

**Bamberg County School District  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
Bamberg County School District Office  
August 4, 2025  
6:00 p.m.**

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

**Absent:** None.

1. **Call meeting to order:** Board Chair David Corder 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**

**Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded to approve the agenda as presented.** The motion passed 7-0. [Trustee Cathy Griffin was not present at the time of the vote.]

4. **Approval of Minutes for June 25, 2025; July 7, 2025; and July 24, 2025.**

**Trustee Jeni Bunch moved, and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded, to accept the June 25, 2025; July 7, 2025; and July 24, 2025 meeting minutes as presented.** The motion passed 7-0. [Trustee Cathy Griffin was not present at the time of the vote.]

5. **School Reports: Mandy Edwards, Denise Miller, Jordan Smith, Dr. Shannon Johnson, Ms. Harriet Davis, 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 Harriett Davis
- Denmark-Olar High School Principal – Principal Dr. Deonia Simmons

Interim Superintendent Denny R. Ulmer, Jr. presented all school reports in the absence of principals.

[Trustee Cathy Griffin arrived at the meeting at 6:06 p.m.]

6. **Athletic Reports: Robert Williams**

Interim Superintendent Dennis R. Ulmer, Jr. reviewed the athletic report as presented for Bamberg County School District in the absence of Athletic Director Robert Williams. [Board Packet Enclosure]

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

Interim Superintendent noted the following:

- a) Mr. Ulmer announced that Bamberg County School District had a smooth start to the first day of the 2025–2026 school year. He commended all staff for their collaborative efforts in making this happen.
- b) Mr. Ulmer reported that the Bamberg County School District Administrative Office has officially relocated to its new address at 3830 Faust Street in Bamberg. Mr. Ulmer further advised that he is optimistic that the board room will be fully completed and ready for use by the September 8, 2025 board meeting.

Mr. Ulmer added that the former district office located at 62 Holly Avenue was now being utilized by the Bamberg Barnwell Adult Education program and has allowed Adult Ed to expand both its administration offices, testing facilities, and classroom spaces, supporting the continued growth and accessibility of adult learning opportunities in our community.

- c) Mr. Ulmer stated that as part of the district's ongoing focus on continuous improvement, he would like to provide a brief update on the current status of school performance designations within the district. Currently, one school is designated as a Priority School, two schools are identified as ATSI (Additional Targeted Support and Improvement) Schools, and one school is rated as Below Average based on the most recent State Report Card data.

Mr. Ulmer advised that the South Carolina Department of Education will release updated school report card ratings on October 15, 2025. Following this release, the district will present the Board with a comprehensive update on school ratings and progress, along with any required next steps or plan adjustments based on the new data. Mr. Ulmer expressed hope that Bamberg County School District schools will be removed from the list.

- d) Mr. Ulmer provided an update on the Federal Programs Allocations for the 2025–2026 school year:

I. Title I – \$1,287,968.35

- All schools in the district will be served under Title I. The district is currently in the process of developing both district- and school-level plans.
- While the typical submission deadline for Title I is July 1, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has extended the deadline to August 15, 2025.

II. Other Federal Funds

- Mr. Ulmer reported that the federal government had delayed the release of several funding streams initially due by July 1, including:
  - 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Afterschool Programs)
  - Title II – Supporting Effective Instruction (Teacher Quality)
  - Title III – English Language Acquisition (Multilingual Learners)
  - Title IV – Student Support and Academic Enrichment
- These funds have recently been released at the federal level. The district is currently awaiting official allocation amounts and project deadlines from the SCDE. No activities associated with these grants will commence until official notifications are received.

III. Title V – Rural Education Achievement Program

- Allocations for Title V are expected to be released later this year. These funds typically support instructional supplies, staff development, and technology initiatives.

