

AT A SCHEDULED JOINT SESSION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AND THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA, HELD AT THE SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE, 2893 COLLIERSTOWN ROAD, LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA, ON THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2016

PRESENT: CHAIRMAN: JOHN M. HIGGINS
MEMBERS: RONNIE R. CAMPBELL, RUSSELL S. FORD, ALBERT W. LEWIS, JR., DAVID W. HINTY, JR. (arrived at 5:35 P.M.)
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR AND CLERK TO BOARD: SPENCER H. SUTER
FINANCE DIRECTOR: STEVEN J. BOLSTER

ALSO PRESENT:
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

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Call to Order

John Higgins, Chairman of the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

Rockbridge County School Board Chairman, David McDaniel, called the meeting to order immediately following.

Chairman Higgins introduced Dr. Hand and Dr. Wilder of Rockbridge County High School and invited them to give a presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

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Project Graduation Academy Presentation

Dr. Wilder introduced her administrative team to the room and began to discuss the grant funding for Project Graduation Academy. In 2014-2015, the grant totaled approximately \$29,000.00; in 2015-2016 the grant totaled approximately \$19,711.00; and, in 2016-2017, \$67,897.00 was applied for. Grant funding for this program has provided the opportunity for tutoring before, after, and during the school day. The program is based on a team approach and Rockbridge County Schools have partnered with the Parry McCluer school system and also mentors from Washington and Lee University; currently fourteen mentors are participating. In addition to the partnerships, the grant helps

pay for technologic and electronic resources such as Chromebooks, headphones, a scantron machine, and online work keys.

Dr. Wilder explained the function of online work keys and how they are making a difference in SOL success rates. Prior to using the online work keys, more than 50 seniors were in jeopardy of failing the SOL's. Since the inception of online work keys, such as business writing results, the students are at a one hundred percent pass rate. Dr. Wilder stated that there is a need to target special education children in the school system. Grants are temporary and unpredictable from year to year. The cost for certain testing is about \$7.25 per test, but the current budget does not allow funding for all of those in need of this test.

Dr. Hand joined the presentation by reiterating that there is not enough money in the budget for such tests. He referenced a meeting that he had attended the day before, which was focused on workforce readiness and what it looks like for Rockbridge County. Neighboring markets are gaining new industries and Rockbridge has students who are ready, willing, and able, but they need credentials to be workforce ready. In order to be ready, testing is required, but due to financial constraints, only some students are afforded the opportunity. As a result, Rockbridge County Schools are partnering with Dabney S. Lancaster Community College to unfold a dual enrollment program. Currently 100 students are taking college level courses, but not all of them will receive credit due to the \$25.00 per credit hour cost. Dr. Hand advised the Board that funding of \$20,000.00 will help with tuition costs for those who cannot afford it.

Chairman Higgins asked if Dabney S. Lancaster Community College assists with funding the program, to which Dr. Hand answered "they contribute 75% of the cost." Chairman Higgins

recognized that even though the previous grant was small, it was very successful due to the staff dedication. He thanked Dr. Hand and Dr. Wilder for their passion about the program.

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Proposed Estimate of Needs and Draft Budget Overview

Salaries and Wages/Mandated Personnel Expenses

School Board Chairman, David McDaniel, Natural Bridge District, presented the 2016-2017 estimate of needs totaling \$29,651,713.00 and identified seventy-three percent (73%) of the total budget to be used for instruction. Mr. McDaniel directed the Board of Supervisors to look at page four of the draft budget, the Executive Summary. He noted that there is a strong emphasis on salaries this year based on the consistent low ranking of Rockbridge County Schools compared to other school divisions; 14th out of 20 divisions in the region. Rockbridge County started the school year with open positions and currently still has open positions. There is a need to attract applicants and the recommendations are to provide all teachers with a \$1200.00 per year increase (averaging between 2.23% and 3.16% depending on where current salary falls); to provide a step increase and \$200.00 for teacher assistants and nurses; and, to provide all other positions a step increase. The increases total \$449,000.00 and represent approximately a 2.5% increase. Mr. McDaniel also included figures for mandated personnel expenses increasing by \$33,000.00 for FICA, \$124,000.00 for VRS and \$14,000.00 for group life insurance - totaling an increase of \$171,000.00.

