

Minutes of Barnwell County School District Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, November 28, 2023
(5214 Reynolds Road, Blackville, SC 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

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

Chair Richardson confirmed the FOI Notice, as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

B. Approval of Agenda – Chair Terry Richardson

A motion was made by Dr. Andy Sandifer to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by SGM Abraham Sexton. Hearing no objections, the agenda was unanimously approved.

C. Approval of October 24, 2023 Work Session Minutes – Chair Terry Richardson

Chairperson Richardson asked for a motion to approve the October 24, 2023 Work Session Minutes. Dr. Andy Sandifer made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. SGM Abraham Sexton seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

D. Approval of the October 24, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes- Chair Terry Richardson

Chairperson Richardson asked for a motion to approve the October 24, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes. SGM Abraham Sexton made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Dr. Andy Sandifer seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

E. There was no public participation.

II. Superintendent Report –Dr. Crystal Stapleton

A. Report on Facility Study

Superintendent Stapleton explained that each board member had maps of all properties that will be owned by Barnwell County School District. This is information that we will reference in future work sessions.

We will have a work session in December to receive an updated report from the M.B. Kahn and SSOE facility study. This is for more information gathering, and they will bring to the board members additional information regarding the district's facilities.

Superintendent Stapleton explained that there have been no decisions made regarding facilities at this time. The only action that has occurred in a board meeting regarding facilities is that the district office will be located at 770 Hagood Avenue in Barnwell. Any facility decisions would be made by the Board of Trustees as a collective group during a board meeting that is appropriately advertised.

She explained that it is the board's priority to keep Pre-K through 8th grade in the communities in which they are currently located and do thorough information gathering before any decisions are made regarding the "plutonium money," as it was most often referenced in the past few years.

The Executive Budget Office is responsible for the disbursement of the Savannah River Site Settlement Funds as allocated by the FY 2022-23 General Appropriations Act, proviso 118.19(72). Barnwell has been designated to receive funding for specific projects identified in the Act. In order to receive the funding, our county must submit a written request to the Executive Budget Office (EBO). Once received, our request will be provided to our county's legislative delegation and the Joint Bond Review Committee for their review after which, the funds will be released. The Barnwell County Board of Trustees has not submitted a request for disbursement of those funds at this time.

B. Update related to Consolidation Plan

Superintendent Stapleton explained that the district has been working on salary schedules and supplemental budgets. She explained that she has had an initial meeting with the CFO, high school principals, and the athletic directors to begin making plans for next year regarding athletic budgets. This was only the first planning meeting, and the team will meet again.

Our curriculum departments will meet for the first time this Thursday to look more in-depth at federal programs within both current districts-including allocations, items being funded in each district, etc.

Our transportation department leaders will meet on December 5th at 9 a.m. to discuss the next steps in the consolidation of the transportation departments-including budgets, current fleets, etc.

There was a joint PCG Medicaid Nursing Review in which all nurses from both districts were invited to attend. PCG is the new platform that the state will use with special services. All the nurses except one was able to attend. A review of the Medicaid billing system for nursing services, current billing insufficiencies, and issues were discussed. These were the first steps in moving to a district-wide electronic billing system for nursing services. There was a joint PCG Therapist

Review meeting in which all therapists, including contracted ones, from both districts were invited to attend. This included a review of the Medicaid billing for rehabilitative services. BSD45 currently uses Frontline and Enrich for this billing, and BCCSD does not currently have an electronic system for these services.

These Medicaid meetings are two of five collaborative meetings our two special education departments have spearheaded in the last month to plan for current and future needs.

Chairperson Richardson stated that he sent Superintendent Stapleton and David Corder, along with some other agencies, information on the federal government making all Medicaid recipients re-certify, and he feels that this will greatly impact our district due to a possible decrease the number of people receiving Medicaid. He asked Superintendent Stapleton what her impression was on this information. Superintendent Stapleton stated that we will work with local agencies and do what is required proactively. This includes working with DHEC and other agencies. We have put it on our "to do list" and try to prevent this from becoming an issue in our county.

