

# Minutes of Barnwell County School District Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

6:00 p.m. at Barnwell County Career Center

(5241 Reynolds Road, Blackville, South Carolina 29817)

Board Members Present: Chairperson Terry Richardson, Ronnie Brown, Becky Huggins, SGM Abraham Sexton, and Dr. Andy Sandifer

## I. Opening Business

- A. Call to Order, Reflection, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, FOI Notice – Chairperson

Chair Richardson called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. SGM Abraham Sexton led the Reflection, and Chair Richardson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Richardson introduced each board member and provided information regarding their backgrounds during the call to order. Chair Richardson recognized local media in the audience, specifically Alex Whitbeck of The People Sentinel, confirming notice of the meeting as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

Chair Richardson also acknowledged current board members who are serving in Barnwell County Consolidated School District and Barnwell School District 45, while expressing his appreciation for the work being done in the schools across the county. Chair Richardson also acknowledged the Barnwell County Consolidated School District Interim Superintendent, Mr. David Corder, and Barnwell School District 45 Superintendent, Dr. Crissie Stapleton. Chair Richardson acknowledged Mr. Daniel Alexander, Barnwell County Council member.

- B. Swearing in of Appointed Transition Board Members

Chair Richardson called on Barnwell County Clerk of Court Rhonda McElveen to administer the Oath of Office. The following Oath of Office was administered to each board member individually, as their family and/or friends stood alongside them. This was done in the following order as called upon by Chair Richardson: Ronald Brown, Dr. Andy Sandifer, Ms. Becky Huggins, SGM Abraham Sexton, and Chair Terry Richardson.

The South Carolina Constitution requires each board member to swear or affirm the following Oath: *"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I am duly qualified,*

*according to the Constitution of this State, to exercise the duties of the office to which I have been elected (or appointed) and that I will, to the best of my ability, discharge the duties thereof, and preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of this State and of the United States. So help me God."*

At the close of the swearing in, Mr. Ronnie Brown asked the Chair if he could recognize the Barnwell County Consolidated School District staff and families present, and they stood. SGM Abraham Sexton then asked to acknowledge his pastor Elder Boyd from Second Baptist Church.

C. Additions, Deletions, and Approval of Agenda – Chairperson

Chair Richardson asked if there were any additions or deletions to the proposed agenda. Chair Richardson asked board members if there were any objections to approving the agenda as presented. Hearing none, the agenda was unanimously approved with no objections. [Please note this was done slightly out of order after Mr. Ronnie Brown asked the Chair to return to that agenda item.]

D. Election of Board Officers and Representatives – Chairperson

Chair Richardson led the election of officers as members voted by secret ballot. Ballots were given to Chair Richardson to tally and announce. SGM Abraham Sexton was voted as clerk, and Mrs. Becky Huggins was voted Career Center Representative.

E. Comments from Legislative Delegation

Chair Richardson stated that Representative Lonnie Hosey and Senator Brad Hutto both sent their regards but were not able to be present at the meeting.

**II. Chairperson's Report – Chair Terry Richardson**

A. Introduction of State Department of Education Consolidation Liaison, Dr. Lee D'Andrea

Chair Richardson introduced the State Department of Education Consolidation Liaison, Dr. Lee D'Andrea. Dr. D'Andrea shared remarks, including that she is looking forward to working with Barnwell County School District during the consolidation. She also shared regarding her family ties to Barnwell County.

**III. Superintendent Report – Mr. David Corder and Dr. Crystal Stapleton**

A. Current Consolidation Efforts

Mr. Corder and Dr. Stapleton jointly provided an update of the current efforts regarding consolidation. Dr. Stapleton stated that the two districts have been meeting together since May and will continue to meet to work toward next steps.

The superintendents expressed that both districts and the career center will partner together for an easy transition. Mr. Corder stated that we are fortunate to have a year to work on the consolidation process and the pace will not be as frantic as before. Dr. Stapleton stated that she and Mr. Corder would be bringing forward several recommendations for the board's consideration. The superintendents also shared that they would be meeting with Mr. Augustine later in the week to discuss and make continued plans for the consolidation efforts.

B. Status of New District ID Number

The superintendents shared that later in the meeting they would be making a recommendation regarding the physical address of the new district. Dr. Stapleton acknowledged that, while tonight's meeting's purpose was to swear them in as new board members, they must have some action items approved to be able to create identification numbers for the new district - Barnwell County School District. The superintendents confirmed that, once they have approval of a physical location, they will move forward with all steps necessary to create the appropriate state and federal ID numbers.

