

**Bamberg County School District
Board of Trustees Meeting
Bamberg County School District Office
March 3, 2025
7:00 p.m.**

Members present: Board Chair Janeth Walker, Vice Chair Naomi Eckels, Secretary Cynthia “Cindy” F. Hurst, Trustee Gwendolyn D. Bamberg, Trustee Jeni Bunch, Trustee Harriet H. Coker, Trustee David Corder, Trustee Tonya A. Sanders-Govan, and Trustee Cathy Ayer Griffin.

Absent: None.

1. **Call meeting to order:** Board Chair Janeth Walker called the meeting to order.

Notice to Media: In accordance with the S. C. Code of Laws of 1976, as amended, Section 30-4-80(E), The Times and Democrat Newspaper, The Bamberg County Leader, WIIZ 97.9 FM, WBSC-LP 102.3 FM, and the Bamberg County School District website have been notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed.

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed 9-0.

4. **Approval of Minutes for February 3, 2025**

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, to accept the minutes from the February 3, 2025, meeting as presented. However, after a brief discussion, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved to rescind her original motion.**

Subsequently, **Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, to accept the February 3, 2025, meeting minutes as presented, with the addition of honorifics on Page 1 and a noted revision on Page 7.** The motion passed 9-0.

5. **School Reports: Mandy Edwards, Denise Miller, Jordan Smith, Dr. Shannon Johnson, Patricia Moultrie-Goldsmith, and Dr. Deonia Simmons. Hand-outs: School Reports (Reviewed by Principals/Assistant Principals)**

- Richard Carroll Elementary School – Principal Mandy Edwards
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School – Principal Denise Miller
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School – Principal Jordan Smith
- Denmark-Olar Elementary School –Principal Dr. Shannon Johnson
- Denmark-Olar Middle School – Principal Patricia Moultrie-Goldsmith
- Denmark-Olar High School Principal – Principal Dr. Deonia Simmons

Superintendent Dottie Brown presented all school reports in the absence of principals.

6. **Athletic Reports: Robert Williams**

Athletic Director Robert Williams reviewed the athletic report as presented for Bamberg County School District and placed emphasis on the spring sports schedules.[Board Packet Enclosures]

7. **Student/Staff Recognition and Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Brown noted the following:

- a) Dr. Brown expressed heartfelt gratitude to the students, staff, and administrators for their time, dedication, and efforts in organizing exceptional Black History Programs. She also extended her thanks to the choirs, bands, guest speakers, special guests, the community, and parents for their support of these programs.
- b) Dr. Brown presented the board with a last-minute request for an out-of-state field trip: RCES Safety Patrol/Robotics Club – Carowinds/Youth Leadership Day – Charlotte, NC – April 11, 2025 (Jazmyn Medlin, RCES Guidance Counselor)

Following a review of the request for an out-of-state trip, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded, to approve the request from RCES Guidance Counselor Jazmyn Medlin for the RCES Safety Patrol/Robotics Club to attend Youth Leadership Day at Carowinds in Charlotte, NC, on April 11, 2025.** The motion passed 9-0. [Handout]

- c) Dr. Brown provided a summary of the enrollment data as of February 26, 2025, reporting a total student enrollment of 1,805 across the district.
- d) Dr. Brown concluded by recognizing the principals, teachers, and curriculum leads for their participation in selecting the new district math textbooks. She also extended a special thank you to Ms. Charlotte Schlamp for leading this effort.

8. **Request for Out of State/Overnight Trips:**

- a. **Bamberg-Ehrhardt Softball – Grand Strand Softball Classic – Myrtle Beach, SC -- April 19, 2025-April 26, 2025 (Robert Williams, Athletic Director/Head Softball Coach)**
- b. **Southern Grants Forum – New Orleans, LA -- July 14, 2025-July 17, 2025 (Professional Development Request by Phyllis Overstreet, Federal Programs Facilitator, and Devon Furr, Chief Financial Officer)**

Following a review of the requests for out of state/overnight trips, **Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded, the motion to approve the following requests: Athletic Director/Head Softball Coach, Robert Williams', request for Bamberg-Ehrhardt Softball to attend the Grand Strand Softball Classic in Myrtle Beach, SC, from April 19, 2025, to April 26, 2025 and the professional development request from Federal Programs Facilitator, Phyllis Overstreet, and Chief Financial Officer, Devon Furr to attend the Southern Grants Forum in New Orleans, LA, from July 14, 2025, to July 17, 2025.** The motion passed 9-0.