We have an early childhood work session scheduled for Thursday, December 7th to discuss more in-depth the current early childhood programs in place, efforts for expanding those programs, recruitment for the programs, and plans for next year. There are possible efforts for expanding. We will begin proactive plans for next year because once we get back from the holidays in January, we will be in full force planning for next year.

The salary study will continue with Phase 3, which will include district-level staff members, principals, assistant principals, administrative assistants, attendance clerks, facilitators, and substitutes. This will conclude the salary schedule. When we have a special-called meeting or regular meeting in January, we want the salary schedules in place.

C. Presentation of School of Choice Recommendations

Superintendent Stapleton explained that a team of representatives from all three areas of the county met to discuss School of Choice recommendations for Barnwell County School District.

The two districts currently have out-of-district enrollment based on an application and tuition process. That would no longer be in place. The consolidated district currently allows intra-district transfers between Williston-Elko and Blackville-Hilda, but there are no formal School of Choice guidelines in place. We want to have guidelines in place and view what other districts have in place.

During the 2024-2025 school year, there will be two choice options available to students and parents in Barnwell County School District: zoned schools and schools open for expanded enrollment choice. (We do have some special/magnet programs at specific schools. This may be considered in the future school choice

enrollment. This is based on the school you're zoned for or how many is allotted. There will be an application created and applicants may apply by a specified deadline. A specific timeline will be created when the School of Choice plans are approved by the Board of Trustees. A policy will also be created at the appropriate time, outlining the information included here. (Tonight's presentation is informal, but formal action may be taken at a future meeting.)

Chair Richardson asked if this will be voted on in January and Superintendent Stapleton responded by saying yes and I can bring you any additional information that you may request and we will have an official application for the board to review at that time.

School Choice Metric for determining how many to allow: This will depend on grade level, as well as special attention to average class size and being mindful of space needed for any "zoned" students enrolling prior to the following year. You never want to have to tell someone who is zoned for a district that they're unable to attend so you have to be mindful of your class size numbers. The cut off numbers will be set year to year. They would not always stay the same.

Ronnie Brown asked how would the policy affect the parents because you said that a policy would have to be created? Superintendent Stapleton explained that the required part of the policy shows that you don't discriminate based on gender, race, or social economics. It would be a lottery process. If you said that 10 additional enrollments could come the Blackville, the first 10 students pulled in the lottery would be able to attend. The biggest impact for parents is they would have to fill out an application, but they would have to provide their own transportation. They are used to that now, because, if they are out of district, we do not provided transportation for out of district students currently.

Dr. Sandifer asked Superintendent Stapleton to explain Magnet and special programs that were mentioned - what they are and at what schools?

Superintendent Stapleton stated that there is a Montessori program at Barnwell Primary School and we talked about how Barnwell Primary School would be an option for school of choice, but we're not going to advertise all the different programs. We don't want it to look like you are advertising one school over another, but in the future we may outline more specific programs that are available. Please note, we allow students countywide to attend certain programs already. For example, JROTC is only at Barnwell High School, and students are able to participate and still attend their home high school.

Chair Richardson asked about art programs and students interested in arts or music. Would this be a potential for the future? Superintendent Stapleton stated that we could advertise it in the future, but the consensus of the group is to let's start small because it's new with us all coming together, we don't want it to appear that we're advertising one school over the other. The hope is when we all consolidate and come together, we will be able to expand those programs anyway.

Other examples were shared by the Superintendent, including Blackville Hilda has early college programs and Williston Elko has Culinary Arts.

Superintendent Stapleton continued with recommendations from the committee. Employees of Barnwell County School District do not complete school of choice applications, unless going to a different feeder school than the school in which the employee works. Families do not have to re-apply for the next year if they are already enrolled in a given school. Current out-of-district students will be “grandfathered in” for School of Choice and not count toward the established allotment of students. Current students that are grandfathered in will no longer have to pay tuition unless they live outside of Barnwell County.

