

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
**Denmark-Olar Board Room**  
**Bamberg County, South Carolina**  
**January 21, 2021 – 9:00 a.m.**

**Members Present:** Beverly Bonaparte, Chairman  
Blossom Thompson, Vice Chairman  
Loretta P. Goodman, Secretary  
Tonie Holman  
Larry Bias

**Also Present:** Thelma Sojourner, Superintendent

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. Bonaparte called the regular meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. In accordance with the SC Code of Laws, 1976, section 30-4-80(e) as amended, the following had been notified of the time, date, place and agenda of the meeting: WIIZ Radio Station, Barnwell, and *The Times and Democrat*, Orangeburg.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll Call was conducted with attendance as recorded above.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

A moment of silence was observed.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The meeting agenda was unanimously approved without objection.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the regular meeting held December 7, 2020 were unanimously approved as written without objection and signed by all members present.

**PRESENTATION**

In recognition of School Board Appreciation Month, Dr. Sojourner read the Governor's Proclamation, the School Board Members' Ethical Principles, and presented a gift to each board member. The board members also signed a copy of the ethical principles to be displayed in the Board Room.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business for discussion.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Dr. Sojourner stated that she wanted to add an Executive Session discussion regarding the evaluation of students in light of COVID19 and establishing minimum grading scores. The board agreed by consensus.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mrs. Bonaparte thanked God for returning in 2021 without the loss of students or staff. She offered encouragement to the administrators.

**SECTION 1 - FINANCE**

- **Finance Report**

Mrs. Oggretta Tyler provided the finance report which was received as information.

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**SECTION 2 - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

- Dr. Ruby Johnson provided information regarding the following:
    - Effects of COVID on instruction
    - Virtual teacher training by the Salkehatchie Consortium, if approved by the Department of Education
    - Current cumulative textbook inventory
    - Comparison of test data from the first week of school through the winter break
    - State student assessment schedule.
- The report was received as information.

**SECTION 3 - ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

- **Attorney Fees**  
Mrs. Goodman moved that the attorney fees for November and December, 2020, totaling \$10,297.69, be paid. Mrs. Thompson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
  
- **Legislative Update**  
Dr. Sojourner stated the legislators had returned to session and that some possible discussions include the request for waiver of student testing mandate; retroactive teacher pay; extra funding due to the pandemic; possible school board members' state benefits (H.3128); reduction of salary cap for retirees; teacher salary increase; and teacher certification reciprocity.

**SECTION 4 - SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- Dr. Sojourner provided the following:
- Foundation for Rural Education delivered 10 laptops for students – Due to the pandemic, the laptops had not been presented to the 2019-2020 recipients, and since the winter holiday, all 10 students have received them.
  - A letter had been sent to parents and the media regarding the return to school.
  - Reports from each school were sent to parents
  - COVID counts – Dr. Sojourner received notice that the COVID vaccines would be coming to the district in the near future for administration on-site to persons requesting them
  - 240 Chromebooks were distributed at the elementary school and more than 200 at the high school. Additional Chromebooks may be ordered using additional funds received, depending on availability from the vendors.
  - The Coleman Foundation has been helpful to the district and recently provided masks and sanitizer for the schools
  - Reminded the board members that their ethics interest statement was due March 30.
- The report was received as information.

**SECTION 5 - EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Mr. Bias moved that the board enter Executive Session to discuss the following:
- Employment/Personnel Recommendations/Matters
  - Student Personnel Matters
  - Contractual Matters
  - Legal Matters/Counsel
- The motion was seconded by Mrs. Thompson and unanimously approved.

**RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

The board returned to Open Session on a motion by Mrs. Goodman, seconded by Bishop Holman and unanimously passed.  
*Note: Mr. Bias was not present when the board returned to Open Session.*

**ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS**

- **Employment/Personnel Recommendations/Matters**  
Mrs. Goodman moved that the employment recommendations presented be accepted and that the employment of LR be approved. Mrs. Thompson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

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JANUARY 21, 2021 – 9:00 A.M.

Mrs. Goodman read a letter from Dr. Thelma Sojourner notifying the board of her retirement on June 30, 2021.  
Mrs. Bonaparte read the following into record for immediate release:

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Today, Dr. Thelma Sojourner, after 50 years, announced her retirement, effective June 30, 2021. Dr. Sojourner's service to this district and contributions to this community over five decades is remarkable. For this reason, the Board asks the faculty, staff, our students and the Denmark community to join us in expressing our thanks to Dr. Sojourner. I say "thank you" today with the knowledge that her contributions will be appreciated appropriately by this Board in the current months.

Beverly P. Bonaparte, Chair  
Board of Trustees

- **Student Personnel Matters**

No action was taken.

- **Contractual Matters**

Dr. Sojourner recommended that the board continue to utilize the services of Kyle Michel Law Firm through June 30, 2021. Mrs. Goodman moved that the recommendation be approved. Mrs. Thompson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

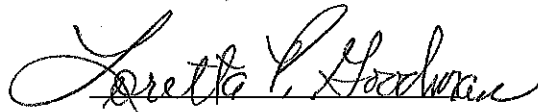
- **Legal Matters/Counsel**

No action was taken.

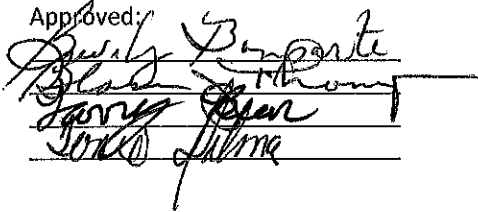
**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned without objection at 11:51 a.m.

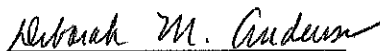
Submitted by,



Approved:



Prepared by  
Deborah Anderson





**Board of Trustees Meeting  
District Office Board Room  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021 - 9:00 A.M.**

**AGENDA**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDUM** *(Action)*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** *(Action)*

- Regular Meeting Held December 7, 2020

**PRESENTATIONS** *(Action if Needed)*

- School Board Month Recognition

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS** *(Action if Needed)*

**NEW BUSINESS** *(Action if Needed)*

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** *(Action if Needed)*

**SECTION 1 - FINANCE** *(Action if Needed)*

- Finance Report ..... Oggretta Tyler

**SECTION 2 - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION** ..... Dr. Ruby J. Johnson

**SECTION 3 - ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION** *(Action)*

- Attorney Fees
- Legislative Update

**SECTION 4 - SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT** *(Action if Needed)* ..... Dr. Thelma Sojourner

**SECTION 5 - EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Employment/Personnel Recommendations/Matters
- Student Personnel Matters
- Contractual Matters
- Legal Matters/Counsel

**RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

**ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS**

- Employment/Personnel Recommendations/Matters
- Student Personnel Matters
- Contractual Matters
- Legal Matters/Counsel

**ADJOURNMENT**