

**Bamberg County School District  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
Bamberg County School District Office  
December 2, 2024  
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. **Welcome**

Superintendent Brown opened the meeting.

2. **Swearing-In Ceremony for Reappointed Members**

Mr. Charles Boykin of Boykin & Davis, LLC, administered the Oath of Office to Mrs. Gwendolyn Bamberg, Ms. Harriet Coker, Mrs. Naomi Eckels, and Mrs. Janeth Walker.

3. **Election of Officers for 2024-2025**

Superintendent Dottie Brown presided over the election of Board Chair, while Board Chair Janeth Walker presided over the election of Vice Chair and Secretary for the 2024-2025 board term (December 2024 to December 2025).

**Trustee Harriet Coker nominated Trustee Janeth Walker for Board Chair, and Trustee Cynthia Hurst seconded the nomination. Without any further nominations, Trustee Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee Naomi Eckels seconded the motion to close the nominations.** The nomination and motion passed 9-0.

**Trustee Cynthia Hurst nominated Trustee Naomi Eckels for Vice Chair, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded the nomination.** With no further nominations, the nomination passed unanimously, 9-0.

**Vice Chair Naomi Eckels nominated Trustee Cynthia Hurst for Secretary.** With no further nominations, the nomination passed unanimously, 9-0.

The election of officers for 2024-2025 concluded with Janeth Walker elected as Board Chair, Naomi Eckels as Vice Chair, and Cynthia Hurst as Secretary.

4. **Call 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.

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

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

6. **Approval of Agenda**  
**Secretary Cynthia Hurst moved, and Trustee David Corder seconded, the motion to approve the agenda as presented.** The motion passed 9-0.
7. **Approval of Minutes for November 4, 2024 and November 15, 2024**  
**Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded, the motion to accept the meeting minutes from November 4, 2024, and November 15, 2024, as presented.** The motion passed 9-0.
8. **School Reports: Shannon Johnson, Patricia Moultrie-Goldsmith, Deonia Simmons, Mandy Edwards, Denise Miller, and Jordan Smith. Hand-outs: School Reports (Reviewed by Principals/Assistant Principals)**
  - Denmark-Olar Elementary School –Principal Shannon Johnson
  - Denmark-Olar Middle School – Principal Patricia Moultrie-Goldsmith
  - Denmark-Olar High School Principal Deonia Simmons
  - Richard Carroll Elementary School –Principal Mandy Edwards
  - Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School – Principal Denise Miller
  - Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School –Principal Jordan Smith

Following the presentation of the school reports, Board Chair Janeth Walker thanked the principals for their hard work and noted that she would not expect them to return to present their reports again until the April 2025 board meeting.

9. **Athletic Reports: Robert Williams**  
Principal Jordan Smith 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**  
Superintendent Brown noted the following:
  - a) Dr. Brown recognized Ms. Dianna Richburg, a teacher at Denmark-Olar Elementary School, for her induction as an Honoree in the Voorhees University 2024 Alumni Hall of Fame.
  - b) Dr. Brown expressed her appreciation to Mrs. Doris Beard and her 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students at Denmark-Olar Middle School for the opportunity to observe their debate on the topics of school lunch and the cell phone policy. She commended the students for their exceptional performance.
  - c) Dr. Brown commended Denise Miller, Principal of Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School, and her entire staff receiving recognition from the State Superintendent of Education, Ms. Ellen Weaver, for the Excellent Student Progress rating on their recently released school report card.

- d) Dr. Brown advised the board on the schools' E-Learning day processes, noting that principals have E-Learning plans in place should such a day be implemented. During E-Learning days, new material is not introduced, and assignments vary by grade level and subject. Teachers also have plans in place and established methods of communication with students. If there is a power outage, teachers will reach out to parents and students through alternative means of communication.

Dr. Brown further advised the board that the state allows for a total of five E-Learning days per academic year, and Bamberg County School District has utilized three to date.

