

AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AND THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD, HELD AT THE ROCKBRIDGE
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES, 150 S MAIN STREET LEXINGTON,
VIRGINIA ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27TH, 2016

PRESENT: CHAIRMAN J.M. HIGGINS,
MEMBERS: R.R. CAMPBELL, R.S. FORD,
D.W. HINTY, JR., A.W. LEWIS, JR.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
AND CLERK TO BOARD: SPENCER H. SUTER
FISCAL SERVICES
DIRECTOR: STEVEN J. BOLSTER

ALSO PRESENT: CHAIRMAN D.B. MCDANIEL
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS: K. BROOKS, W. LOVELL, L. STRONG

RCS SUPERINTENDENT: DR. JACK DONALD
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT: PHILLIP THOMPSON
FINANCE MANAGER: MATT CROSSMAN
FACILITIES DIRECTOR: JOHN MORRIS
CLERK TO THE BOARD: RHONDA HUMPHRIES

Call to Order

Board of Supervisors Chairman John Higgins reconvened the Board of Supervisors meeting and School Board Chairman David McDaniel called the School Board Meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

Chairman Higgins welcomed the attendees and asked Mr. Suter to review the agenda.

Mr. Suter noted that the evening's agenda included the following:

- General overviews of both County and Schools Budget outlook.
- Review the School's FY17 Capital Improvement/Capital Purchase plan that the joint executive committee has vetted and recommended. He noted that at the conclusion of that topic, the Boards could discuss and consider provisional adoption, understanding that the plan could change through the budget process.
- Presentation of information on teacher salaries, developed as a result of the last joint board meeting.

Mr. Suter then reviewed the County budget status as follows:

- Current fiscal year (FY16) standing as of December 31: Mr. Suter provided a line chart handout which graphed revenues and expenditures, noting that revenues are up and expenditures are down, when compared to estimates. He noted that this could certainly change based on numerous factors outside the County's control.

He then reviewed the status of FY17 budget planning as follows:

- Revenues – Overall revenues, State, Local and Federal are anticipated to remain relatively flat, as they have for the past several years.
- Expenditures – The call for Budget estimates was due from internal departments, constitutionals and external agencies (except the schools) on January 15th. He noted that Mr. Bolster is still compiling the requests so we don't yet have a solid feel for where we stand. He reported an estimated increase of 10% in the cost of health insurance, with actual numbers expected by the end of February. Also, based on a salary survey, 14 Full Time and all Part Time positions were deemed to be below market, and the Board determined to provide an increase with an expected annual impact of approximately \$74,000.
- From a capital/debt service perspective, we will be entering the next phase of the radio system project – an annual increase of about \$317,000. Additionally, we plan to begin a phased upgrade of the HVAC system in the County Administration building, followed in future years by addressing the roof, bathrooms and elevator. Finally, we are entering the final phases of landfill planning and would plan to borrow funds in the spring VRA pool.

Dr. Donald then provided a review of the current-year school budget, noting that several expenditure lines were trending high, including transportation personnel costs. He noted that a focus moving ahead would be on personnel salaries and reported a probable 0.6% increase in VRS costs, with an estimated total impact of approximately \$107,000.

Chairman McDaniel noted that of 130 school districts, 90 saw reductions in composite index ranking, including Rockbridge. He cautioned that, though this should normally result in increased funding, the high number of systems seeing reductions could dilute the local positive impact.

Mr. Brooks noted the potential to increase water/sewer expenditures based on current experience. Dr. Donald noted that some water leaks had been found and repaired.

Mr. Hinty asked Dr. Donald to advise Mr. Suter of any cost overruns so that the Board of Supervisors could look at them and see where we could help.

Mr. Morris indicated that the schools were seeing some savings in natural gas.

Chairman McDaniel then reviewed the School's Capital Improvement / Capital Purchase plan in the order of listing on the document which had been distributed to all:

1) A&E Study for RCHS:

Chairman McDaniel noted that this was originally approved by both Boards last year.

Dr. Donald noted that this was currently on hold, while the schools get a performance contracting project (PCP) underway, in that the PCP could positively inform an A&E study. He noted that the list of potential PCP companies had been narrowed to four.

2) Financial Services / Human Resources Software Package:

Mr. Crossman noted that four companies had been investigated, including Tyler/Munis, ADP, Keystone and RDA. He noted that a requirement of all was that they link to the existing County Bright Software. Of the four, at least two have confirmed and the other two are working to meet that requirement.

Chairman McDaniel noted that the cost estimate ranges from \$200,000 to \$350,000 and that the Schools think that they can get by with \$200,000, with an additional \$25,000 in annual maintenance fees. He stated that this item exhibits the most glaring need on the list of projects, in that the current software is over 30 years old.

3) A&E Study – Field Drainage Study and Construction at CES:

Dr. Donald noted that the study includes a look at an auxiliary gymnasium and storage based on the significant need.

Chairman McDaniel noted that the current facility serves as both a gym and cafeteria, limiting activities.

Mr. Brooks stated that there is a bill in place in the current General Assembly session which would require 100 minutes of physical activity a week for students.