9. **District Math Textbook Selections (Action Needed)**

Dr. Brown informed the board that, in accordance with new guidelines from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), the district's Math Textbook selections must be reviewed and approved by the school board. She provided a brief overview of the SCDE's process for vetting vendors and products before presenting their final four or five selections to school districts for consideration. Dr. Brown then introduced the following textbook selections, as recommended by Bamberg County School District's textbook committees:

- a) Curriculum Associates, iReady for grades K-5th;
- b) Savvas Learning, enVision for grades 6th-8th;
- c) Savvas Learning, enVision for 7th grade honors;
- d) Accelerate Learning, Math Nation for 8th grade honors;
- e) Savvas Learning, enVision for Algebra I;
- f) Savvas Learning, enVision for Algebra II; and
- g) Savvas Learning, enVision for Geometry.

After reviewing the math textbook selections, **Trustee Harriet Coker moved, and Trustee Jeni Bunch seconded, to accept the recommended math textbook selections from the district textbook committees.** The motion passed 9-0.

10. **Approval: 2025-2026 School Calendar**

Superintendent Brown presented the 2025-2026 draft calendar for the first reading. Dr. Brown highlighted that the calendar not only meets the minimum requirement for make-up days but also includes two additional inclement weather make-up days, based on the district's experience with school closures during the current year. She further noted that the calendar incorporates the required professional development days and retains both fall and winter breaks, provided these days are not needed for make-up.

Trustee David Corder moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, to accept the 2025-2026 draft calendar for first reading, as presented. The motion carried 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosure]

11. **Second Reading – BCSD Policies – Section E – Support Services:**

- a. **ECAH – Unmanned Aircraft Systems “Drones”**
- b. **ECAH-R – Unmanned Aircraft Systems “Drones”**
- c. **EEBA – District-Owned Vehicles**
- d. **EEBA-R – District-Owned Vehicles**

Dr. Brown presented policies ECAH, ECAH-R, EEBA, and EEBA-R for second reading.

After a brief discussion of policies ECAH and ECAH-R, **Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Vice Chair Naomi Eckels seconded, the motion to approve the second reading of Policies ECAH – Unmanned Aircraft Systems “Drones” and ECAH-R – Unmanned Aircraft Systems “Drones” with the addition of the phrase “or flown under the supervision of a licensed FAA Certified Drone Pilot” on Page 2, Item D of Policy ECAH and Page 1, Item II(B) of Policy ECAH-R.** The motion passed 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosures]

After discussion of policies EEBA and EEBA-R, **Trustee Jeni Bunch moved, and Trustee David Corder seconded, the motion to approve the second reading of Policies EEBA – District-Owned Vehicles and EEBA-R – District-Owned Vehicles, as presented.** The motion passed 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosures]

12. **Second Reading – BCSD Policies – Section I – Instruction:**
 - a. **IKD-R – Honor Rolls**
 - b. **IKE – Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration of Students (Revision)**

Dr. Brown presented policies IKD-R and IKE for second reading.

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded, to accept the second reading of Policy IKD-R – Honor Rolls and IKE – Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration of Students, as presented. However, after a brief discussion, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved to rescind her original motion.**

Subsequently, **Trustee David Corder moved, and Trustee Cathy Griffin seconded, to table the second reading of Policy IKE – Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration of Students until the next meeting, in order to add the language “in consultation with parent/legal guardian” to the last sentence on Page 3 under “Retention; Grades One and Two; Grades Four through Eight” for further consideration by the board.** The motion passed 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosure]

After a brief discussion, **Trustee David Corder moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded, the motion to approve the second reading of Policy IKD-R – Honor Rolls, as presented.** The motion passed 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosure]

13. **Second Reading – BCSD Policy – Section K – School-Community-Home Relations:**
 - a. **KB – Parent and Family Engagement in Education**

Dr. Brown presented policies KB for second reading.

After discussion of policy KB, **Trustee Harriet Coker moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded, the motion to approve the second reading of Policy KB – Parent and Family Engagement in Education, as presented, with correction in font size on Page 2.** The motion passed 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosure]

14. **SCAGO Bond Resolution (Action Needed)**

Bob Dameron of Compass Municipal Advisors reviewed the South Carolina Association of Governmental Organizations (SCAGO) resolution, which was prepared by Frannie Heizer of Burr & Forman, LLP. Mr. Dameron explained that this resolution is a standard SCAGO resolution adopted by districts annually. The calculation is based on the district's 8% capacity and is designed to allow the district to issue approximately \$1,000,000 in SCAGO bonds for capital projects, without increasing the millage. He further clarified that these funds cannot be used for operational purposes and are strictly designated for capital needs.