IV. Perkins Grant – \$52,775.00 and State Equipment Funds – \$50,000.00

- These funds are designated for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the high school level. They support professional development, equipment upgrades, and enhancements to career and technology classrooms.
- Plans for the use of these funds are currently under development and are due to the SCDE in mid-August.

e) Mr. Ulmer concluded by giving an update on district enrollment, reporting a total of 1,811 students as of the August 4, 2025.

8. **Update/Discussion of Proposal for Moving 6<sup>th</sup> Grade from Richard Carroll Elementary School to Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School (Action Needed)**

Mr. Ulmer revisited the Board's decision from the February 2025 meeting to table the proposal to relocate 6th grade until August 2025. He advised that there were no new updates and no additional funding available to support the project at this time. Chief Financial Officer Devon Furr reminded the Board that architectural estimates for constructing a dedicated 6th grade wing ranged from \$4,000,000 to \$8,000,000.

Following the update, **Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded, the motion to table this project again, with a plan to revisit the matter in January of 2026.** The motion passed 8-0.

9. **Elective Course Approval:**

- a. **Assigned Supervision (379921CW or 379921CH)**
- b. **College & Career Preparation I (379985CH)**
- c. **Work Experience (379925CH)**
- d. **Action Based Learning – Grade: Pre-Kindergarten (17992504)**
- e. **Action Based Learning – Grade: Kindergarten (17992500)**
- f. **Action Based Learning – Grade: 1<sup>st</sup> (17992501)**

Interim Superintendent Ulmer introduced the proposal to offer the following courses as electives for Bamberg County School District: Assigned Supervision, College & Career Preparation I, Work Experience, Action Based Learning – Grade: Pre-Kindergarten, Action Based Learning – Grade: Kindergarten, and Action Based Learning – Grade: 1<sup>st</sup>.

Following the proposal, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Cathy Griffin seconded, the motion to approve the following courses as electives for Bamberg County School District: Assigned Supervision (3779921CW or 379921CH), College & Career Preparation I (379985CH), Work Experience (379925CH), Action Based Learning – Grade: Pre-Kindergarten (17992504), Action Based Learning – Grade (17992500): Kindergarten, and Action Based Learning – Grade: 1st (17992501). The motion passed 8-0.**

**10. Request for Out of State/Overnight Trip:**

- a. Denmark-Olar High School Seniors – CSRA College Night –Augusta, GA – September 11, 2025 (Jacqueline Banks, Guidance Counselor)**

Following a review of the request for out of state/overnight trip, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Secretary Cynthia Hurst seconded, the motion to approve the following request: Denmark-Olar High School Guidance Counselor Jacqueline Banks’ request for Denmark-Olar High School Seniors to attend the CSRA College Night in Augusta, GA, on September 11, 2025. The motion passed 8-0.**

**11. First Reading – BCSD Policies – Section G – Personnel:**

- a. GCC – Professional Staff Leave and Absences**
- b. GCC-R – Professional Staff Leave and Absences**
- c. GCD – Support Staff Leave and Absences**
- d. GCCAAA – Sick Leave Bank Program**
- e. GCCAAA-R – Sick Leave Bank Program**
- f. GCCAAA-E – Sick Leave Bank Program**
- g. GCCAAA-E(1) – Sick Leave Bank Program**

Mr. Ulmer presented policies GCC, GCC-R, GCD, GCCAAA, GCCAAA-R, GCCAA-E, and GCCAAA-E(1) for first reading.

Following a brief discussion, **Trustee Harriet Coker moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, the motion to approve the first reading of Policies GCC – Professional Staff Leave and Absences, GCC-R – Professional Staff Leave and Absences, GCD – Support Staff Leave and Absences, GCCAAA – Sick Leave Bank Program, GCCAAA-R – Sick Leave Bank Program, GCCAAA-E – Sick Leave Bank Program, and GCCAAA-E(1) – Sick Leave Bank Program. The motion passed 8-0.**  
[Board Packet Enclosures]

**12. South Carolina Education Scholarship Trust Fund Program (Action Needed)**

Chief Financial Officer Devon Furr presented an overview of the South Carolina Education Scholarship Trust Fund Program for the Board’s consideration. Ms. Furr explained that the program provides eligible K–12 students with state-funded education savings accounts to

cover approved educational expenses, such as school tuition and instructional materials. She requested the Board's direction on whether the district would be interested in participating as a vendor in the program.

