

**Bamberg County School District
Board of Trustees Meeting
Bamberg County School District Office
January 6, 2025
6:00 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 December 2, 2024**

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded to accept the December 2, 2024 meeting minutes as presented with noted correction on Page 3. The motion passed 9-0.

5. **Bamberg County School District FY 2023-2024 Audit – Neal Crider, McGregor & Company, L.L.P.**

Mr. Neal Crider advised that the objective of their auditing firm is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor’s report that includes their opinion.

Mr. Crider noted that the District received an "unmodified/clean opinion" on the financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Mr. Crider stated that they do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the District’s internal controls. However, they did identify certain deficiencies in internal controls that they consider to be a material weakness and a significant deficiency. More specifically, Mr. Crider advised that there was a deviation from standard fiscal practices in revenues not being posted to the general ledger in a timely manner, and as a result, bank reconciliations could not be provided promptly. The recommendation for this material weakness is for district personnel to prepare bank reconciliations each month and at least by the close of the following month to remedy any errors in a timely manner. Mr. Crider advised that this weakness and recommendation have

been discussed with the District, and the District has procedures in place to address this finding.

Mr. Crider advised that each major Federal Program was tested, and reports on compliance for these programs were issued with a “clean opinion” on compliance. There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies related to internal control over financial reporting, and no major compliance findings on the major programs tested.

Mr. Crider went over the financial analysis for the district and advised that, for the second year following consolidation, the district has made steady progress in maintaining financial stability. For FY 2024, the district brought in a total of \$49,090,998.00 in revenues and spent \$44,052,315.00, leaving an excess of revenues amounting to \$5,038,673.00.

Mr. Crider concluded by informing that the general fund finished with a decrease in Fund Balance of \$722,472.00, bringing the total accumulated general fund balance, as of June 30, 2024, to \$8,211,774.00. Mr. Crider stated that the district is in good shape and has a healthy fund balance.

6. **2025 School board Recognition – Review of Ethical Principles**

The board was presented with the South Carolina School Boards Association’s 2025 Ethical Principles for review. Each board member took their turn reading the ethical principles, followed by signing the 2025 Ethical Principles poster to reaffirm their pledge as school board members.

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

- Richard Carroll Elementary School – Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer in the absence of Principal Mandy Edwards
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School – Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer in the absence of Principal Denise Miller
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School – Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer in the absence of Principal Jordan Smith
- Denmark-Olar Elementary School – Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer in the absence of Principal Shannon Johnson
- Denmark-Olar Middle School – Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer in the absence of Principal Patricia Moultrie-Goldsmith
- Denmark-Olar High School Principal – Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer on behalf of Principal Deonia Simmons

8. **Review and Approval of Denmark-Olar High School’s Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)/Turnaround Plan (Action Needed)**

Denmark-Olar High School Principal Deonia Simmons presented Denmark-Olar High School’s Continuous Improvement Plan for board review and approval. Dr. Simmons reminded the board of the school's underperforming rating and further advised that they have received input from the School Improvement Council, community, and other

stakeholders to develop an improvement plan that must be approved by the board prior to submission. Dr. Simmons identified three goals to strengthen the school's performance and opportunities for growth. These three goals include: 1) improving student achievement by using evidence-based research practices to facilitate continuous growth; 2) implementing a series of graduation supports; and 3) ensuring all students complete the appropriate courses to earn Career and Technical Education (CTE) completer status.

Dr. Simmons advised the board that he would share information on the progress of the improvement plan.

After review of the plan, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee David Corder seconded, the motion to accept Denmark-Olar High School's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)/Turnaround Plan as presented.** The motion passed 9-0.

9. **Athletic Reports: Robert Williams**

Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer reviewed the athletic report as presented for Bamberg County School District in the absence of Athletic Director Robert Williams. [Board Packet Enclosure]

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

Assistant Superintendent Denny Ulmer noted the following in the absence of Superintendent Dottie Brown:

- a) Mr. Ulmer introduced Dr. Alfricquea Major. Dr. Major, on behalf of the South Carolina Education Association, recognized and celebrated each school board member for being advocates for families and the community. Dr. Major thanked the board for their unwavering support, hard work, and dedication, as they are the backbone of the educational community. Dr. Major presented each member with an engraved puzzle piece that read, "Thank you for being an important piece in our team."
- b) Mr. Ulmer recognized January as SCSBA's Board Recognition Month. Mr. Ulmer expressed appreciation to the board members for their time, dedication, and continued service. Mr. Ulmer advised that the canvas prints at their seats were created by students from Denmark-Olar Elementary School, the individual cards were made by students from Richard Carroll Elementary School, and the 3D printed Viking and dragon were created by the STEM and Robotics classes as a "thank you" to each of the board members.
- c) Mr. Ulmer further recognized Board Chair Janeth Walker for serving 10 years as a school board member. Mr. Ulmer advised that all board members would be recognized for their achievements at SCSBA's Annual Convention in February.
- d) Mr. Ulmer concluded with a summary of the enrollment data as of December 19, 2024, advising that the total student enrollment across the district is currently 1,818.

11. **First 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**

Assistant Superintendent Ulmer presented policies ECAH and ECAH-R for first reading. Mr. Ulmer advised that further research had been conducted regarding policies EEBA and EEBA-R and respectfully requested that the first reading of these policies be postponed until the next board meeting, when necessary revisions could be made.

After brief discussion and due to the need for more information regarding the proposed ECAH and ECAH-R policies, **Trustee David Corder moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded, the motion to table and postpone the first readings of policies ECAH, ECAH-R, EEBA, and EEBA-R until the February 2024 board meeting.** The motion passed 9-0. [Board Packet Enclosures]

12. **Monthly Financial Report**

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

Ms. Furr further confirmed that procedures are in place to ensure corrective action on the audit finding regarding timely postings to the general ledger and bank reconciliations.

Trustee Harriet Coker moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded the motion to accept and approve the Financial Report for December 2024 as presented. The motion passed 9-0.

13. **Visitors’ Comments**

None.

14. **Executive Session**

Board Chair Janeth Walker called for a motion to enter Executive Session. Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg 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: Personnel Recommendations for Hire, Personnel Recommendations for Resignation, and Discussion of Release of Students.

Open session: Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst 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.

15. **Action on Executive Session Items**

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded the motion to accept and approve Agenda Item 14 (1) Personnel Recommendations for Hire for employee a. The motion passed 9-0.

There was no action taken on Agenda Item 14 (a) (2) Personnel Recommendations for Resignation or Agenda Item 14 (b) Discussion of Release of Students.

16. **Adjourn**

Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 9-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Minutes approved:

Janeth Walker, Board Chair

Cynthia Hurst, Secretary