

Minutes of Barnwell County School District
Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
(10524 Marlboro Avenue, Barnwell, SC 29812)

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

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. Becky Huggins led the Reflection and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Becky Huggins confirmed the FOI Notice went out as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

Becky Huggins asked that the SCTSA Field Experience to the State TSA Conference in Charleston, South Carolina from March 20th through March 22nd be added to New Business for approval after Executive Session.

B. Approval of Agenda – Becky Huggins

A motion was made by Rosey Anderson to approve the agenda as presented with the addition of the SCTSA Field Experience to the State TSA Conference in Charleston, South Carolina from March 20th through March 22nd for approval. 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 January 20, 2026 Regular Board Meeting Minutes- Becky Huggins
2. Approval of February Personnel Report- Becky Huggins
3. Approval of November Financial Report- Becky Huggins
4. Approval of the December Financial Report- Becky Huggins

The motion was made by Felicia Devore to approve the Consent Agenda Items. The motion was seconded by John Melton. The motion was approved unanimously.

D. There was no public participation.

II. Recognition

III. Superintendent Report- Superintendent

A. Presentation of Plans for Barnwell County High School

Dr. Stapleton gave the following update related to plans for Barnwell County High School, as well as shared photos of the plans for the public to view.

- The Design and Development phase of the project is now complete- a significant step that reflects months of thoughtful planning and valuable input from many district stakeholders.
- Throughout this phase, we were grateful for the input provided by students, staff, parents, community members, local leaders, and industry professionals. Their voices help shape a shared vision for a high school that will serve Barnwell County students for generations to come.
- This was the last sentence in the newspaper article the district published at the beginning of our project...
The work ahead is ambitious, but with a clear vision and a commitment to creating a space that will inspire our future generation, we are confident that this school will be a game-changer for our students and our community.
- The SSOE Group is an international firm providing architecture, engineering, and construction management services.
- The SSOE Group was selected by Barnwell County School District's Board of Trustees following a comprehensive interview and presentation process at the start of the project in March of 2024 and have led the Design and Development Phase.
- The district continues to partner with HG Reynolds, a construction management firm that has specialized in K-12 school facilities and infrastructure projects since 1948. HG Reynolds was also selected early in the process to serve as our Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR).

The CMAR project delivery method allows the district to bring the construction manager into the process during the design phase, rather than waiting until construction begins. This approach provides valuable early input related to cost estimating, scheduling, and value engineering. One of the greatest benefits of this method is early involvement-ensuring that construction expertise helps guide decisions from the very beginning.

- The BCSD Design and Development Team consisted of high school principals, BCCC Director, district leaders, and board chair, created the core values and mission statement to guide the project, and met throughout the process, in between the focus group meetings, before and after survey administration, etc.
Community-Centered
Ensuring that the needs and feedback of our community are at the heart of the design process.
Innovation
Creating modern, adaptable spaces that inspire learning and future growth.
Integrity
Upholding transparency, honesty, and accountability in every step of the project.
Collaboration
Working together with stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students and staff.
- Our mission is to honor the legacy of the schools that came before us while empowering our students for life beyond graduation- through a community-centered approach, we will foster innovation, integrity, and a commitment to academic excellence, preparing our students for success for the future.
- Through community and student surveys, as well as the many focus groups that met throughout the process, the design professionals and the design and development team were able to incorporate meaningful feedback into the overall layout, functionality, and use of each learning and common space.
- The survey data showed that 95.7 % of respondents rated workforce readiness as 'Very important', highlighting the community's commitment to preparing students for future careers.
- STEM, healthcare, and skilled trades clearly emerged as the top community-supported priorities.
- Top career and technical education programs identified include Health Sciences and Welding, reflecting community aspirations for a skilled workforce.
- The facility design themes emphasized modern, flexible learning spaces that honor both innovation and heritage.
- Key ideas from qualitative feedback:

- o Flexible, modern learning spaces for collaboration and technology-based instruction.
 - o Inclusion of community spaces (performing arts center, athletic facilities).
 - o Innovation labs for robotics, engineering, and hands-on STEM projects.
 - o Balanced school identity that honors heritage while creating unity.
 - o Green design and outdoor learning areas for student wellness and connection with nature.
- Common Areas & Student Well-Being

What students told us:

