective April 21, 2025

Brian Sheltman, Teacher Assistant, Mountain View Elementary School, resigning effective the end of 2024-2025 school year

Heidi Sheltman, School Nurse, Mountain View Elementary School, resigning effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year

Wendolyn Gilmer, Teacher Assistant, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective the end of the 2024-2025 school year

Professional Staff

Resignation

Derek Vanderveer, School Counselor, Central Elementary School, resigning effective the end of the 2024-2025 School year

David Daniels, Director of Finance, Central Office, retiring effective the end of the 2024-2025 School year

Gracyn Darrington, Teacher, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective the end of the 2024-2025 School year

Heather Mayes, Teacher, Mountain View Elementary School, resigning effective the end of the 2024-2025 School year

• **Business Items**

- Approved debt service payments due 1, 2025 to US Bank for Rockbridge County Public School VPSA bonds in the amount of \$159,375.00.
- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for grant in the amount of \$628.00.
- Approved Monthly Financials in the amount of \$3,788,603.90.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

One patron addressed the board expressing appreciation for service and the academic success at Rockbridge County School. The patron expressed concern with the location of the auxiliary gym being considered which would eliminate the tennis courts. The patron expressed concern that this could possibly eliminate RCHS tennis teams and requested that consideration be given to adding a tennis court instead of eliminating the courts.

BUDGET PLANNING:

Dr. Thompson, Superintendent, stated that the budget will be addressed as action item at this meeting. He stated that all data has been received from Richmond and that overall the result is good. He noted that the initial school budget included a five percent employee raise, but with the help of the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors help, Rockbridge County Public School employees will receive a three percent raise for all employees.

- Chairman Burant stated that all Rockbridge County employees will receive a three percent raise, with fire and rescue personnel receiving a little more of an increase.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT: None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. Jason Kirby, Chief Business Officer, presented the Early Retirement Incentive Program and stated that the program continues to retain great staff and utilizes their knowledge. He stated that the plan remains the same as was adopted on May 9, 2023 and will be presented as an Action Item at the June meeting.

- \$40 per hour for administrative duties for the first 200 hours
 - \$32 per hour after 200 hours
- \$30 per hour for teaching and other professional staff duties (teaching, counseling, library, etc.) for the first 200 hours
 - \$22 per hour after 200 hours
- \$20 per hour for clerical, janitorial, food service, and driving duties for the first 200 hours
 - \$16 per hour after 200 hours
- Participants under this plan may not hold over days from month to month and all ERIP days must be completed before working for regular substitute pay. ERIP participants may only bank up to 5 days from year to year with approval of the Chief Business Officer/Director of Personnel.

Ms. Tracy Hinty, Supervisor of Federal Programs, provided information on the Federal Grants process, which is due on July 1. She stated that the allocations used are based on the previous year's allocation and the grants will be revised and or amended in the fall based on the new final allocation and that these are non-competitive grants. She stated that the final allocations will not be available until late summer or early fall. The grants will be amended at that time with those new allocations. She provided information on the individual and consolidated state and federal entitlement grants, which are Title I, Part A; Title I, Part C; Title II, Part A – Title II; Title III Part A; and Title IV A. Federal Grants will be presented as an Action Item at the June board meeting.