Mr. Dameron presented Compass' preliminary calculations and worked with the bond issuer to determine that the district would be able to issue \$1,000,000. The resolution specifies a "not to exceed" amount of \$1,100,000 to account for issuance costs. He noted that if there is surplus money in the debt service fund prior to issuance, the amount could be slightly adjusted to ensure rounding, but the primary goal is for \$1,000,000 in funding.

He also advised that the bonds would be sold on April 29th, along with those of other participating school districts, with the funds expected to be available for the district between May 15th and May 20th. This timing would allow the district to utilize the funds for capital construction projects during the summer.

Mr. Dameron explained that the district has issued bonds through the SCAGO program almost every year. However, a two-year bond was issued about a year ago because the projects exceeded \$1,000,000. To accommodate this, the \$2,000,000 was structured over two years, primarily to maintain the millage at its current level. He pointed out that the debt service for this year was 104 mills. Thanks to the \$5,000,000 allocated to the escrow account through the state budget by Representative Bamberg, the debt service is expected to decrease by approximately six mills, bringing it down to 98 mills for the upcoming year. The investment account was established to draw down through 2035, aligning with the term of the old bonds issued under the district's debt structure prior to consolidation.

Mr. Dameron reminded the board that all debts from District One and District Two were consolidated into the debt of Bamberg County School District. Additionally, all assets and debt service funds held in the Treasurer's office were transferred to Bamberg County School District to be used for future debt payments. He further clarified that the auditor is the sole authority in determining the debt service millage each year. However, he and Devon Furr, Chief Financial Officer for the district, would consult with the auditors before setting the millage for the 2025-2026 year to review the necessary calculations.

Mr. Dameron explained that debt service millage differs from operating millage in that the legislature does not affect the district's 8% constitutional debt limit. The debt service millage is set based on debt service payments authorized by the board under the constitutional debt limit, and the legislature has no impact on the board's constitutional authority to issue bonds up to 8% of the district's assessed value. He further clarified that the district is not issuing 100% of its 8% capacity, nor is it attempting to maintain this full capacity, as the millage is structured in such a way that it does not fully utilize the 8% capacity.

Mr. Dameron further reminded the board that SCAGO bonds are sold competitively, meaning the district will receive the same rate as the entire pool. Since the bonds are sold on a competitive basis, the district will secure the highest rating available from the state and will receive the lowest possible interest rate on the day the bonds go to market.

After review, **Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved and Trustee Jeni Bunch seconded to approve issuance of the SCAGO Bond Resolution, as presented.** The motion passed 9-0. [Handout]

15. **Monthly Financial Report**

Chief Financial Officer Devon Furr presented the Financial Report for Bamberg County School District for FY 2024-2025 as of February 2025, for review. [Board Packet Enclosure]

Ms. Furr reminded the board that it is time to begin planning for the budget. She will start meeting with principals as soon as possible and will bring the proposed budget to the board for a budget work session.

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded the motion to accept and approve the Financial Report for February 2025, as presented. The motion passed 9-0.

16. **Visitors' Comments**

None.

17. **Executive Session**

Board Chair Janeth Walker called for a motion to enter Executive Session. Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee Cathy Griffin seconded, the motion to enter Executive Session. The motion carried 9-0.

Board Chair Janeth Walker noted that the Board would be moving into Executive Session to discuss Employment/Personnel Matters Related to: Personnel Recommendations for Hire, Personnel Recommendations for Resignation, Matters Related to Release of Students and Legal Advice on Superintendent Search.

Open session: Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, the motion for the Board to come out of Executive Session and return to the regular session of the meeting. The motion carried 9-0.

18. **Action on Executive Session Items**

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded the motion to accept and approve Agenda Item 17(a)(2) Personnel Recommendations for Resignation for employees a and b, and Agenda Item 17(b) Matters Related to Release of Students for students 1, 2, and 3. The motion passed 9-0.

There was no action taken on Agenda Item 17(a)(1) Personnel Recommendations for Hire or Agenda Item 17(c) Legal Advice on Superintendent Search.

19. **Adjourn**

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 9-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

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Minutes approved:

Janeth Walker, Board Chair

Cynthia Hurst, Secretary