

# School board OKs two-hour delay for Election Day

By Josette Keelor

WOODSTOCK — The Shenandoah County School Board voted Thursday to keep schools open on Nov. 3, this year's Election Day.

Superintendent Jeremy Raley asked for an approval of a memorandum of understanding with

the Shenandoah County Electoral Board that would allow voters access to high schools in Woodstock and Strasburg polling locations.

Schools will open two hours late on Nov. 3, and the board added an addendum to reconvene later this school year for

discussion of allowing school use for polling locations on subsequent election dates. The memorandum of agreement has an end date of Dec. 31, 2015.

The motion made by Kathryn Holsinger and seconded by Vice Chair Karen Whetzel passed, 4-2. Opposing the motion were Irv-

ing Getz and Chairman Richard L. "Rick" Koontz Jr.

The vote came after questions arose from Raley's recommendation, which did not address access to schools for a primary election in March and a local election in May.

After an initial motion by Kath-

eryn Freakley and seconded by Sonya Williams-Gierch to approve Raley's recommendation as presented, the board discussed the matter further, ultimately voting 5-1 not to approve the recommendation as presented.

• DELAY, A2



# Delay

Continued from A1

Whetzel was the only board member to vote for the recommendation as presented.

The situation of polling locations became a point of contention earlier this spring after the School Board approved a school calendar for the 2015-16 school year naming Nov. 3 a school day.

Joyce Gary, chair of the county electoral board, had asked the board to consider that keeping schools open could lead to a reduction in voter turnout, should the public not find parking or easily navigate school campuses on Election Day.

But closing schools that day would force a makeup day in June — a decision board members reasoned might not present the best use of educational time for students already finished with testing and other class obligations by that late date.

Though they cited security as a concern if schools with polling locations remained open that day, board members also balked at closing all 10 county schools for the sake of two polling locations.

Raley's recommendation included offers by the Shenandoah County Sheriff's Office and Strasburg Police Department to post

an extra officer at Central High School and Strasburg High School on Election Day.

He suggested the two-hour delay to help ease traffic concerns in the morning, allowing voters easier access to polling locations during peak morning hours before students arrive at 10 a.m.

The board will reconvene later in the school year to discuss the matter of elections on school campuses this spring and in subsequent years.

In other meeting business, the board approved a memorandum of agreement with Massanutten Military Academy in Woodstock to partner with Central High School on a junior ROTC pilot program, which Raley explained will be free to Shenandoah schools for the first year.

So far, he said, interest in the program has come only from the Central campus, but after the pilot year the school division will consider whether or not to continue and include students from other campuses.

Following a recommendation from Maintenance Supervisor Eugene Dykes, Raley plans to ask the Board of Supervisors for funding to purchase a new boiler for W.W. Robinson Elementary School. Capital Boiler was the low bidder on a double boiler for \$5,800, what Dykes called a "nominal fee."

"It will pay for itself in a very short period of time," he said.

At a work session preceding the meeting, board members considered upcoming division needs and listened to a proposal from the educational facilities planning team that will study space concerns at area schools.

After touring schools this month and collecting community feedback in September, the team plans to present the board a final report by Oct. 1.

"They really get it," Freakley said. "It makes me excited."

Other meeting items:

- Approval of a memorandum of understanding between Shenandoah schools and the Mount Jackson Little League Football, Strasburg Lacrosse, Strasburg Little League Baseball, Strasburg Little League Football and Woodstock Little League Football for the 2015-16 school year.

- Approval of School Board policy revisions that include the board's final step in developing a compensation policy and changes clarifying procedures related to salary benchmarking.

The board will meet again at 7 p.m. Aug. 13 at 600 Main St., Woodstock.

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