Dr. Donald stated that the study would likely assume a “panelized” building.

Mr. Brooks added that the study may also include potential for up to four new classrooms.

Mr. Ford asked how big a building was needed.

Chairman McDaniel noted that these schools are only looking at the A&E study now. He then noted that of all the County schools, CES had the highest student to teacher ratio at approximately 20:1.

4) A&E Study for Relocation/Reconstruction of Playground at NBES:

Dr. Donald noted that it is a long hike from the school to the current playground and that handicapped access is difficult.

Mr. Hinty reminded the meeting that the school safety committee had looked at this need as a security issue as well.

Dr. Donald agreed that security was the original concern. He then added that they also would like to include an outdoor basketball court and auxiliary gym in the study.

5) Chromebook/Personal Electronic Device Initiative:

Chairman McDaniel noted that many schools are moving in this direction and that his Board has been looking at this program for over two years. They have agreed that 7th grade is the best place to start, and that with a five to six year lifespan, the units could follow the children from 7th to 12th grade. He stated that he is not yet sure of buying a unit for every child, so the plan is to start with classroom sets in order to establish usage policies for the future.

Dr. Donald stated that this would mean about 20 – 25 units per class, and that the price would include the necessary staff training. He noted that students are “ready” with regard to use of technology, but that the focus would be in training them to use technology for educational purposes.

In response to a question from Mr. Hinty, Dr. Donald described Chromebooks as a cross between a laptop and a tablet. He explained that, though they could be used without, they are best utilized when coupled with an internet connection.

In response to a question from Mr. Ford, Dr. Donald agreed that teachers could indeed monitor students’ work in real time and also interact with them.

Mr. Brooks noted that the schools are attempting to take a “middle of the road” approach, stating that some school systems start these programs as early as first grade. He continued by noting that many of our children do not have technology in the home.

Chairman McDaniel added that this initiative would also assist with space and the ability to upload new educational material, rather than buying new books every five or six years, only to see them quickly become outdated. He reiterated the need to provide children with the ability to compete in higher education and the workplace moving ahead.

Dr. Donald added that, going forward, children will be using paper less and less.

Chairman Higgins asked if the schools had completed a survey to see how many children had internet access in the home.

Dr. Donald responded that no recent survey was available, but the one was planned. He added that most telecommunications companies are now providing low cost subscription options for students.

Mr. Brooks noted that the schools are currently looking at opening schools after hours to assist children with limited access.

Mr. Ford suggested also conferring with our public libraries to help with internet access.

In response to a question from Mr. Campbell, Dr. Donald noted that the schools still employ a part time grant writer.

Responding to a question from Mr. Lewis, Dr. Donald confirmed that that the proposal is to start by providing Chromebooks for classrooms first before moving to individual students.

Mr. Brooks noted that the schools are also coordinating with the City of Lexington in hopes that they will introduce Chromebooks at Lylburn Downing Middle School as well. Regardless, some accommodation must be reached in order to provide this service for city students at RCHS.

Chairman Higgins noted that of all the ideas discussed tonight, this was the best.

Chairman McDaniel noted additional potential for a child home sick, to keep up with the class remotely. He also noted the potential for future savings on textbooks.

Chairman Higgins agreed, noting that this would allow us to keep current (via software uploads) without spending money on hard copy books.

In a related matter, Mr. Ford observed that the Governor has proposed more technical training at the community college level, but that our region seems to have been passed by when grants were awarded.

Dr. Donald agreed, noting that it appears that we do not qualify for much of the available funding. He added that the schools are working with DSLCC on dual enrollment and have had informal discussions about a STEM academy.

Mr. Ford remarked that the enhanced STEM program could be a “win” all the way around.

Mr. Brooks then announced that the schools would be asking the Board for assistance with parts of the School Board’s legislative plan.

6) Replacement of Sound Systems for Auditorium and Gym at RCHS:

Chairman McDaniel explained that the current sound system at the high school is wholly inadequate. Several members of both Boards agreed. He then noted that this completes the review of the items which are being requested/recommended but noted that there was one more item on the list to discuss:

7) HVAC Repair/Replacement (Emergency Situation Only)

Chairman McDaniel introduced the subject and asked Mr. Morris to provide an overview.

Mr. Morris noted that the unit serving the auditorium is the chief concern right now. He explained that the 30 ton compressor unit would need to be replaced before hot weather arrives. He further stated that new controls are needed for the entire system – that the sensors and other electronics are “shot”. He noted that the previously discussed study would help determine what improvements would bring the highest efficiency.

Chairman McDaniel stated that they simply want to keep this item "on the burner".

Chairman Higgins asked if the school board has continued to focus on security upgrades.

Chairman McDaniel replied that they had been working on actions suggested in the original study for about three years, and that they had recently asked Mike Cash with the Sheriff’s Office to revisit and update the security plan.

Dr. Donald noted that the report had been received, but that staff had not yet had time to address it.

Mr. Hinty stated that he liked the detail pages shown in the capital plan.

