

AT A CALLED MEETING OF THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
HELD IN THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
AT 150 SOUTH MAIN STREET, LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA
ON THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2020 AT 4:00 P.M.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: D. E. LYONS
R. W. DAY
L.E. AYERS
D.B. MCDANIEL
A.J. "JAY" LEWIS, II.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: SPENCER H. SUTER

FISCAL SERVICES
DIRECTOR: STEVEN J. BOLSTER

CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Lyons called the meeting to order.

Presentation of School Division Feasibility Study:

School Board Chairperson Wendy Lovell stated that the Rockbridge County School Board had the opportunity to hear the presentation by Quinn Evans at a recent School Board Meeting.

School Superintendent Dr. Phillip Thompson introduced Erin Richardson, who provided an overview of the Feasibility Study.

Ms. Richardson provided the following information:

- Scope Summary
- Demographic Analysis
- Programmatic and Facilities Assessments
- School Capacity Analysis

Dr. Thompson inquired if 85% cap is desired for all schools and clarified that Central Elementary School is now at 86.5%.

Ms. Richardson confirmed that Central Elementary School is slightly over the cap.

Roger Richardson, also with Quinn Evans, stated that the target is to accommodate changes over time, while noting that it is more critical at the high school level.

Supervisor Lyons inquired if all of the students enrolled at Central Elementary School reside in the Central Elementary zone. He also inquired if redistricting has been discussed.

Dr. Thompson stated that not all students reside in the Central zone. He also noted that the student enrollment from student transfers has been diligently managed in the past five years. Central Elementary School is at capacity, as it is centrally located, but it is not overcrowded. Redistricting has not been discussed at this time.

School Board Chairperson Lovell reflected that the Central Elementary School cafeteria/gym will still be an issue even with less students.

Dr. Thompson stated that the gym space makes it difficult for eating and PE class to be achieved because they occur in the same space.

Ms. Richardson continued the Quinn Evans presentation with the following:

- Maximum Design Capacity / Functional Capacity
- Recommended Improvements

Supervisor Ayers inquired what the proposed renovations at Rockbridge County High School would allow for capacity and if the roof would have capacity for solar energy panels.

Quinn Evans' Mr. Charles Tilley responded that there would be opportunity for that, but that it is not currently part of the analysis. He indicated there has been legislation passed for solar panels on school property that may make this type of renewable energy more attractive than in previous years.

Supervisor McDaniel inquired what the life span would be of the proposed renovation project for Rockbridge County High School. He also inquired about a project timeline from start to finish, and if work would take place while students are in the building.

Mr. Tilley responded that the building is over thirty years old, but he proposed to keep the shell and exterior walls, while noting that it would be viable to look ahead twenty to thirty years. He estimated it may take twenty modular units to house 1200 students while work is taking place. He estimated that it may take 12-14 months for the planning phase, 18-20 months for construction, with an estimated total three-year project.

Mr. Richardson stated that the building is functional and has adapted over time to changes and programs to extend the life and usefulness of the facilities. He feels the building could contribute beyond twenty to thirty years if taken care of.

Supervisor McDaniel inquired if the outside recreation area and lack of gym space has been taken into account with recommendations of possible field locations.

Mr. Richardson responded that the lack of space issue had been observed at Central Elementary School and Rockbridge County High School, while noting there is adequate outdoor space and gym size at Fairfield

Elementary School, Mountain View Elementary School, Natural Bridge Elementary School, and Maury River Middle School.

Supervisor McDaniel inquired if the assessment study shows if the recent renovations from 2000-06 was money well spent with an investment return.

Mr. Richardson responded that Quinn Evans spoke to the administration and faculty about previous renovations, and all feel that the facilities are still modern and economical, with themes are still engaging. He feels there may be need for improvement on finishes of floors, walls, and lights. The mechanical system needs to be looked at and improved but stated that this item is already in the Capital Improvement Plan.

School Board Member Ms. Kathy Burant emphasized that the lack of lights have been an ongoing item and that the athletics of Rockbridge County High School sometimes has to use other spaces. Lighting would allow more use of the fields and reduce the need for student athletics to go elsewhere.

Mr. Richardson stated that the lighting at Rockbridge County High School was addressed in the assessment. Installation of artificial turf is also a recommendation at the high school.

Ms. Richardson expressed her appreciation for assistance given by school division staff to their team during the assessment process.

Dr. Thompson stated that he will share the presentation with Lexington City Public Schools administration as well. He also expressed his appreciation to the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors for allowing time for the presentation of the School Division Feasibility Study.

Overview of RCPS Fall Semester Reopening Plan:

Dr. Thompson reviewed the presentation that was given and approved at the Rockbridge County School Board meeting of July 14, 2020.

Supervisor Lyons inquired how the start date of August 31 would affect the end of the year. He expressed his concern that students will have to go through remediation since the 2019-20 school year was cut short, taking away fifteen days of instruction away from teachers.

