

**On Bamberg School District One  
Minutes of Regular Meeting of Board of Trustees  
Richard Carroll Elementary School  
March 16, 2020  
6:30 p.m.**

**Members present:** Board Chair Janeth Walker, Vice Chair Gwendolyn Dianne Bamberg, Secretary Tony E. Duncan, Trustee John Hiers, and Trustee Julia “Kim” Berry.

**Absent:** None

1. **Call meeting to order:** Board Chair Janeth Walker called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She noted that this meeting was a regular scheduled meeting under unusual circumstances. On yesterday (March 15, 2020) Governor Henry McMaster ordered all schools in South Carolina closed at least for the rest of this month and asked that all public gatherings expecting more than 100 persons be cancelled or postponed. The Governor’s order was due to concerns about potential problems with the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Since Governor McMaster’s statement, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has lowered the maximum attendance to 50 persons and the Board will comply with the CDC’s requirement.

While the Governor’s order excludes government meetings, such as tonight’s school board meeting, from the gathering restrictions, the board will follow guidance from the CDC and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) in establishing meeting parameters. The seating for this meeting will have persons positioned six feet apart, as you are. Persons who wish to stand are asked to remain six feet apart.

Board Chair Walker also noted that she had been advised that there was an interest in the discussion of consolidation of Bamberg School District One and Denmark-Olar School District Two. However, be assured that tonight will not be the final discussion on this topic. To that point, we hope to have discussions in the future to include our legislative delegation and our State Superintendent of Education, Molly Spearman. Moving forward with this meeting, Board Chair Walker asked for patience.

**Notice to Media:** In accordance with the S. C. Code of Laws of 1976, as amended, Section 30-4-80(E), the following have been notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting:

**The Times and Democrat  
The Advertiser-Herald**

2. **Approval of Agenda**  
**Trustee Tony Duncan moved and Trustee John Hiers seconded to approve the agenda as written.** The motion passed 5-0.
3. **Approval of Minutes**  
**Trustee John Hiers moved and Trustee Tony Duncan seconded to accept the February 24, 2020, called meeting minutes as presented.** The motion passed 5-0.

**Vice Chair Gwendolyn Bamberg moved and Trustee John Hiers seconded to accept the February 26, 2020, called meeting minutes as presented.** The motion passed 5-0.

**Trustee Kim Berry moved and Trustee Tony Duncan seconded to accept the regular scheduled Board Meeting Minutes of February 18, 2020, as presented.** The motion passed 5-0.

4. **School Reports: Stacey Walter, Denise Miller, Dennis Ulmer**

Handouts: School Reports (Reviewed by Principals):

- Richard Carroll Elementary School – Principal Stacey Walter
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School – Principal Denise Miller
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School – Principal Dennis Ulmer

5. **Student/Staff Recognition Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Schwarting noted the following:

**a) Briefing: Coronavirus**

Superintendent Schwarting noted that the District was informed on Sunday, March 15, 2020, that schools would be closed for the next two weeks due to the coronavirus. According to the SDE, teachers must plan enough work for students to be engaged in educational activities for the next two weeks. The District's staff, through team efforts, came together and put together a ten-day instructional plan as follows:

**Instructions:** Packets of school work for students will go home by the children on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Teachers will be at school Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. After this time, it will be determined who is essential – it may be on a rotating basis. Students will be allowed into schools, accompanied by a parent upon arrangement with principals, to retrieve personal items. Medications that belong to students that are at school must be picked up by a parent – no deliveries by school personnel.

**Meals:** Starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020, grab and go bags will be available for students at the bus port at Richard Carroll Elementary School with access from Binnicker Bridge Road. A daily combined breakfast and lunch delivery for outlying areas will be made with buses departing at 9:00 each morning. We have stock for 378 bags; however, we are expecting an arrival on Wednesday. Staff will be assisting in helping food service get the grab and go bags ready. Aides and other staff will also be available to ride the bus routes to help distribute the meals.

**Essential Staff: Custodians** will be considered essential staff until the required deep cleaning of each school is completed. Food Service are considered essential staff due to the need to provide the daily breakfast and lunch during the closure period.

Teachers are to be on site from through Wednesday, and then are to be available each day from 8:00 a.m. through 12 noon via email for parent questions and instructional assistance. **Aides** also are to be on site through Wednesday; teachers and aides will be asked to assist as needed with preparing grab and go bags and/or riding the buses to distribute meals. **District Office staff** will be on site through the week. Ongoing work status will be re-evaluated weekly on a position by position basis. There are several staff members who are pregnant, so CDDC precautions need to be considered for their situations. Therefore, after Wednesday, due to safety precautions, pregnant ladies will not be asked to return. **Other Items:** Pre-K registration is postponed.

There is an expectation that state testing will not be done this year. Dottie Brown, Director of Student Services, is on top of Special Education information from Washington, DC.