- Trustee Whitmore inquired if the model is to apply for flat funding.
 - Ms. Hinty stated that Title I is the largest grant and funding may increase. She stated that she attended a conference and that the VDOE staff have been very clear regarding federal funds that the information they were presenting on that day was current as of that day.
- Trustee Whitmore inquired on that will tie into VLA [Virginia Literacy Act], noting that RCPS is one year into VLA.
 - Ms. Hinty stated that VLA is stated mandated and noted that Title I funds can not be used for VLA.
- Trustee Ojura inquired how once a child qualifies for Title I for reading, is it income based or reading level based.
 - Ms. Hinty stated that income determines how much funding is received, but noted that services are available to any child who needs assistance.
- Mr. Martino stated that it is very different from the Head Start Preschool which is income based in order to qualify for the program. He stated that Ms. Hinty moved Rockbridge County Public Schools to school-wide, there is more flexibility in what can be done for students and what materials to buy. He stated that the VLA information is still dragging a bit. He stated that VLA and Title I are two different things.
- Trustee Whitmore inquired how SOL scores are tied to VLA.
 - Mr. Martino stated that there will be some matrix that will say this learner needs additional assistance. The language and guides have been slow coming out so school divisions are almost in a holding pattern, while still trying to move ahead with students. This can make it more challenging for teachers when they return in August to find out what additional assistance may be needed.
- Ms. Hinty stated that Reading Specialists do provide the support, the intervention, through Title I funds for the VLA, but that materials and supplies, if mandated by the state, then it must come from state funds.
- Chairman Burant inquired if there is a back-up plan if funding disappears.
 - Ms. Hinty stated that funding is good for at least another year and these are federal entitlement grants so Congress would need to act in order for the funds to be eliminated.

Superintendent Thompson stated that there is at least one school board meeting each month and that board members do much more on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis participating in called meetings, Discipline Committee, Foundation Committee, or Ad Hoc Committee. The Rockbridge County School Board did hold a board meeting in July of 2024 because of the Rockbridge Innovation Center approval, but eight to nine years prior to that, a meeting has not been held in July. The primary reason for that is because between Central Office Staff, administrators, and board members, it is a busy time of the year for all. It is a relatively quiet time as school is not in session. The board will need to give permission to the administrative staff to pay bills. This will be presented as an Action Item for the June meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, the board voted 5-0, to approve authorization for the Superintendent/Designee to process GRANT payment and other accounts payables as necessary at the end of May 2025. A final report summarizing these actions will be provided at the next Board meeting. All transactions will require signatures of two of the following staff positions: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Chief Business Officer, Chief Operations Officer, or Director of Financial Services. Authorization was also approved for the Superintendent/Designee to close out the current fiscal year. This authorization would include payment of remaining accounts payable and payroll expenses and the preparation of necessary expenditure transfers, budget adjustments, appropriations of additional revenues and requests for category transfers from the Board of Supervisors, if needed. A final report summarizing these actions will be distributed during the month of July. All transactions will require signatures of two of the following staff positions: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Chief Business Officer, Chief Operations Officer, or Director of Financial Services.

Mr. Jason Kirby, Chief Business Officer, stated that there have been a few slight changes since the March meeting, in regards to local and state revenue. This is the final version that will be sent to the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors once approved. He stated that we have progressed toward the goals specified by the board by providing a three percent salary increase, and maintaining reasonable health insurance cost for the upcoming year.

- Trustee Whitmore inquired what the health insurance came in at.
 - Mr. Kirby stated that it came in at six percent, with the county absorbing a majority of that increase.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, the board voted 5-0, to approve the FY26 Line Item Budget in the amount of \$39,121,943, which includes a 3% increase for all employees.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Burant expressed her appreciation to teachers and staff for another incredible year. She expressed appreciation to the Culinary Art students for preparing food for schools during Teacher Appreciation Week. She stated that she was impressed by the outpouring of support by our community and organizations as well.

Chairman Burant expressed appreciation to the Rockbridge Area Health Center for their support to students, staff, and community. She stated that it is extraordinary for our community to be able to access quality health care in our school buildings.

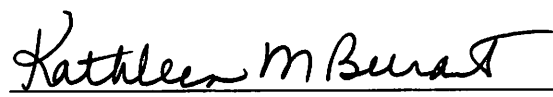
Trustee Berkstresser stated that the Rockbridge Innovation Center is in full swing and that there will be a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will be held on Thursday, June 5, 2025 at 10:00 AM.

SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, June 10, 2025 / 5:30 PM / Location: Maury River Middle School, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.


Kathy M. Burant, Chairman


Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board