**Roanoke Valley Governor’s School Regional Board
Minutes of February 1, 2021 Meeting - DRAFT**

The Roanoke Valley Governor’s School Regional Board met on Monday, February 1, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, a safer-at-home order by the Governor of Virginia and the passage of the Governor's Executive Amendments relative to the Pandemic, the Regional Board conducted this meeting virtually in compliance with provisions of Section 2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia and House Bills 29 and 30.

The following Board members participated virtually via Zoom teleconference:

Mr. Mark Cathey Roanoke City Chairman
Mr. Jason Johnson Bedford County Vice Chairman
Mr. Trace Bellassai Craig County
Dr. Michael Chiglinsky Salem City
Mrs. Michelle Crook Botetourt County
Mrs. Julie Nix Franklin County
Mr. Mike Wray Roanoke County

Also participating virtually: Roanoke City Public Schools Superintendent, Mrs. Verletta White, representing the Committee of Superintendents; Governor’s School Director Mark Levy; Clerk Cindy Poulton; Deputy Clerk Paula Buch; Botetourt County Schools Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Russ; Franklin County Schools Superintendent Dr. Bernice Cobbs; Roanoke County Schools Superintendent Dr. Ken Nicely; and division representatives Jamie Soltis (Salem), Jody Robinson (Franklin), Michael Riley (Roanoke County), and Laura Kelly (Roanoke City).

Call to Order

Mr. Cathey called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

On motion by Mr. Wray and Dr. Chiglinsky, the Board unanimously approved the agenda as distributed.

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Mrs. White opened the floor for nominations for Chairman. Mrs. Nix moved the nomination of Mark Cathey for Chairman, and the motion was seconded by Dr. Chiglinsky. Hearing no further nominations, nominations were closed. By unanimous vote, Mr. Cathey was elected Chairman for 2021. Mr. Cathey expressed his appreciation and noted he was applying for his third term on the Roanoke City School Board and planned to continue to serve as its representative on the Regional Board.

Mr. Cathey opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairman. Dr. Chiglinsky moved the nomination of Jason Johnson for Vice Chairman, and the motion was seconded by Mrs. Nix. Hearing no further nominations, nominations were closed. By unanimous vote, Mr. Johnson was elected Vice Chairman for 2021. Mr. Johnston stated, “this is a great Board and it is a pleasure for me to serve on it.”

Election of Clerk and Deputy Clerk

On motion by Dr. Chiglinsky and Mrs. Nix, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Cindy Poulton as Clerk and Paula Buch as Deputy Clerk for 2021.

Personnel List

On motion by Dr. Chiglinsky and Mr. Wray, the Board unanimously approved the Personnel List as presented establishing the stipends for the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

Approval of October 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes

On motion by Mr. Wray and Dr. Chiglinsky, the Board unanimously approved the October 5, 2020 meeting minutes as distributed.

Legislative Update

Mr. Levy reminded the Board of the General Assembly’s intent to enact legislation during the 2021 session around increasing access to Academic Year Governor’s Schools (AYGS) for historically underserved students. He provided an overview of the development of House Bill 2305 and noted the current version, a copy of which was included in the agenda packet, retains a majority of the topics in earlier drafts but the language regarding a prescribed admissions policy has been removed. Mr. Levy stated the majority of AYGS Directors Committee supports passage of this bill as it ensures AYGS continue to have policy direction from regional boards rather than dictated by the State; he stated the bill is expected to be approved by the House and considered by the Senate during crossover.