The administration submitted its ten-day instruction plan to the SCDE on February 16, 2020, and the Food Plan has been approved by the SCDE. [Handout: District COVID Plan]

Board Chair Janeth Walker thanked Superintendent Schwarting and the staff for preparing all the plans and working diligently in getting everything done in such a short time.

b) **Overnight Field Trip Request – Myrtle Beach, SC – March 27-29, 2020**

Superintendent Schwarting noted that the overnight field trip request to Myrtle Beach, SC on March 27, 2020, was null and void due the restraints (coronavirus) that are in place everywhere. Also, she noted that the previous trips that were approved via email are cancelled. [Board Packet Enclosure]

c) The SCSBA Delegate Assembly takes place December 5, 2020, at the Legislative and Advocacy Conference. Filing dates for Nominations or Proposals/Changes are as follows: Nominations for officer/board – deadline: June 15, 2020; New Proposals for 2020-21 Legislative Resolutions – deadline: June 15, 2020; and. Proposals for changes to the SCSBA Constitution – Deadline: June 15, 2020. [Board Packet Enclosures – Forms]

d) The District's student enrollment is holding steady at 1,236. [Board Packet Enclosure]

6. **United States Census: Michael J. Kroll**

Superintendent Schwarting noted that Michael J. Kroll was scheduled to do a presentation regarding the United States Census; however, he wasn't present – probably due to the coronavirus. However, Superintendent Schwarting noted that the Census is coming up and it is wherever you are on April 1, 2020, as to who is counted. If someone is staying with you, they should be counted – everybody has to be counted. Everyone is asked to keep up with Census information and respond accordingly so that every person can get counted. A lot of the District's funding, for different things, depends on the Census count.

7. **Draft: 2020-2021 School Calendar**

Superintendent Schwarting requested that the 2020-2021 school calendar be left in draft form for the time because of things that are still being considered in the legislature. [Board Packet Enclosure]

Trustee John Hiers **moved and Trustee Kim Berry seconded to table approval of the 2020-2021 School Calendar for further clarification.** The motion carried 5-0 [Board Packet Enclosure]

8. **Monthly Financial Report**

Finance Director Devon Furr presented the Financial Report for February 2020, for review.

Ms. Furr noted that although the administration is dealing with the coronavirus, a budget will still be planned for the next school year (2020-2021). The process in preparing the budget with the school's administrators will begin shortly.

**Trustee Tony Duncan moved and Vice Chair Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded to accept the February 2020, Financial Report as presented.** The motion carried 5-0.

9. **Visitors' Comments**

**Ken Ahlin** inquired as to who would ultimately be the one to make the decision on the consolidation? Will Molly Spearman leave it to this Board? Nevertheless, she can't legislate a county's debit because that's a state entity -- fought with lawsuits and he will be happy to jump on it. He further stated that there has been no public input on consolidation and he hopes that changes soon. There have been a lot of private meetings and the public has been left out in in the dark. If this Board elects to make a decision and move forward with consolidation, there will be a lot of upset citizens in Bamberg County. Also, Mr. Ahlin expressed concerns about his daughter/students supplying copying paper for extra credit. His belief is that teachers should never have to buy classroom supplies. He questioned why the District is contemplating consolidation and can't handle supplies for the teachers.

**Bobbie Bunch** noted that she has been teaching for 20 years and Phyllis Schwarting has been her superintendent during all those years in this district. Regarding the position of Superintendent, Mrs. Bunch noted that she would like to see some input from the faculty, principals or parents serving on a committee, if one is selected. There are people who live here, pay taxes and want to see their children grow up here. She would like for the next generation of people to come back and live here and support her. She would like to see this community stay the way it is – don't ever want it to change. Mrs. Bunch further stated that there are changes being made in this town – Rock-Lon is leaving and the hospital is gone. If things are not done the right way with the superintendent and consolidation, we are going to lose again. People are not going to stay and come back after they graduate. People love being a part of this town and every facet there is. She believes that everybody wants consolidation as long as they don't have to spend more money. They (Denmark-Olar) has a brand new school – there are great schools in this district but people don't want to spend more money than necessary.

**Mayor Nancy Foster** thanked Phyllis Schwarting for what she has done as superintendent for the past 20 years and in the district for 48 years. She has been a jewel – she brought us to where we are – the schools are beautiful and we excel. She uses the schools every day in her real estate business with her clients. Mayor Foster thanked the Board and Superintendent Schwarting for all that they do.