After brief consideration, **Trustee Jeni Bunch moved, and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded, the motion for Bamberg County School District to become a vendor of the South Carolina Education Scholarship Trust Fund Program.** The motion passed 8-0.

13. **Approval: 2025-2026 Budget**

**Handout:** FY 2025-2026 Budget

Chief Finance Officer Devon Furr reported that the public hearing for the 2025–2026 budget was held and described the session as productive, with three attendees. Ms. Furr stated that, following extensive work and collaboration, she was able to present the Board with a balanced budget totaling \$27,499,938.43, accomplished without increasing millage rates or taxes.

After reviewing the proposed 2025–2026 budget and the information presented, **Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg moved, and Trustee Cathy Griffin seconded, a motion to approve the 2025–2026 budget as presented.** The motion passed 8-0.

The Board commended Ms. Furr for her diligence and hard work in developing a balanced budget.

14. **Visitors' Comments**

None.

15. **Executive Session**

**Board Chair David Corder called for a motion to enter Executive Session. Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, the motion to enter Executive Session.** The motion carried 8-0.

Board Chair David Corder 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, and Matters Related to Release of Students.

**Open session: Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg moved, and Trustee Cathy Griffin seconded, the motion for the Board to come out of Executive Session and return to the regular session of the meeting.** The motion carried 8-0.

16. **Action on Executive Session Items**

Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Jeni Bunch seconded, the motion to accept and approve Agenda Item 15(a)(1) Personnel Recommendations for Hire for employee a and Agenda Item 15(b) To Discuss Matters Related to Release of Students for students 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. The motion passed 8-0.

With respect to Agenda Item 15(a)(2) Personnel Recommendations for Resignation there was no action taken.

**17. Board Member Comments**

- Chair David Corder welcomed everyone to the new school year and extended best wishes to faculty, staff, administrators, and students. He emphasized that children are the district's most important resource and encouraged everyone to lead with care, love, and hope. He acknowledged the increasing challenges teachers face and expressed sincere appreciation for their dedication.
- Trustee Tonya Sanders-Govan welcomed everyone back and assured staff that the Board is fully supportive in achieving the shared goal of student learning and success.
- Secretary Cynthia Hurst shared her excitement for the new school year and wished everyone a wonderful and successful start. She highlighted that teachers are the backbone of student success and expressed gratitude for their work and commitment.
- Trustee Harriet Coker thanked Mr. Ulmer, the District Office staff, principals, and teachers for their support and efforts. She expressed that she is impressed with the progress and is confident that everyone is set for a successful school year.
- Vice Chair Naomi Eckels echoed the sentiments of fellow board members, welcomed everyone back, and extended a special welcome to new teachers. She thanked Mr. Ulmer, the administrative team, and the bus drivers for their work in preparing for the new year.
- Trustee Cathy Griffin expressed appreciation to all who contributed to launching the new school year. She acknowledged the hard work involved in getting ready and commended those who take on the responsibility of educating and equipping children to become productive members of society.
- Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg thanked Mr. Ulmer and the district staff, and extended well wishes to all principals, teachers, and students for a great school year. She encouraged students to take full advantage of learning opportunities and thanked all who support the schools.
- Trustee Jeni Bunch expressed gratitude to Mr. Ulmer for his leadership, as well as to district staff and all individuals who contribute to the daily operations of the school system. She emphasized the importance of preparing students for physical, mental, and social development and wished everyone a successful year.

**18. Adjourn**

**Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded, the motion to adjourn the meeting.** The motion passed 8-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

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Minutes approved:

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David Corder, Board Chair

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Cynthia Hurst, Secretary