Chairman Higgins expressed that he thought it was a good layout and asked Board members for comment.

Hearing no further comments, Mr. Suter noted that the action item requested was provisional adoption of the plan as presented. He explained that, through the budget process, the plan could change as needed, with final adoption in concert with adoption of the overall County budget.

Chairman McDaniel noted that the School Board had already adopted the document as presented.

Mr. Lewis moved to adopt provisionally the plan as presented. Mr. Hinty provided a second and the motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mr. Hinty then asked if the Boards were clear on how funding would be allocated from the school capital reserve.

Mr. Suter explained that after final adoption of a budget and appropriation of the funds - to include the capital improvement / capital purchase plan, he and Dr. Donald would coordinate to implement the plan. He noted that should a project end up costing more than the allocation, both Boards could be reapproached to consider the additional funding.

Dr. Donald then introduced information regarding teachers' salaries. He reviewed a detailed, 12 page handout, which compared data points from 19 localities in our region, along with a statewide comparison. Specific items of focus were:

- Salary ranking for FY14/15 and FY15/16 – Dr. Donald reviewed pages 2 – 5 of the handout and noted that we are below the midpoint in most areas. Chairman McDaniel noted that it appears that we slipped a little further below the curve from FY14/15 to FY15/16.

Chairman Higgins asked if there was any way the group could see how many teachers are within each step.

Dr. Donald noted that he could provide that information.

- Cost of Living Comparison – Dr. Donald reviewed pages 6 – 7 of the handout, noting that at the last joint meeting, Mr. Ford had requested a cost of living comparison. He explained that the source of the data was “Sperlings Best Places.” He explained that the cost of living in Rockbridge is above the regional average.

Mr. Ford noted that he was rather shocked at the numbers, but agreed that the source of the data was reliable.

- Operating Budget Revenues – Dr. Donald explained page 8 of the handout, showing operating revenues for the RCPS from 2008 – 2016.

- Debt Service – Dr. Donald explained page 9 of the handout (showing school debt service from 1999 to present) , noting that he wanted all to know that the RCPS remains cognizant of the fact that debt service is part of overall education costs.
- Per Pupil Costs – Dr. Donald reviewed pages 10 and 11 of the handout, noting that page 10 includes costs for students which are in educational settings outside the division as well as Lexington City Students being educated at RCHS. He noted that page 11 shows the actual costs per pupil as calculated by the Virginia Department of Education on data submitted from Virginia school divisions.

Mr. Ford asked if CSA (Comprehensive Services Act) costs were included.

Dr. Donald replied that he believed they were.

Chairman Higgins asked if there were any additional items to discuss.

Chairman McDaniel indicated that there were no items from the School Board.

Mr. Ford asked to discuss future pension liabilities, noting that he understood that the RCPS liabilities were approximately \$25M. He asked if there was any way we could know whether that amount were considered financially sound.

Mr. Bolster noted that he had talked to the County’s auditor and that the “rule of thumb” is that organizations should be between 80 and 90 percent funded.

Mr. Ford noted that he thinks we are at the 80% point, so we should be fine.

Mr. Brooks then noted that the School Board had recently passed a request on to the State to rethink the charter school amendment currently under consideration in the General Assembly.

He requested that the Board of Supervisors consider supporting the School Board in this request, by adopting a resolution similar to that adopted by the School Board.

After discussion, the School Board resolution was adapted for consideration by the Board of Supervisors and read aloud. Mr. Ford moved to approve the resolution. Mr. Campbell provided the second and the resolution was adopted by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Ford, Campbell, Lewis, Hinty, Higgins

NAYES: None

AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AND THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD, HELD AT THE ROCKBRIDGE
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27th, 2016:

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO
DIVEST LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS FROM THE SOLE AUTHORITY
TO APPROVE CHARTER SCHOOLS**

WHEREAS, in its 2016 session, the General Assembly will be considering a resolution seeking a constitutional amendment to divest local school boards of the sole authority to approve charter schools, vesting authority with a gubernatorial appointed board; and

WHEREAS, local school boards, which are elected or appointed by their community and entrusted with the authority to supervise schools, are best equipped to assess the needs of their students and the locality; and

WHEREAS, local school boards are responsible for the outcomes of all schools within the school system, including charter schools; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that charter school outcomes are mixed, with the majority doing no better than the traditional public schools that feed them; and

WHEREAS, state-authorized charter schools would result in a massive unfunded mandate to local school divisions, costing millions of dollars to local taxpayers; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors hereby opposes the resolution seeking a constitutional amendment to divest local school boards from the sole authority to approve charter schools.

Adopted this 27th day of January, 2015.

Recorded Vote:

AYES: Ford, Campbell, Lewis, Hinty, Higgins

NAYES: None

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

By: _____
Chairman

Attest: _____
Spencer H. Suter, Clerk

After brief discussion where members of both Boards expressed appreciation for a productive meeting, Mr. Hinty moved to adjourn. Mr. Ford seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote by the Board.

AYES: Hinty, Ford, Lewis, Campbell, Higgins

NAYES: None