**Sarah Sandifer** asked for clarification regarding the method for students picking up their meals (all grade levels); are pregnant staff members allowed to return when school resumes; concerned about the rumors/unease about the superintendent's search – wondering why not keep Superintendent Schwarting on until her contract ends in June 2020 and until the consolidation happens and the District is forced to find a permanent

Superintendent for both districts as opposed to hiring and spending \$7,000 to \$7,500 to hire a company to search for an interim superintendent; concerned about the District not being able to take care of the teachers' basic needs when there were a couple months ago an uproar about looking for a proposed \$600 a month increase in Board members pay which did not go through; and how is it that the District can afford to hire a company to hire an interim Superintendent instead of just keeping Superintendent Schwarting on. She doesn't understand how this is in the best interest of the District, of the students or of the teachers to spend extra money which you do not have -- do not need to spend -- when the teachers can't be taken care of now.

**Superintendent Schwarting** responded by stating that the District does take care of their teachers and she doesn't know who asked students to bring supplies. That is not necessary and it is something that will be looked into. The list for extra supplies that are asked for by teachers at the beginning of school is not mandatory; however, they may be helpful.

Board Chair Walker noted that all the questions will be looked at and a response will be provided at an appropriate time.

10. **Executive Session**

Board Chair Janeth Walker called for a **motion to enter Executive Session**. Trustee Tony Duncan **moved and Vice Chair Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded to enter the Executive Session**. The motion carried (5-0).

The purpose for entering executive session was to discuss:

- a. Personnel Recommendation(s) for Resignation / Employment / Terminate
- b. Student Transfer Requests
- c. Discussion: Superintendent Search
- d. Legal Advice: Superintendent Search
- e. Legal Advice: Consolidation

**Open session:** Trustee Tony Duncan **moved and Vice Chair Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded for the Board to come out of Executive Session and return to the regular session of the meeting**. The motion carried 5-0.

11. **Action on Executive Session Items**

**Trustee John Hiers moved and Trustee Kim Berry seconded to accept Agenda Item 10 (a) Personnel Recommendation(s) for Resignation / Employment / Terminate for employee #1 (Resignations), # 2 and #3 (Employment), and #4 (Terminate) as presented**. The motion carried 5-0.

**Trustee John Hiers moved and Vice Chair Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded to accept Agenda Item 10 (b) Student Transfer Requests for students #1 and #2**. The motion carried 5-0.

**Board Chair Janeth Walker noted that in regards to Agenda Item 10 (c) Discussion: Superintendent Search and Agenda Item 10 (d) Legal Advice: Superintendent Search** that there was no action taken.

**In regards to Agenda Item 10 (e) Legal Advice: Consolidation, Trustee Tony Duncan moved and Board Chair Gwendolyn Bamberg seconded that Bamberg School District One move forward with a proposal to consolidate with Bamberg School District Two.**

**Trustee John Hiers** noted that he wanted to voice his concerns with consolidation due to the burden that will be placed on District One citizens with consolidation with District Two on the proposed Bill S.419.

**Trustee Kim Berry** noted that that she is not in agreement with consolidation until more information is obtained. The information received is not enough to make a decision on.

Specifically, in reference to the motion that was made, there is enough information, particularly under the proposed bill, that the District can move forward with a decision for a consolidated plan was stated by **Board Chair Walker**.

**Following a discussion, Board Chair Janeth Walker called for the vote. The motion carried 3-2. [Trustee John Hiers and Trustee Kim Berry voted nay]**

Board Chair Janeth Walker noted that “Bamberg One Board of Trustees is faced with a difficult decision regarding the education of our children. We must decide whether to willingly work with Bamberg Two on consolidation or sit back and allow key decisions about our children’s education be made by persons from outside of our community. Given the choice of working toward the best education for our children or allow persons from outside our community to make that decision, the Board believes it is our duty to make the tough decisions to create the best educational opportunities for our children. For this reason, we will work with all interested parties to make the best decision for our children”.

“Let me say that I do understand that consolidation is not the preferred direction for many in our community. However, from all information that is made available to us, members of the Board, we do not see any reasonable alternative at this time. Given that consolidation is the only viable option for our District, we believe every effort should be considered to make the best decisions for our children”.

“In our view, the educational environment for our children is one that maintains as much of what has been built as feasible. To the extent possible, we plan to preserve those components that have served our students well for many years”.

“We also understand the concern with regard to taxes. When the decision was made to upgrade our schools, we were of the impression that we were only spending money in Bamberg One. With consolidation, that notion is being called into question. The Board however, will do everything in its power to spare Bamberg One taxpayers from any additional tax burden”,

“In closing, when faced with an uncertain future we identify the most important thing and do our best to preserve that thing. The most important thing for this Board is that we maintain the best educational program for our children. We are approaching consolidation with the view that no child should lose a quality education in consolidation”.

12. **Adjourn**

Trustee John Hiers **moved and Trustee Tony Duncan seconded to adjourn the meeting.** The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Minutes approved:

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Janeth Walker, Board Chair

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Tony E. Duncan, Secretary