Chairman Higgins asked the School Board to recall and recognize the large VRS increase in the following year, due to a 2% increase in contribution rate. Healthcare costs continue to rise, and though numbers have not been confirmed, an increase of 8.7% is expected - equaling \$144,000.00.

School Board member, Albert Lewis III, Walkers Creek District, informed the Board of Supervisors that healthcare options have been reviewed since the previous year and members have gone as far as meeting with Senators to address the issues. School Board member, Kevin Brooks, South River District, stated there has been a push to get into the State plan. Mr. McDaniel recognized that the school system is struggling with healthcare costs.

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New Instructional Positions

Mr. McDaniel informed the Board of Supervisors that the School System has a "high-need" for eight additional positions: two STEM, two IT, two Art, and two Physical Education. The total cost, including all mandated personnel expenses, for the new positions will be \$474,000.00, and some of the positions will be shared among four schools. He noted that as technology continues to evolve, it will become a larger part of school, and IT resource teachers will help students and teachers maximize the use of technology; the goal is to move to a 1:1 Chromebook to student ratio at Maury River Middle School.

Mr. Brooks elaborated that IT resource teachers will help teachers help students in the event the legislature may require computer SOL's.

Mr. McDaniel explained that the plan to introduce these positions into the elementary level allows STEM teachers to prepare students for 1:1 technology in middle school; art teachers to utilize art to teach more subjects such as math/geometry; and, physical education teachers to meet the increasing State requirements of physical education.

Mr. (Jay) Lewis added that these six positions educate a "whole child". Mr. Brooks stated these requirements are an unfunded mandate from the State. The total for salaries, wages,

mandated personnel expenses, and eight new positions equals \$1,239,000.00.

Mr. McDaniel continued with the remainder of the draft budget - approximately 17%, totaling \$38,400.00, to be used for utility expenses, non-medical insurance expenses, and materials/supplies/replacements/services. The final impact of the budget is an increase of \$1,278,000.00 over FY 2016. Total Revenue is projected at \$28,971,962.00 as explained by Mr. McDaniel, and is from various funding sources. The largest amount is contributed by the State - \$14,093,128.00; local funding requested is \$13,478,834.00; and, estimated tuition, \$1,400,000.00. He noted that local funding will decrease by \$176,000.00 as a special fund previously set aside from a "VRS Holiday" (funds placed into an escrow to offset future increases) has been depleted.

Mr. McDaniel introduced the comparison of State revenues document to the Board of Supervisors and showed that the expected contribution from the General Assembly's adopted budget was \$110,420.00 above what was expected. This concluded the draft budget presentation.

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Chairman Higgins requested the Board of Supervisors to ask any questions at this time. Supervisor Ford inquired about how transportation costs were presented on the school budget statements. Dr. Donald, Superintendent, informed him that field trips and athletics were listed in separate lines. Mr. McDaniel referred to page thirteen to show the total of \$2.27 million dollars budgeted for transportation. Supervisor Ford inquired as to how much was left over to convert to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Superintendent Donald informed him the third quarter is just ending, but things are "running where we expect to be". Mr. Brooks added that transportation and

utilities increased during the year and Fairfield Elementary experienced water issues.

Supervisor Ford stated that there was currently a \$250,000.00 surplus in the fuel line for FY 2015-16; Superintendent Donald explained the fuel savings were being eroded by extending the school day by twenty minutes; the remaining savings would be used toward personnel costs.

Supervisor Hinty inquired about the Dabney S. Lancaster Dual Enrollment tuition and whether the funds for the program could be placed into a restricted account. Dr. Donald informed Supervisor Hinty that he was addressing two issues: 1) \$75.00 cost per student; and, 2) credentialing/testing programs; the \$20,000.00 requested may not be accurate and he would like to sit down with Dr. Hand and come back to the Board of Supervisors with a decision for creating a restricted account.