Dr. Thompson stated that Rockbridge County Public Schools is within the 990 hours at this point, but will apply for a waiver to make sure that it will not be affected. The opening framework includes a two week minimum program at the beginning of the school year to fill in gaps that were missed last year to get students caught up as best as can be achieved via assessments that will allow those gaps to be addressed. The school division is working closely with the Virginia Department of Health in developing safety and health plans for our schools. He stated that the mental health of our students and staff members is also of utmost importance during these challenging times. He provided information on the framework as approved at the meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board on July 14, 2020. He stated that in keeping in accordance with all safety measures, the school division has determined that the best option for providing students with the academic success in the fall of 2020 is a blended learning environment with a staggered schedule. He emphasized that following health and safety priorities that teaching and learning is also a top priority. He expressed that communication is the key. All schools will be on a similar learning plan framework. The Continuity of

Learning Plan was approved by the School Board but is flexible as information comes out each day for guidance on how to be as safe as possible and how to provide the best education as we can within a safe environment, with a high quality education, along with safety for teachers, staff, and students being a top priority.

Supervisor McDaniel inquired if the virtual learning will affect ADM.

Dr. Thompson stated that per guidance from Dr. James Lane, VDOE State Superintendent, as long as students are engaged and participating, they are counted as present and it will not affect ADM. Students who receive home instruction does effect ADM.

Supervisor McDaniel inquired what the virtual learning environment will be.

Dr. Thompson stated that the virtual learning is being developed. There will be more professional development for teachers to provide a foundation; some teachers have already been utilizing the virtual learning format in previous years. He stated that he anticipates the teacher will record 15-20 minute sessions for the student to view, and then work on their assignments at home. Assessments will be given to students for accountability. The ramifications for a "live" classroom involve risk with students in the classroom, privacy issues to be considered. Pre-recorded tutorials will be encouraged.

Supervisor McDaniel inquired on the mask policy for teachers and students with medical conditions; citing if 95% wear a mask, how are the other 5% protected. He also inquired if mask wearing will not be mandated for students who have a medical condition.

Dr. Thompson stated that it will take education on the part of the school system. There will need to be medical documentation on file that will enable a child not to be forced to wear a mask in a classroom, nor be shunned. There will be a shield in front of desks where needed.

School Board Vice Chairperson Ms. Hostetter added that the child would have to have a note from the doctor, but the note would not have to state the condition.

Supervisor Lyons inquired of the platform for instruction.

Dr. Thompson stated that Google Classroom and Virtual Virginia will be utilized.

Tim Martino, Director of K12 Curriculum and Instruction, stated that town hall community meetings will be held to make sure that parents understand the platforms.

Supervisor Lyons inquired if the school division has communicated with parents who provide home instruction to see if they may be interested in Virtual Learning, which would help with ADM.

Dr. Thompson stated that the division is in the process of beginning that communication.

Supervisor McDaniel expressed his appreciation to the school division staff and noted that policies may not allow all needs to be met. He further stated that some of his constituents are disappointed in the virtual learning environment, in that it is not a live presentation for students. Parents do not want their child to get behind in their studies. He emphasized that he is not against the plan being developed by Rockbridge County Public Schools as he realizes it is the same across the

Commonwealth and that the realization is that there is no perfect solution.

Chairperson Ms. Lovell stated that she understands the concern, but that as hard and challenging as the situation is, RCPS teachers are working hard to find new ways to deliver a quality education. She also stated that there are many challenges for safety while noting that there may be some kids at home who may be not be in the safest environment either. She encourages the Board of Supervisor members to encourage constituents to have patience and support teachers and students.

School Board Member Mr. Berkstresser expressed that he had concern for all students last spring, and that he is looking forward to having students back in school.

Dr. Thompson stated that there have been many conversations about various scenarios, which lead to other questions and concerns and challenges. There are roadblocks but RCPS will provide the best valued education we can, and hope for a return to normalcy.

Ms. Hostetter stated that she takes into account that teachers, staff, stakeholders, and parents are major participants in childcare and that she is encouraged that RCPS is thinking of different options to educate students by logging on at different times so that parents can help their child.

Supervisor McDaniel emphasized that there will be hurdles and hard times, personal challenges, technical issues with no internet at some county spots, and teacher needs. He requested that the School Board make the Board of Supervisors aware of how the school year progresses. He

cited that the budget cycle was hard, but acknowledged that the county must education our children and it must be done well.

Dr. Thompson expressed his appreciation to the Board of Supervisors and Emergency Management community. He noted that a huge need is childcare for teachers and others in the community as there may be additional need for three days a week as school opens. He requested that the Board of Supervisors be an advocate for teachers and others in the community.

Chairperson Ms. Lovell stated that even in normal times, there is not enough childcare in Rockbridge County.

Supervisor Ayers stated that Lexington City teachers will be able to take their children to school with them.

Dr. Thompson stated that this is not an opportunity for the teachers of Rockbridge County Public Schools as there are additional tasks now to be done on a daily basis, and there is not enough staff to pull away for coverage. He further referenced his understanding that the YMCA is having difficulty finding people for part-time. There would not be a problem to house a type of childcare in one of the RCPS buildings, but there would be an issue to find person to run it and there would be an issue of how to pay for those services.

Additional Discussion:

The next regularly scheduled Joint Meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board and Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors is scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 5:00 PM / Location : to be determined.

Adjournment:

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Lyons adjourned the meeting.