C. Consolidation Planning regarding \$3.1 Million Funding from State Department

Dr. Stapleton stated that the state will be providing a minimum of 3.1 million dollars to the consolidated district. Mr. Corder shared that these funds will be utilized and spent on consolidation efforts, such as updating software programs across the district, equalizing salaries, and other action as deemed necessary. They stated that they are currently working on the plan to be submitted to the State Department of Education. After approval of the plan, the State Department will release the consolidation funds. Dr. Stapleton stated that the new district will receive an additional 10 million dollars from a previous grant application written for the career center. Mr. Corder and Dr. Stapleton expressed to the board members that they would be sharing this plan with them prior to submission.

**IV. New Business**

Chair Richardson asked the superintendents to move forward with their recommendations regarding new business. Dr. Stapleton requested to share all of the recommendations first, then have the board members vote on them individually.

Dr. Stapleton began the first recommendation stating that "Mr. Corder and I come to you together tonight with three recommendations that we seek approval for to move forward with creating a new district. These are initial decisions that must be made for us to create new ID numbers and begin consolidation efforts, as well as receiving the additional state funding available for the consolidation efforts."

Both superintendents spoke on how both Barnwell School District 45, the Barnwell County Consolidated School District, and the Barnwell County Career center are currently represented by Halligan, Mahoney, and Williams, specifically Attorney Connie Jackson. The superintendents referenced the packet provided to board members regarding Halligan, Mahoney, and Williams. Chair Richardson also stated his knowledge of the great work they do. The superintendents formally requested to continue with that legal representation during this transition period for the new consolidated school district. Dr. Stapleton stated, "Our recommendation is that we continue working with Halligan, Mahoney, and Williams to counsel the Board and administration on matters involving the new school district."

Mr. Corder presented the recommendation that the new district use the Barnwell School District 45 administrative building as the physical location of Barnwell County School District. He stated that Barnwell is the county seat and they felt it made sense to have the district office in that location.

Dr. Stapleton stated that the districts decided together to make the recommendation for Barnwell School District 45 to be the fiscal agent.

Mr. Ronnie Brown asked for clarification of why this action item was being approved when the board already approved the new district office location. Dr. Stapleton explained that the board needed to approve them separately, so there would be a new physical location and a fiscal agent to move forward with any temporary financial needs for the new district.

A. Recommendation from Current Districts regarding District Legal Representation – Action Item

(Action) Motion was made for approval for the district's legal representation to remain Halligan, Mahoney & Williams. Motion made by Dr. Andy Sandifer and seconded by SGM Abraham Sexton. Motion was approved unanimously.

B. Recommendation from Current Districts regarding Address and Physical Location of New District Office – Action Item

(Action) Motion was made to accept the superintendents' joint recommendation for the location of the new district office to be the Barnwell School District 45 district office location. Motion made by Mr. Ronnie Brown regarding the physical address for the district office. SGM Abraham Sexton seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Stapleton asked that it be reflected in the minutes that the physical address of that location is "770 Hagood Avenue, Barnwell, South Carolina, 29812."

C. Recommendation from Current Districts regarding Fiscal Agent – Action Item

(Action) Motion was made that Barnwell School District 45 serve as the Fiscal

Agent for the district. Motion made by SGM Abraham Sexton and seconded by Becky Huggins. Motion was approved unanimously.

**V. Adjournment**

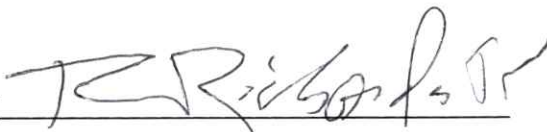
A. Announcement of Next Meeting – August 2, 2023

Chair Richardson announced that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 2, 2023 at the Barnwell School District 45 Administration Building. The meeting will begin with a two-hour work session and the move straight into the regular meeting. He acknowledged that some of the future meetings would rotate to different locations around the county.

Following a question by Dr. Andy Sandifer, Chair Richardson stated that the agendas would be sent as soon as possible for the following week's meeting.

B. Meeting Adjournment

Chair Richardson asked if there were any objections to adjourning. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 6:38 p.m.

Chair   
Clerk 