

Bamberg County School District
Minutes of Swearing-In and Meeting of Board of Trustees
Bamberg Ehrhardt High School
January 25, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Members present: Board Chair Janeth Walker, Vice Chair Beverly P. Bonaparte, Secretary Tonie A. Holman, Trustee Gwendolyn D. Bamberg, Trustee Harriet H. Coker, Trustee Naomi Eckels, Trustee John L. Hiers, Trustee Cynthia “Cindy” F. Hurst and Trustee Blossom J. Thompson.

Absent: None.

1. **Welcome and Purpose**

2. Superintendent Brown opened the meeting and stated the purpose of the meeting was to organize the Board of Trustees for Bamberg County School District by swearing in the new board members and electing the board officers. Dr. Brown congratulated each board member for being appointed to the new consolidated board.

3. **Words on Consolidation from Representative Justin Bamberg**

Agenda item was bypassed, as Representative Bamberg was unable to attend the meeting.

4. **Greeting from the South Carolina School Boards Association**

Mr. Scott Price, Executive Director of the South Carolina School Boards Association, congratulated all trustees on their appointment as board members to the consolidated board. Mr. Price informed the board of the services provided by SCSBA and SCSBA’s role in helping the board move forward. Mr. Price further advised of the various learning opportunities and informative email blasts provided to board members.

5. **Swearing-In of the members of Bamberg County School District**

Mr. Charles Boykin of Boykin & Davis, LLC, administered the Oath of Office to Mrs. Gwendolyn D. Bamberg, Mrs. Beverly P. Bonaparte, Ms. Harriet H. Coker, Mrs. Naomi Eckels, Mr. John L. Hiers, Mr. Tonie A. Holman, Mrs. Cynthia “Cindy” F. Hurst, Ms. Blossom J. Thompson and Mrs. Janeth Walker.

6. **Call meeting to order:** Superintendent Dottie Brown 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, and the Bamberg School Districts One and Two Websites have been notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting.

7. **Election of Board Officers – Dr. Dottie Brown**

Superintendent Dottie Brown presided during the election of Board Chair. Once elected, Board Chair Janeth Walker presided during the election of Board Vice Chair and Secretary for the board.

Trustee Blossom Thompson nominated Trustee Janeth Walker as Board Chair. The motion passed 9-0.

Trustee John Hiers nominated Trustee Beverly Bonaparte as Vice Chair. The motion passed 9-0.

Trustee Beverly Bonaparte nominated Trustee Tonie Holman as Secretary. The motion passed 9-0.

8. **2022 School Board Recognition – Review of the Ethical Principles**

The board was presented with the South Carolina School Board Association’s 2022 Ethical Principles for review. Each Board member took their turn and shared in the reading of the ethical principles, followed with the signing of the 2022 Ethical Principles poster to reiterate their pledge as a school board member.

9. **Discussion and Vote on Legal Services**

Superintendent Brown made the recommendation of continuing with the legal services and representation of Boykin & Davis, LLC for the new consolidated district.

Vice Chair Beverly Bonaparte moved and Secretary Tonie Holman seconded to approve retaining the legal services of Boykin & Davis, LLC. The motion passed 9-0.

10. **Discussion and Vote on Shared Services Agreements**

Superintendent Brown reviewed the shared services agreements entered into by Bamberg School Districts One and Two and requested that the board continue the administrative consolidated services under the governance of the new board for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year, with the understanding that the agreements could be reviewed and modified as necessary for next year. Dr. Brown proposed that the agreements include the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Finance Director, Technology Director, Food Service Director, and Technology Coach.

Vice Chair Beverly Bonaparte moved and Secretary Tonie Holman seconded to approve continuing the current shared services agreements. The motion passed 9-0.

11. **Discussion and Vote on Consultants**

Superintendent Brown made the recommendation of continuing the consulting services of Dr. Dean Wittwer and also retaining the services of Dr. Zona Jefferson to help with consolidation planning.

Trustee John Hiers moved and Vice Chair Beverly Bonaparte seconded to approve the consulting services of Dr. Dean Wittwer and Dr. Zona Jefferson. The motion passed 9-0.

12. **Brief Overview of Activities for the Coming Months**

Superintendent Brown advised the first order of business for both the board and administrative staff for the new consolidated district and for existing Bamberg School Districts One and Two is strategic planning. Dr. Brown noted that the board, along with other administrative staff, will write the strategic plan in order to finalize the consolidated district, which includes personnel and staffing needs.

13. **Discussion and Approval of Attendance of New Member Orientation**

Superintendent Brown informed the board that new board members have one year to complete new board member orientation. Dr. Brown noted that the first opportunity for this training is offered at the South Carolina School Board Association's annual meeting being held February 17-February 20, 2022 in Hilton Head, South Carolina and requested that the board approve attendance at the required training presented by SCSBA.

Trustee Naomi Eckels moved and Secretary Tonie Holman seconded to approve attendance at the required board training presented by SCSBA. The motion passed 9-0.