In regards to athletics, SCHSL rules must be followed when transferring Intra-District. Special attention will be made to ensure students do not “jump around” schools to play sports in multiple places. SCHSL Guidelines state that for an intra-district transfer, a student may transfer to another school in the same district other than the ninth grade, provided the affected superintendent and schools’ principals approve the transfer. This type of transfer is allowed only once every 365 days and only applicable to member schools located within the district.

School of Choice applications will close at a specified date and will not be accepted after the deadline, except for extenuating circumstances. The district will develop and have in place a process to allow transfers for extenuating circumstances. Siblings would be given preference if he/she has a sibling accepted to a feeder school for school of choice. We would not want our parents running to different parts of the county.

Incoming Kindergarten students whose siblings attend a feeder school through School of Choice will be automatically enrolled in the same feeder school. Families will have one option on the School of Choice application.

Chair Richardson asked why would there only be one choice and not a second option? Superintendent Stapleton explained that it would be a simpler process being the first time. We will revisit the guidelines for official approval in January. Chair Richardson stated that he will open the board up to see if there’s any concerns on progressing along these lines. Ronnie Brown stated that we should wait for the application to review for a better insight. Chair Richardson stated that we will look at the application in January because more time is needed.

Superintendent Stapleton explained that a timeline is needed to allow transfers, look at out of district enrollment, and the option of taking away tuition

III. **Old Business**

IV. **New Business**

Superintendent Stapleton presented the Costa Rica Field Experience planned by Kimberly Walters at Williston –Elko High School. The focus is Culinary Arts, but it is being opened up to other high school students.

A. Approval of Costa Rica Field Experience for Spring/Summer 2025

- (Action) Motion was made to approve Costa Rica Field Experience for Spring/Summer 2025
- Motion made by Becky Huggins and seconded by SGM Abraham Sexton. It was approved unanimously.

Phase II Salary Schedules includes Food Service Operators and Managers, Teacher Assistants, Career Specialists, IT Tech, Bookkeepers, Speech Therapists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, and School Psychologists

B. Approval of Phase II Salary Schedules

- (Action) Motion was made to approve Phase II Salary Schedules
- Motion made by Dr. Andy Sandifer and seconded by SGM Abraham Sexton. It was approved unanimously.

Superintendent Stapleton explained that this would be the first reading of Proposed policies. The drafts are from:

- Section A- Foundation and Basic Commitments
- Section B- School Board Governance and Operations

Sections A and B are model policies from SCSBA. These are the proposed policies that they recommend. Any legal references are listed at the bottom of the policy. I will say the name and anything specific about each. When they are approved, please approve by stating Category A and Category B separately.

C. Approval of First Reading of Policies

Superintendent Stapleton presented the following policies:

**POLICY CATEGORY A
FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS**

- Policy AA - School District Legal Status - This policy establishes the foundation and legal authority of the school district.
- Policy AC - Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity - This policy is required by law to establish the position of the district as a non-discriminatory, public educational entity. In accordance with the law, it includes a section on resolving complaints; district contact information must be added.

There are blanks that will be filled in with the name of HR or person designated.

- Policy ACB - Educational Equity - This policy specifically addresses equity in all aspects of the educational program.
- Policy ACE - Service Animals (Public) - This policy establishes guidelines for members of the public permitted to utilize service animals in district buildings and on district property. It coincides with the service animal policies set forth in sections G, I, and J. Please note district contact information must be added.

Becky Huggins proposed that the example listed in policy (miniature horses) be removed.

Ronnie Brown asked for clarity on what was asked to be removed. Superintendent Stapleton explained that it was being proposed that the example of miniature horses be removed from the policy. She explained that it's just an example and can be removed. Barnwell School District 45 had the example removed. Chair Richardson asked if it was not a problem, and Superintendent Stapleton explained that because it was just an example, there is the option to have it removed.

Ronnie Brown asked what was the SBA take on the matter, and what if someone moved here with a miniature horse? Superintendent Stapleton explained that they would have paperwork and the proper guidelines would be followed.