Supervisors Campbell and Ford inquired about the criteria used to determine which children really need the tuition assistance. The possibility of tying eligibility to the free lunch program was mentioned by one of the School Board members. Mr. McDaniel advised that the School Board would discuss the issue and come up with a proposal. Chairman Higgins stated it was the consensus of the Board of Supervisors to do something for both programs, but more information about where the funding would be applied is required.

Chairman Higgins asked the School Board if there was a request to the City of Lexington for an increase in funding, and if a possibility for an increase in revenue exists.

Superintendent Donald replied that such a possibility existed. Mr. McDaniel stated that the School Board would be meeting on March 30, 2016 and would send finalized documents to Mr. Suter on March 31st.

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Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Mr. McDaniel presented the CIP and informed the Board of Supervisors that there were two requests to add the word "gymnasium" to lines three and four. Mr. Suter clarified that the requested change was to add the word "study".

Supervisor Campbell inquired about the durability of the Chromebooks and preventative measures to keep children from damaging them. Mr. McDaniel informed Supervisor Campbell that there will be an insurance plan in place and that students will be introduced to a full year of classroom use to become more familiar with the devices prior to being able to take them home. Chairman Higgins asked if the Chromebooks are currently in use and if so, how many. Mr. Kirby, with the School's Technology department, was called to speak about the use of the Chromebooks.

Mr. Kirby explained there are currently 400-450 Chromebooks in use in three schools: Natural Bridge Elementary, Maury River Middle School, and Rockbridge County High School. The Chromebooks are used for many applications such as online programs, Google Docs, communication tools, Google Classroom (paperless method), and SOL benchmark testing.

Mr. Brooks inquired about the ability to maintain and the durability of the devices. Superintendent Donald stated that some brands are better than others, but "we always test extensively before bringing to the Board of Supervisors."

Chairman Higgins stated that he did not realize the devices were already being used in classrooms nor that we had data on the program. Superintendent Donald informed the Board that some devices were obtained with grants; Mr. Kirby elaborated that \$120,000.00 was funded through a private donation. Another School Board member added, "This is a sustainable program and it cannot live on a grant". Mr. McDaniel illustrated that

Chromebooks have, in a sense, replaced computer labs and it is "just a change in technology". Superintendent Donald added that the General Assembly prohibits using electronic textbooks for any students unless they are available to all students.

Supervisor Ford inquired about the access to high speed internet in all school locations. Superintendent Donald acknowledged problems with Mountain View Elementary School, to which Mr. Suter responded that RANA was unable to obtain the necessary easements to get to Mountain View Elementary.

Superintendent Donald next presented an actual Chromebook to the room for members to view. Mr. Suter reminded the Board of Supervisors that there is a future cost associated with the devices and directed them to the right column on the CIP cover page.

Chairman Higgins asked the Board of Supervisors if there were any questions for the School Board; no one had questions at the time. Mr. McDaniel requested any wrap up comments or resolutions. Chairman Higgins concluded it was a productive meeting and there is information for consideration for the budget needs; he requested that the School Board ensure that information be distributed as soon as possible. Mr. Suter reiterated that the CIP is provisional; Supervisor Lewis stated its approval is provisional. Chairman Higgins stated it would be approved when the budget is approved.

Superintendent Donald informed the Board of Supervisors that the Governor is expected to sign the budget on April 1, 2016. Chairman Higgins asked that as soon as the revenue from the State and information from the health insurance provider is finalized, it be shared with the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Suter clarified to the Board of Supervisors that the School Board is asking for \$569,000.00 of additional funds and Dr. Donald will need to know something by March 29, 2016. Mr.

McDaniel stated that the Board of Supervisors would have the final document on March 31, 2016.

Vice Chairman Hinty made the motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Supervisor Lewis and approved unanimously on a roll call vote.

Chairman

Attest: _____
County Administrator