14. **Schedule of In-District Board Training for New Members**

Superintendent Brown noted there will be several in-district training opportunities provided to new board members wherein the public can witness their training. Dr. Brown informed the board that the in-district training opportunities will increase the potential for success in the new district and will allow parent and community members to be a formal part of the development of the new district. Dr. Brown stated Mr. Charles Boykin of Boykin and Davis, LLC, will be providing the training at a later date and will include topics such as board member roles and responsibilities, effective decision making for school boards, ethics, legal matters, and public bodies.

15. **Consolidation Update**

a. Role of Consolidation Consultants

- i. Scope of Services for Strategic Plan
- ii. Scope of Services Personnel and Staffing

Superintendent Brown explained that the role of the consolidation consultants is to guide the board and superintendent through every step of the consolidation process.

b. Role of the Superintendent

Superintendent Brown noted the superintendent's role in consolidation is to keep the board informed, up to date and educated so that the best informed decisions can be made in the consolidation process.

c. Role of the Board

Superintendent Brown advised that the role of the board is to decide how the district will be structured and to move forward with writing policies and procedures.

Dr. Brown further stated that, collectively, the job of both the superintendent and board of trustees is to keep the public and community informed as much as possible during the process of consolidation.

Dr. Brown added that as of July 1, 2022, Bamberg School Districts One and Two will cease to exist and Bamberg County School District will be born.

16. **Board Member Comments**

Secretary Tonie Holman stated that his eyes have been opened as to what the board does and he thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve and to do what is best for the children.

Trustee John Hiers commented that both boards have already been working together for two years and that consolidation has gone seamlessly and unnoticed by the two schools. Mr. Hiers made note that a lot of work has already been done behind the scenes by the administration and consolidating services from both districts and that he expects things to continue to work as well as they have in the past. Mr. Hiers concluded by saying that he looks forward to working with the new members and looks forward to good things for Bamberg School District.

Board Chair Janeth Walker thanked her fellow board members for believing in her to lead and to work collectively with each of them for the good of the children and community. Mrs. Walker addressed the community and stated that the district has served and worked together over the years, and that once consolidation became a reality for all, they began to work closely together and collectively with the vision to become one, first by stabilizing administration and then by combining the administration. Now what is being done is stabilizing consolidation. Mrs. Walker believes that consolidation does not cause problems, but reveals the weakness that is within the community. Mrs. Walker concluded by asserting that the board is committed to doing all that they can for the children that they will all serve and again thanked everyone for the opportunity.

Vice Chair Beverly Bonaparte stated that it feels like a “breath of fresh air” because consolidation has been a long time coming. Mrs. Bonaparte stated she has worked closely with Board Chair Janeth Walker over the past three years and that they had Mr. Boykin encouraging them along the way. Mrs. Bonaparte stated that no one knows what the board has actually gone through, but thanked God who has given the strength to maintain a strong board. Mrs. Bonaparte hopes that the board will become a good example to other schools and will show that to move forward, it takes a common denomination of different people coming together for the good of the children. Mrs. Bonaparte vowed to continue to do her utmost best for the children of Bamberg County School District.

Trustee Naomi Eckels echoed all that had already been said and hopes the community knows the board is dedicated to the community and to the children. Mrs. Eckels stated that she hopes the teachers, staff and everyone who continues to put in the work, so the children have a place that they can depend on and have people to depend on, know that the board does not take that lightly. She added that she hopes that they put that trust in the board to help them continue to do their jobs to help the children and the community and further stated she is grateful to be a part of the consolidated board.

Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg began by saying that she was glad to see the birth of the new board and reiterated that the board is dedicated to seeing the students of Bamberg County rank as high as the larger districts. Mrs. Bamberg stated the board wants the best for the students and that the best is what the board is striving for and that, with the community’s help, it can be done. Mrs. Bamberg further stated that it takes everyone working for the same goal- to come out with what we would have our children to be. Mrs. Bamberg thanked everyone for supporting and believing in the board members, but reminded everyone it is all about the students.

Trustee Blossom Thompson thanked everyone and God for the consolidation opportunity and for the community coming together to make consolidation happen. Mrs. Blossom vowed to work her hardest to make the board work as it should work.

Trustee Harriet Coker stated that she appreciated all of the hard work already put in and knows it has not been easy. Ms. Coker noted she was the “new kid on the block” and knows there’s a lot to learn, but indicated she was ready, willing and able. Ms. Coker further affirmed that she is looking forward to the opportunity and stated that Bamberg School Districts One and Two have had outstanding graduates and feels confident the district will continue to produce outstanding young people.

Trustee Cynthia Hurst stated that being on the board is a wonderful opportunity, with the community’s support to try and create and develop what is best for the students, who she believes are the future for everyone. Mrs. Hurst indicated that she felt a little overwhelmed, but knows there is a lot of expertise on the board and said that she looks forward to the opportunity for the county to excel and shine as it should. Mrs. Hurst thanked everyone for allowing her to be a part of the consolidation.

Board Chair Walker concluded by stating the statistics said children are 27% of the world’s population, but are 100% our future. Mrs. Walker thanked everyone for being a part of this historic moment.

17. **Adjourn**

Vice Chair Beverly Bonaparte moved and Trustee Naomi Eckels seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 9-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Minutes approved:

Janeth Walker, Board Chair

Tonie A. Holman, Secretary