Chair Richardson asked if there were any objections to removing the example? Superintendent Stapleton explained that it was just an example and it would not change the policy. Ronnie Brown explained that he just wanted clarity and had no problem removing it. Superintendent Stapleton explained that the law would still be followed, and the example would be removed at the second reading.

- Policy ADA; ADA-R - This policy, and its associated rule, establish the board's vision and the basic structure for developing a district strategic plan and school renewal plans with updates as required by law.
 - The rule is the model.
 - We have included a current mission statement and goals and objectives; however, the district would include an updated mission statement for the newly consolidated district.
- Policy ADB - Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace and Schools - This policy establishes the basic structure in place to ensure the board's vision of a workplace and learning environment free of drugs and alcohol.
- Policy ADC - Tobacco-Free School District - This is the comprehensive 100% tobacco-free policy establishing the basic structure in place to ensure the board's vision of a workplace and learning environment free of tobacco and alternative nicotine products. Policies GBED and JICG will correspond with this information.

POLICY CATEGORY B

SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

- Policy BA - Board Operational Goals - This policy establishes the basic structure for board operations. This policy focuses on goals of the board as the governing body and not the district.
- Policy BAA - Board Self-Evaluation - This policy establishes the basic structure for self-evaluation of the board. This is a new policy that was recommended by the SCSBA.
- Policy BB - Board Legal Status - This policy establishes the legal foundation for board operations based on state law and the district's establishing legislation.
- Policy BBA - Board Powers and Duties - This policy establishes the board's powers and duties as authorized by state law.
- Policy BBAA; BBAA-R - Board Member Authority and Responsibilities – This policy establishes the basic qualifications for school board service based on the state constitution.
- Policy BBB - Board Membership/ Elections - This policy establishes the basic structure for the election of the board members. (This is the recommendation from the SCSBA. Prior to the second reading, we can compare this to how other newly created boards have set up elections.)

Chair Richardson asked if there was any information on when someone could register for the November 2024 election? Superintendent Stapleton explained that it would be advertised ahead of time as well as posted in the newspaper and the election office.

Ronnie Brown asked about elections being done by secret ballot. Superintendent Stapleton explained that there was a policy that would be discussed in this reading that relates to secret ballots and the election of board member officers.

- Policy BBBA - Board Member Qualifications - This policy establishes the basic qualifications for school board service based on the state constitution.
- Policy BBBC - Board Member Resignation - This policy establishes the basic structure for resignation of a board member, and includes expanded information on the resignation of board members and time frame.
- Policy BBBB - Board Member Removal from Office - This policy addresses removal board members from office by the Governor based on Act 138 of 2022. (Referenced and recommended in the 2022 SCSBA Policy and Legislative Update.)

- Policy BBBE - Unexpired Term Fulfillment/Vacancies - This policy establishes the basic structure for filling vacancies occurring prior to the end of a term based on the establishing legislation.
- Policy BC - Board Member Conduct - This policy establishes the basic structure for board member conduct as individuals and while sitting as a board. This language is based on the rules of conduct established statewide by boards at the SCSBA delegate assembly.
- Policy BCA - Board Member Code of Ethics - This policy establishes the basic structure for ethical board conduct as reflected in the provisions of the SC Ethics Act.
- Policy BCB - Board Member Conflict of Interest - This policy establishes the basic structure for prohibiting board member conflict of interest in accordance with the state ethical rules.

Superintendent Stapleton explained that with this policy, it prevents nepotism and board members will reclude themselves when there is a conflict of interest.

- Policy BD; BD-R - Organization of the Board - This policy and rule establish the basic structure for board organization.
- Policy BDD - Board-Superintendent Relationship - This policy establishes the basic structure for the board and superintendent relationship by detailing the responsibilities of both in relation to the other.
- Policy BDE - Board Committees - This policy establishes the basic structure for the board's use of committees, including special committees, and compliance with the SC FOIA.
- Policy BDF; BDF-R - Advisory Committees – School Improvement Councils This policy establishes the basic structure for advisory committees in the district. Information regarding School Improvement Councils is included in the rule so that the board may add additional advisory committees, as needed.
- Policy BDG; BDG-R - Board Attorney/Legal Services - This policy establishes the basic structure for the board's need for and relationship with its attorney or law firm and includes the option for in-house counsel. The rule sets forth the board's expectations for its attorney or law firm.
- Policy BDH - Board Consultants - This policy establishes the basic structure for the board's need for and relationship with consultants. (Optional Policy – The Barnwell County Career Center had this policy in place, so it was included for consideration.)