Proposed Equitable Access Plan

Mr. Levy presented highlights of the proposed Equitable Access Plan that focuses on representation of the communities served within each school district and allows the plan to adhere to the unique characteristics of each locality. He stated the proposal is presented for information and discussion, and he requested additional input and suggestions be provided before the next meeting. Mr. Levy noted that district liaisons provided input that helped develop the proposed plan. He reviewed the approach to defining diversity, noting racial subgroup diversity among the seven districts looks different and will be monitored as will economically disadvantaged students, but the primary measure will be geographic representation. Mr. Levy highlighted the key elements of the Plan, concerns expressed by district staff, and next steps as the Board will be asked to approve the Plan at a future meeting. He stated there will be a four-year implementation period, and there is not a punitive step taken against a district that does meet the geographic representation goal; however, the district would need to develop an action plan and framework for how this will be addressed moving forward. Mr. Johnson asked how this will be handled for Bedford as its zones overlap with the Roanoke AYGS and Lynchburg AYGS; Mr. Levy stated this is a unique situation because of the overlap, and if there is not representation in that zone because students did not apply, the district would explain why there was not a choice. Mr. Levy clarified that the proposal does not encourage anyone to accept unqualified students because the goal is for all RVGS students to be successful, and everything in the proposal supports the idea that districts are only looking at qualified students. He added that there will be flexibility in the Plan and an alternate option to the geographic representation could be economically disadvantaged or having a student eligible under McKinney Vento. Mrs. Nix asked about schools where there would be limited diversity; Mr. Levy stated the district could decide to arrange the elementary schools into zones that would address the diversity issue.

Moving forward, Mr. Levy stated the Board needs more opportunity to discuss the proposal, provide edits or adjustments, and consider if the Plan will be considered Regional Board “policy” or “guidance.” Additionally, there will be guidance and support for district staff in addressing parent/guardian concerns and there may be discretion for districts to temporarily increase slot allotment to account for geographic representation.

2020-21 Budget Update

Mr. Levy highlighted the operating budget year as of January 12, 2021 as compared to January 15, 2020. He reported an amendment for CARES Act funding was submitted, and requested just over $20,000, which will be used for planning materials and to pay teachers for extra duties. Mr. Levy stated cleaning materials are provided by Roanoke City Schools and custodial staff is paid by RVGS. He noted the reduction in debt service costs and noted these funds were used this year to add a new staff position. Mr. Levy stated expenses have been lower to date and disbursements from districts for tuition arrive sporadically and by the end of the year will be paid.

2021-22 Preliminary Budget

Mr. Levy compared the FY22 preliminary budget with the current FY21 budget reiterating his efforts to be a good steward of the funds and be as careful as possible during these difficult times. He stated there is a slight revenue increase from the State; however, it does not keep up with personnel costs. Mr. Levy stated there will be no tuition increase, and because the debt service has decreased, there is flexibility to maintain tuition at its current level. He noted a $2,000 decrease in the utilities line and the addition of a non-recurring technology expense of $10,000 for replacement and repair of devices distributed in 2020-21. Mr. Levy stated educational expenses remain budgeted at $225,000, and the projected use from unspent funds is $18,883; however, he expects to avoid using any unspent funds because of savings across the line items.

Director’s Report

Intersession and Project Forum—Mr. Levy stated Intersession will take place in February to avoid higher infection levels of COVID following the holidays, students have been encouraged to develop partner projects to allow for students to alternate attendance and participate in four days of instruction, and Board members and superintendents will receive an email inviting them to visit campus. He stated Project Forum will be held virtually on March 6 with a virtual open house at 1:00 p.m. and online awards announcement at 4:00 p.m.

Instruction—Mr. Levy stated he would not advocate for any changes to the attendance model, and he is pleased with how students are “rolling with the changes” and complying with the requirements. He stated teachers are confident that the courses will be completed and AP students ready for exams.

Parent and Student Survey—Mr. Levy reviewed the overall positive results of the parent and student survey measuring their satisfaction with the hybrid schedule and instruction.

2020-21 Recruitment—Mr. Levy stated the information meetings were well attended and more than 237 students registered to apply. He stated this year he asked students who participated in an information meeting and requested an application to self-report demographic information, which reflected as follows: White 66.2%, Asian 15.2%, Black 9.7%, Hispanic 1.3%, and two or more 7.6%. Mr. Levy stated this is the first year he has captured this data and a priority will be to reach out to the Hispanic population.

Student Performance, Support, and Retention—Mr. Levy stated there are not a lot of students who are failing classes but there has been an increase in the number of Cs or lower when compared to previous years, and student supports are being provided.

Senior Dinner—Mr. Levy stated the dinner is scheduled for Wednesday, May 12, and the format is contingent on Pandemic conditions.

Superintendent Discussion Items – Mrs. White suggested the superintendents get together to further discuss the proposed Equitable Access Plan.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is Monday, April 26, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

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 Mark K. Cathey, Chairman

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