

Minutes of Barnwell County School District

Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

(770 Hagood Avenue, Barnwell, SC 29812)

Board Members Present: Becky Huggins, Felicia Devore, Rosey Anderson, Catrena Hughes-Parker, John Melton

I. Opening Business

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

Becky Huggins called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Felicia Devore led the Reflection and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Becky Huggins confirmed the FOI Notice at the closing of the meeting, as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

B. Approval of Agenda – Becky Huggins

A motion was made by Rosey Anderson to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Felicia Devore. Hearing no objections, the agenda was unanimously approved.

C. Approval of Consent Agenda Items – Becky Huggins

1. Approval of the February 25, 2025 Board Work Session Minutes
2. Approval of the February 25, 2025 Board Regular Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of March Personnel Report
4. Approval of January Financial Report

The motion was made by Felicia Devore to approve the Consent Agenda Items. The motion was seconded by Catrena Hughes-Parker. The motion was approved unanimously.

D. There was no public participation.

II. Superintendent Report

A. Update related to the BCSD Facility Plan

- FEMA Safe Room and Gymnasium:
Dr. Stapleton shared a time-lapse video of the progress on the FEMA Safe Room project.
- Dr. Stapleton shared photos from facility projects across the district.

B. School and District Updates

Dr. Stapleton shared the following highlights:

Human Resources Update

- Future Educator Signing Day - *Celebrating Tomorrow's Educators*
 - The district will host our Future Educator Signing Day during the April Board Meeting by recognizing graduating students who have committed to pursuing careers in education.
 - Students will participate in a formal signing ceremony, similar to athletic signing days, and families, mentors, and current teachers will be invited to attend this celebration.
 - This initiative supports our district's "grow your own" teacher recruitment strategy.
- Staff Recognition Surprises - *Honoring Excellence in Education*
 - The Superintendent, HR, and School Administrators will conduct surprise announcements at each school for:
 - School Level Teachers of the Year
 - Support Staff of the Year
 - Recipients will be invited to the May board meeting for formal public recognition.

IT Update

- Training has been completed in Final Forms for our new online registration. District users have one last training session (Gate-Keeper Training). This will take place the week of March 17th, and the district will then roll out the new online registration for new and returning students.
- Motorola Radios for bus communication countywide is now fully functional.
- The IT department is supporting testing countywide throughout the remainder of the year.
- GBMS Career Day-Dustin Jones (IT Intern) will be representing the IT Department on March 28th at the GBMS Career Day.
- Equipment has been ordered for the schools, as needed at different locations: 25 Promethean Boards, 21 Laptops, 30 Lab Computers, 38 External Monitors, 60 Docking Stations.

Finance Updates

- CFO Holly Hutto and Superintendent Stapleton completed the FY25-26 collaborative budget meetings with each Principal and Chief. Now, the CFO is using that information to create the budget that will be presented to the Board.
- CFO Holly Hutto continues to stay informed of the state budget by listening to most of the live audio stream of the House and the Senate.

Special Services - Special Education

- Marissa Lynn, SPED Compliance Specialist, is coordinating the district's participation in upcoming Special Olympics event in Orangeburg, SC, on March 21st. The district is so excited for our Special Olympics participants!
- Changes to SPED practices continue to be made to alleviate burdens on SPED Case Managers. For example, the process for IEP amendments is being changed due to issues with EDPlan SC and to make paperwork processes more seamless for SPED teachers and therapists.
- MTSS Support Specialist, Amy Davis, continues to regularly meet and hold discussions with school-level MTSS Coordinators on district MTSS processes and individual student cases. Regular consultation occurs between the district level and school level to ensure best practices for strengthening the foundational components of MTSS across the district.

- SPED/IT Departments worked together to push out accessibility tools to all student Chromebooks in the district. This accessibility tool will be helpful to ensure equal access and meaningful participation for students with disabilities with severe reading and writing deficits.
- SPED evaluators continue to process a high number of Child Find referral, BabyNet referrals, and MTSS referrals across the district ensuring students found eligible with disabilities receive access to necessary special education services.
- Barnwell County School District SPED Department collaborated with Bamberg County School District. The department hosted an all day SCDE Office of Special Education Services training for speech language therapists and school psychologists in both districts on March 12, 2025. These training sessions focused on the updated disability criteria. More specifically, this training was tailored for speech language therapists with a focus on speech language impairments and the role of speech language therapists in assisting school psychologists with preschool and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) evaluations.