- e) Dr. Brown briefly addressed Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO), advising that these organizations are established by parents, community members, and sometimes teachers, rather than by the school district. She encouraged anyone interested in establishing a PTO to obtain information from reliable sources, such as PTO Today or PTO.org, and emphasized the importance of ensuring that any information comes from a reputable source. Dr. Brown further clarified that there is a specific process for establishing a PTO, and that these procedures must be followed for the organization to be officially recognized. She also noted that a PTO is not the same as a School Improvement Council (SIC), and that these two organizations function separately.
- f) Dr. Brown provided an update on the construction process at the district office in Bamberg, advising that the building was 60% to 70% complete, with a projected completion date by the end of February, though possibly extending into March depending on weather conditions and the availability of supplies. She also addressed concerns with the current district office, which led to the previous board's decision to renovate the Bamberg office.
- g) Dr. Brown provided an update on the \$5,000,000.00 received from Representative Justin Bamberg, advising that these funds are directed to the Bamberg County Treasurer and do not pass through the district's finance office. She noted that, on October 17, 2023, the money was transferred to Bamberg County to manage a bond, which is overseen and invested by Regions Bank. Dr. Brown further explained that Bamberg County School District reports on this funding annually, in accordance with pre-scheduled due dates.

Finance Director Devon Furr clarified that the district's legislation specifies that these funds must be used exclusively to pay down bond debt. She noted that, over the past two years, the bond debt has been reduced from 109 mills to 105 mills. Ms. Furr emphasized that all funds must be reported and audited, and she confirmed that the county treasurer makes all bond payments.

- h) Dr. Brown presented an invitation from Sam Burgess of the Denmark-Olar Alumni Foundation, inviting Board members to attend the 2023-2024 Foundation Scholarship Reception, scheduled for Sunday, December 8, 2024. She requested that any Board member interested in attending inform her so she could RSVP on their behalf.

- i) Dr. Brown advised that new or updated headshots for board members need to be taken. She stated that dates from the photographer would be obtained and shared with the members to check their availability.
- j) Dr. Brown concluded with a summary of the enrollment data as of December 2, 2024, advising that the total student enrollment across the district is currently 1, 819.

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

Dr. Brown introduced the proposal to move 6th-grade students from Richard Carroll Elementary School to Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School. She explained that, currently, Denmark-Olar Elementary School houses grades K-5, Richard Carroll Elementary School houses grades K-6, Denmark-Olar Middle School houses grades 6-8, and Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School houses grades 7-8. Moving 6th grade to Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School would help equalize the schools across the district, aligning elementary and middle school grade levels. Dr. Brown noted that the social and developmental levels of 6th-grade students are more in line with those of students at the middle school level. She also mentioned that enrollment at Richard Carroll Elementary School has grown, creating limited space for new students and additional teachers..

Dr. Brown advised Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School would need additional space to accommodate the move, which could be provided in one of two ways:

1. Adding a brick-and-mortar wing; or
2. Obtaining portable classrooms, which could be leased or purchased, as outlined in the budgetary estimate included in the board packets.

Finance Director Devon Furr advised that Capital Improvement funds would be used to cover the expense of either of the aforementioned options. If the board decides to move forward with the brick-and-mortar option, she would begin by issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) and return to the board with a more detailed cost projection.

After a lengthy discussion, **Trustee David Corder moved, and Vice Chair Naomi Eckels seconded, the motion to approve the request to move Richard Carroll Elementary School's 6th-grade students to Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School, proceed with the RFP process, and grant the Superintendent the authority to take the necessary steps to complete the process.** The motion passed 9-0.

12. **Approval of 2025 Board Calendar**

Dr. Brown presented the 2025 Board Calendar. [Board Packet Enclosure]

After a brief discussion, **Vice Chair Naomi Eckels moved, and Trustee Harriet Coker seconded the motion to accept the 2025 Board Calendar as presented.** The motion passed 9-0.

13. **Monthly Financial Report**

Board Chair Janeth Walker presented the Financial Report for Bamberg County School District for FY 2024-2025, as of November 2024, for review. [Board Packet Enclosure]

**Trustee Gwendolyn Bamberg moved, and Trustee Tonya A. Sanders-Govan seconded the motion to accept and approve the Financial Report for November 2024 as presented.** The motion passed 9-0.

14. **Visitors' Comments**  
None.

15. **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 Vice Chair Naomi Eckels 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.

16. **Action on Executive Session Items**

There was no action taken on Agenda Item 15 (a) (1) Personnel Recommendations for Hire, Agenda Item 15 (a) (2) Personnel Recommendations for Resignation, or Agenda Item 15 (b) Discussion of Release of Students.

17. **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 9:00 p.m.

Minutes approved:

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Janeth Walker, Board Chair

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Cynthia Hurst, Secretary