 - o 79% want welcoming common areas for collaboration and connection
 - o 72% said access to quiet spaces for studying or decompressing is important
 - o 67% want the school to feel safe, modern, and student-centered
- Athletics, Arts & Extracurricular Spaces
 - o 73% believe athletics and extracurriculars are an important part of school culture
 - o 66% want improved athletic facilities
 - o 61% want expanded spaces for fine arts, music, and performances
- Overall Student Priorities (Top Themes)
 - o Collaborative learning environments- 82%
 - o Career and workforce preparation- 74%
 - o Safe, modern facilities- 73%
 - o Student gathering and common spaces- 79%
 - o Hands-on learning opportunities- 76%
- Community and student feedback directly informed the design of the new Barnwell County High School. The facility reflects student priorities around collaboration, career readiness, safety, well-being, and modern learning environments- ensuring the school is built not just for students, but with community and student voice at the center.
- CTE-focused High School Concept

What does it mean to be a CTE-Focused high school?

A CTE-focused (Career and Technical Education-focused) high School is a school that intentionally designs learning around career readiness, real-world skills, and post-secondary options- without limiting students to one path. It means college, career, military, and workforce pathways are all valued and supported.
- When it comes to designing a state-of-the-art Career and Technical Education (CTE) focused high school, the planning phase is just as critical as the final product. Every detail- from classroom layouts to industry-aligned workspaces must be carefully considered to create a school that truly prepares students for the workforce of tomorrow.
- Conceptual Idea

With this priority in mind, a group of our district leaders, including our Career Center Director, Chief Academic Officer, School Board Chair, and Superintendent, traveled in February 2025 with the district's architect and design team from SSOE, to Colorado to visit some of the most innovative CTE-focused schools in the country. The outcome of this trip was invaluable, helping shape a vision for a school that will best serve our students and community.
- Big Idea

Our CTE classes are infused throughout the high school. There isn't a Career Center wing or separate Career Center building.
- How focus groups impacted the next steps:
 - o Throughout the remainder of 2025, multiple focus groups met to provide feedback and input on the initial designs. That feedback was used to make modifications and improvements to the design plan including each aspect, from food service to JROTC to fine arts...and many more.

- o Teacher representatives from every high school also met. For all CTE focused spaces, those instructors were involved in creating data sheets for our design team that provided what they needed for their particular spaces.
- This collaborative effort has ensured that the design reflects both our educational priorities and the needs of our community.
- As construction moves forward over the next two years, additional teams will continue working together to plan programming, interior finishes, and the details that will bring this vision to life.
- Key Highlights:
 - State of the Art Spaces for:

- o <i>Welding</i> - o <i>Building Construction</i> - o <i>Automotive Technology</i> - o <i>Mechatronics</i> - o <i>Mechanical Design</i> - o <i>Agriculture</i> - o <i>Agriculture Mechanics</i> - o <i>Marketing</i> - o <i>Cosmetology</i> - o <i>Barber Program</i> - o <i>Early Childhood</i> - o <i>Cyber Security</i> - o <i>Health Science</i> - o <i>Project Lead the Way-Engineering</i> - o <i>Computer Science</i>	- Criminal Justice Obstacle Course - eSports Lab - Broadcasting and Video Lab - Modern Athletic Facilities - Practice Gym and Main Gym - Arts and Science Labs - Virtual Labs - Early Childhood Program for Younger Children - Food-Court Style Cafeteria Space - School Store and Smoothie Shop - Learning Kitchen - Business Suite - Greenhouses - Future Arena in Master Plan
--	---
 - Large Commons Area at the Center
 - Full-functioning Farm
 - JROTC Drill Pad

Our goal is not to decide students' futures for them- it is to prepare them for any future they choose.

Dr. Stapleton presented the Schematic Design and new school plans noting that there are options for future variations.

- With recent milestones achieved, HG Reynolds has now bid out the early site work for the project and will be moving forward with that work in the coming weeks. Residents can expect to see activity begin soon at the future high school site, located at the intersection of Highway 278 and Highway 37.
- The early site work bid date was January 29, 2026, and the award went to J.R. Wilson. This includes grading/earthwork, storm drainage, erosion control, paving, sidewalks, and more.
- This work will begin as soon as the district is provided approval for the Land Disturbance Permit from South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES).
- The district is also planning a formal groundbreaking ceremony in March, which will mark another exciting moment in this journey. We look forward to sharing more about that event in the near future.
- Since the start of this project, the district has shared a timeline targeting completion of the new high school in time for students to begin classes there during the 2028-2029 school year.

Chair Becky Huggins acknowledged that sharing the plans of the new high school is such a huge milestone and represents hard work and countless hours of work by dedicated individuals. The plans that are being shared represent the vision of the halls the students will walk and the classrooms where they will learn. We are grateful to everyone that has put in so much time and effort. There's a lot of work yet to be done, but this step is worth celebrating.