Special Services - Student Services

- Guidance counselors and career facilitators met virtually on 2/12/25 with Mrs. Pam Rush (Axis 1) and Mrs. Susan Jerkins (DSS) for two meaningful and informative presentations.
- On 03/04/2025, secondary school counselors met at the Career Center to facilitate consistency with enrollment procedures, shared courses, and student failures due to attendance issues
- On 3/11/2025, Chief Rhoad conducted Medicaid training along with lead nurse, Stacey Epps, for all school nurses. Medicaid procedures were reviewed and various billing requirements were reviewed

Barnwell County Science Fair

- Over the past several weeks, each middle school in the district held their school level science fairs and chose the winners who would move on to the first ever Barnwell County School District Science Fair. There was a total of 27 projects. (Photos)
- 1st Place Overall: Abigail Smith (MEMS) What helps get rid of mucus the best?
- 2nd Place Overall: Helen Overton (GBMS) Plant Paper
- 3rd Place Overall: Liam Creech (GBMS) What Lure Catches the Most Fish?
- Honorable Mention Overall: Jansen Baines (GBMS) Which Method of Using Invisible Ink Works Best?

Barnwell County School District Strategic Planning

- Friday, March 7th School teams from across the district gathered at the district office for a full day, intensive strategic planning session.
- Participants participated in district level strategic planning discussions, helping to create a unified understanding of the district's goals. Then, they worked on goals, performance objectives, strategies, and action steps specific to their school needs.
- Breakout discussions on the district's vision, mission, and core values an essential component of the strategic plan. These conversations were vital in gathering input from stakeholders about the values and priorities that should define Barnwell County School District's future. Through this collaborative effort, we identified several common themes and shared priorities and guiding principles, which now form the foundation of the district's new vision, mission, and core values.
- From here, we will be reaching out for feedback from all staff and our community.

- Photos from the districtwide planning session were shared.

Dr. Stapleton shared other school updates they submitted to be shared with the Board:

- Barnwell Elementary School Literacy Night (photos)
- Barnwell High School
 - Spring sports are in full swing. BHS has 10 spring sports and currently have at least one home event each night until April 10.
 - Principal Youngblood asks that you please come and see the Warhorses in action.
 - The Guidance Office hosted Be Pro Be Proud on campus last Friday! It was a great opportunity for students to get some hands on experience in a variety of careers. We even had a timed competition on the brake pad changing station.
 - BHS Guidance took a group to Hi Cotton Greenhouses for a tour of their facility 3/11/25. The students had a great time.
- Blackville-Hilda High School
 - Early Childhood students received their “Real Babies” this week, this allows them the opportunity to understand the responsibilities of having a baby and taking care of them properly.
 - Mr. Edwards’ Technical Theatre students have been busy sketching and designing costumes out of newspaper and masking tape, designing masks, and learning to use latex to create special effects. (Photos)

III. Old Business – There was no Old Business.

IV. New Business

- A. Approval of Barnwell County School District 2025-2026 Re-Elect List for Certified Staff (Following Executive Session) – Action Item

Action regarding this item was deferred until after Executive Session. Following Executive Session, motion was made by Rosey Anderson and seconded by Felicia Devore. The motion was approved unanimously.

- B. Approval of Barnwell County School District 2025-2026 Re-Elect List for Non-Certified Staff (Following Executive Session) – Action Item

Action regarding this item was deferred until after Executive Session. Following Executive Session, motion was made by Felicia Devore and seconded by John Melton. The motion was approved unanimously.

- C. Approval of Barnwell County Career Center Field Experience for Agriculture Program to FFA Summer Camp June 2 through June 6, 2025 – Action Item

Motion was made by Rosey Anderson and seconded by Catrena Hughes Parker. The motion was approved unanimously.

- D. Approval of Barnwell County Career Center Field Experience for Agriculture Program to South Carolina FFA Convention June 17 through June 19, 2025 – Action Item

Motion was made by John Melton and seconded by Felicia Devore. The motion was approved unanimously.

- E. Approval of Bands of Barnwell County to Western Carolina University Summer Symposium Music Camp July 6 through July 10, 2025 – Action Item

Motion was made by Felicia Devore and seconded by Rosey Anderson. The motion was approved unanimously.

