

Lexington City Schools
Minutes
September 9, 2020

The Lexington City School Board met on September 9, 2020, at 5:30 pm via Zoom video conference. Present; Timothy Diette, Owen Collins, Tammy Dunn, Mollie Fox, Glenn Sullivan, Rebecca Walters-Superintendent, Stephanie Burch-Clerk.

Upon motion of Mr. Collins, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, the Board approved the Agenda.

Ms. Walters read a Division statement:

“We had every hope and intention of opening school with in-person instruction on August 31st. We had developed a plan with the input of many that we thought was a solid plan at the time. We recognize that the timing of the August 24th decision to open the school year in an all-virtual model on September 8th for the first nine weeks was less than ideal, much like the March 13th abrupt closure of our schools at the beginning of this pandemic.

In the days leading up to this decision, several factors became key considerations:

- virus transmission levels and COVID data continued to fluctuate within our region
- schools and universities around the state and nation opened, and then experienced positive cases forcing them to abruptly change course
- our own local universities made their return with unknown impact to our numbers
- and our teachers and staff returned to our schools to put our plan into practice in preparation to welcome hundreds of children back into our care. In the days leading up to our decision, a majority of our teachers and staff shared with us their concerns and fears that an in-person opening may be premature.

So, we made the difficult and untimely decision to change course based on these factors. We made this decision with safety and the best educational intentions in mind using the information available to us at that time. Though not intentional, we acknowledge the inconvenience and challenges faced by many of our families, however, we felt it was the safest and best choice for now for us to be able to start the first nine weeks of school with continuity of learning and continued health for all stakeholders.

There is no doubt that every student, parent, teacher, and administrator would like to be in person for the start of the school year. During the next weeks, we will continue to monitor our community’s transmission levels and collaborate with the Virginia Department of Health. We will consider and plan for various models for transitioning our students into our buildings safely and effectively including blended or hybrid models. We will continue to look to the experiences of other schools for structures that have been successful, and we will continue to provide quality educational opportunities and connections for all students.”

Mr. Diette had a couple of thoughts to share to follow-up on Ms. Walters' comments:
"First, I apologize that during the August 24th meeting I did not provide a sufficient recap of our months of deliberations. Clearly, a recap was needed to help the public better understand the process, questions board members had asked during previous board meetings, different plans considered, and the other thoughts that went into the recommendation and subsequent vote. I will admit that I did not fully appreciate how I needed to approach the August 24th meeting differently than the previous 8 public meetings the board has held since our schools closed due to COVID-19 in March.

I also wish that we had found a way throughout the summer to clearly communicate that, while we had confidence in the plans that were being developed, the plans were continually evolving due to the new and shifting guidance. Shifting to virtual learning was always a very real possibility in my mind.

Finally, I want to thank all of the Lexington City Schools employees for working so tirelessly on behalf of our young people. I want to thank our educators, trained professionals at helping our young people grow, for teaching full-time while also helping the administration craft these plans going forward."

During our public comment we had three individuals who spoke:

Patrick Ramey

Janice Friend

Eric Koch

Also, during our public comment each Board member read letters of comments.

Upon motion of Ms. Fox, seconded by Ms. Dunn, the Board approved the Consent Agenda:

Minutes of August 12, August 24, 2020

August Payroll \$311,726.44

August Expenditures \$355,504.42

FY 20-21 YTD Expenditures \$923,489.80

Petty Cash Reports

Ms. Walters gave an update on the Superintendent's report that included many success stories of virtual learning. Ms. Camden gave an update that the first day of virtual learning went well. Mr. Keesee gave an update that the first day went well and that the teachers said it felt good to have the students together again.

Ms. Walters is working on planning for a Division Equity team.

Ms. Dunn gave an update on the Rockbridge County School Board meeting: Dr. Thompson thanked all of his teachers, staff, and bus drivers for making virtual learning a success.

The Rockbridge County School Board meeting will be held October 13, 2020 at 5:00 pm.

No Ad Hoc updates.

The next Board meetings are:

September 30, 2020, at 5:30 pm.

October 14, 2020, at 5:30 pm.

October 15, 2020, Joint City Council-School Board work session at 7:00 pm.

October 28, 2020, at 5:30 pm.

Upon motion of Mr. Collins, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, the Board approved the appointment of Jerry Ruten and Justin Mitchell as substitute teachers and Rick Lollis as an administrator substitute.

Upon motion of Ms. Dunn, seconded by Ms. Fox, the Board adjourned at 5:18 pm.

Board Chair

Board Clerk