Superintendent Stapleton explained that this policy is optional. The Barnwell County Career Center was included for consideration.

Chair Richardson asked Superintendent Stapleton if she was in favor of this policy, and she stated that she was fine with how it was written and outlined.

- Policy BE - Board Meetings- This policy establishes the basic structure for board meetings and establishes parliamentary authority.
- Policy BEC - Executive Session/ Open Meetings - This policy establishes the basic structure for conducting executive sessions in accordance with the FOIA.
- Policy BEDA - Board Meeting Notification - This policy establishes the basic structure for board and public notification of board meetings, including when meeting materials should be given to the board.

Superintendent Stapleton explained that the recommendation for board members receiving board material is 3 days, but we always do a week prior.

- Policy BEDB - Board Agenda - This policy establishes the basic structure for board preparation of and adherence to its meeting agenda.
- Policy BEDF - Voting Method at Board Meetings - This policy establishes the basic structure for voting at board meetings.

Superintendent Stapleton stated that this was the policy that Ronnie Brown referenced earlier and he asked why are there secret ballots for the election of officers because some school districts vote by secret ballot and some don't. She explained that combing the policies from all districts is how it was looked at and if it is changed, it will have to be changed at the second reading in the policy referencing the election of board members and voting method at a board meeting.

Ronnie Brown explained the policy now states how it should have been. The last time ballots were cast, Chair Richardson gave out the ballots and looked at the ballots.

Superintendent Stapleton stated that it needs to be written so you will have checks and balances.

Chair Richardson asked for Superintendent Stapleton's recommendation.

Superintendent Stapleton stated that there should be a nomination from the floor and meshing, and votes done by secret ballot.

Ronnie Brown stated that he feels that it should be done openly because secretly, you don't know who did what.

Dr. Andy Sandifer stated that he feels that a person's vote is a confidential and personal matter.

Superintendent Stapleton stated that's why secret ballots are allowed.

Chair Richardson said to make a note so it can be revisited. He said that he thought that was their first disagreement.

Superintendent Stapleton explained that the decision will be determined by the second reading and approval.

- Policy BEDG - Minutes of Board Meetings - This policy establishes the basic structure for maintaining a record of business conducted at board meetings in accordance with the FOIA.
- Policy BEDI - News Media Services at Board Meetings - This policy establishes the basic structure for news media notification of and attendance at board meetings.
- Policy BEDL - Board Members and Electronic Communications - This policy establishes the basic structure for electronic communications of board members, including such communications during board meetings. (There is an optional statement in this policy at the beginning of Paragraph 3.)
- Policy BEDM - Electronic Participation in Board Meetings - This policy establishes the basic structure for electronic participation of board members in board meetings. (Optional Policy)

Superintendent Stapleton explained that this policy allows you to decide when some can join electronically. There would be exceptional circumstances.

- Policy BEDN - Board Members Use of District-Owned Portable Devices – This policy establishes the basic structure for the use of district-owned portable devices, if applicable.
- Policy BGD - Board Policy Process/ Board Review of Administrative Rules – This policy establishes the basic structure for the development of board policy and board review of administrative rules.
- Policy BIA/BIB - New Member Orientation/Board Member Development Opportunities - This policy establishes the basic structure for the training mandated for all newly elected board members and for continuous development opportunities for the board.
- Policy BID - Board Member Compensation and Expenses - This policy establishes the basic structure for board per diem and reimbursement Payment of board expenses for authorized travel.
- Policy BIE - Board Member Insurance/Liability- This policy establishes the basic structure for maintenance of liability insurance and defense of such claims.