- F. Approval of the Gear Up Field Trip to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University March 28, 2025 – Action Item

Motion was made by Catrena Hughes Parker and seconded by John Melton. The motion was approved unanimously.

- G. Approval of Barnwell High School TSA Team to South Carolina Technology Student Association (SCTSA) State Conference March 28 through March 30, 2025 – Action Item

Motion was made by Rosey Anderson and seconded by Catrena Hughes Parker. The motion was approved unanimously.

- H. Approval of School Day Waiver for March 5, 2025 pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-1-425(B) – Action Item

Dr. Stapleton explained S.C. Code Ann. § 59-1-425 According to this law, a local school board may grant a waiver for up to three missed days by majority vote, but this can only be done after the district has made up at least three full days or the equivalent number of hours (meaning extending the school days to equate to the appropriate number of hours or doing Saturday hours).

Makeup Days for School Closure:

- 9/30/24 was made up on October 9, 2024 This was originally a Teacher Inservice Day which became an Early Release Day for students.
- 10/1/24 was made up on December 20, 2025 The half day originally scheduled for December 19th was moved to December 20th
- 1/23/25 has officially been scheduled to be made up at the end of the school year by extending the student days by 1. This was already outlined on the district approved calendar that was submitted to the State prior to the 2024-2025 school year.

Dr. Stapleton explained that tonight the district seeks approval of a waiver for the school closure on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

Motion was made by Catrena Hughes Parker, "I make a motion that we waive the March 5, 2025 school closure day pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-1-425. Please reflect in the minutes that this waiver is only approved after the district has made up 3 missed school days and used all 5 eLearning days." The motion as seconded by Felicia Devore. There was no additional discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

- I. Approval of Resolution for the Annual Capital Bond Issue Not to Exceed 2.5 Million – Action Item

Dr. Stapleton explained the following:

- The district seeks approval of a resolution authorizing a not to exceed \$2,500,000 general obligation bond through the 2025 SCAGO Spring GO Program.
- This is the annual bond that funds capital improvements at all schools and athletic facilities. CFO Holly Hutto and I have been meeting with every principal to determine their top facility priorities for the 25-26 school year.
- This bond will not increase taxes, because the debt millage will remain the same. The amount we may issue is determined by the available 8% debt capacity the school district is allowed.
- South Carolina's constitution allows bonds such as this to fund capital projects such as new schools and facility upgrades up to 8% of assessed property values within the district.
- Without a voter approved referendum which would substantially increase taxes, this 8% limit is the only recurring source of funding for district facility needs.
- By staying at this annual 8% limit, the bond advisors and bond attorney work with the district to determine the annual amount to issue so it doesn't increase taxes for the citizens within the school district but instead calculates it to keep the current millage for the bond funds at a steady rate. This is how the bond funds operated in the separate districts previously, as well as how they were calculated for the Barnwell County School District this school year.

V. Executive Session

Dr. Stapleton stated that there was a need for Executive Session for the following reasons:

Discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline, or release of an employee, a student, or a person regulated by a public body or the appointment of a person to a public body.

• *Discussion of Employment – Re-Elect Lists for Certified and Non-Certified Staff*

• *Contractual Matters related to Employees*

• Discussion of negotiations incident to contractual arrangements, specifically facility rentals, FEMA Safe Room and Hazard Mitigation Grant, and ongoing process for OSF approval of land for new high school/career center

• Receipt of legal advice, as needed, in regard to contractual agreements

A motion was made by Rosey Anderson at 6:47pm to enter Executive Session following a 5 minute break. It was seconded by John Melton and approved unanimously.

Following Executive Session for the matters listed, a motion was made by Rosey Anderson to come out of Executive Session at 7:57pm. It was seconded by Catrena Hughes Parker and approved unanimously.

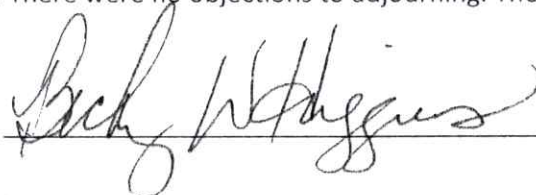
VI. Adjournment

A. Announcement of Next Meeting – Chair Huggins shared that April 22, 2025 would be the next regular meeting date.

B. Meeting Adjournment

Chair Huggins asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Felicia Devore and seconded by John Melton. There were no objections to adjourning. The meeting adjourned at 7:52pm.

Chair



Clerk