B. Additional Updates related to the BCSD Facility Plan

Dr. Stapleton shared the following additional updates related to the BCSD Facility Plan:

- FEMA Gymnasium and Safe House Update
 - We are still awaiting news on the Period of Performance Extension Request from FEMA.
 - February 10, 2026 (One Week Post Notice to Proceed)- CMU Completion
 - March 3, 2026 (Four Weeks Post to Proceed)- HVAC OH (Rough In) Metal studs. (Rough in)
 - March 10, 2026 (Five Weeks Post Notice to Proceed)-Electrical OH (Rough In)
 - March 17, 2026 (Six Weeks Post Notice to Proceed)- Electrical Completion
 - May 12, 2026 (Fourteen Weeks Post Notice to Proceed)- OSF Final submission
 - June 9, 2026 (18 Weeks Post Notice to Proceed)- Estimated Construction Completion
 - July 15, 2026 (23 Weeks Post Notice to Proceed)- Estimated Grant Completion

C. School and District Updates

Dr. Stapleton shared the following school and district updates:

Safety Grant

- BCSD was awarded \$105,000.00 for a safety grant that will be used for:
 - Door hardware and locks
 - Door access controls
 - Cameras
 - Metal detectors like those used at sporting events that are mobile and available for the schools to transport more easily.

School Choice

- Our School Choice open enrollment period opened on Monday, February 9th, and will close at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 9th.
- During this window, families may complete the online District Choice application available on the Barnwell County School District homepage and shared through ParentSquare.

Montessori

- Barnwell Primary School is currently accepting applications for three-year-olds interested in entering the Montessori program for the 2026-2027 school year.
 - Application deadline: Monday, March 2nd at 3:00 p.m.
 - Following the deadline, a lottery will be held to determine available spots.
 - Age eligibility is based on a child's age as of September 1, 2026.
 - Children must be potty trained.
- Bus transportation is not offered for three-year-olds, as state safety guidelines and supervision requirements don't allow for transporting at this age.
- There will be an option for a half-day or full-day program for families.

Measles

- The South Carolina Department of Public Health (DPH) recently shared information regarding confirmed measles cases in South Carolina. While there are no known cases connected to our schools at this time, health officials have advised districts to be proactive due to the highly contagious nature of measles.

- As a precautionary step. We are asking staff to be aware of what documentation may be needed only in the event of a confirmed measles exposure. We have shared guidance as to what is acceptable evidence of immunity to measles.
- In the event of a confirmed measles exposure, DPH guidance requires a 21-day exclusion for individuals without verified immunity. Because measles can remain airborne for up to two hours, exposure determinations may include shared spaces such as classrooms and cafeterias. Having documentation readily available could help prevent unnecessary absences should a situation occur.

IV. Old Business

V. New Business

- A. Approval of South Carolina FFA Convention & Expo in Greenville, South Carolina June 16th through 18th— Action Item

Motion made by John Melton to approve the South Carolina FFA Convention & Expo in Greenville, South Carolina June 16th through 18th. The motion was seconded by Catrena Hughes-Parker. The motion was approved unanimously.

- B. Approval of South Carolina FFA Summer Camp 2026 in Cherry Grove, South Carolina June 1st through 5th (Please note summer dates for this camp are tentative and still being finalized)- Action Item

Motion made by Catrena Hughes-Parker to approve South Carolina FFA Summer Camp 2026 in Cherry Grove, South Carolina June 1st through 5th. The motion was seconded by Felicia Devore. The motion was approved unanimously.

- C. Approval of SCTSA Field Experience to the State TSA Conference in Charleston, South Carolina March 20th through 22nd- Action Item

Motion made by Felicia Devore to approve SCTSA Field Experience to the State TSA Conference in Charleston, South Carolina March 20th through 22nd. The motion was seconded by Rosey Anderson. The motion was approved unanimously.

D. Executive Session

Motion made to go into Executive Session by Catrena Hughes-Parker at 6:55 p.m. and seconded by Felicia Devore for the purpose of:

- Discussion of negotiations incident to contractual arrangements, specifically FEMA Safe Room and Hazard Mitigation Grant and ongoing process for planning and construction of the new high school/career center
- Receipt of legal advice, as needed, in regard to contractual agreements

Any action that is required by Executive Session discussion will occur following the close of Executive Session.

Motion made to come out of Executive Session at 7:21 p.m. Motion made by Catrena Hughes-Parker and seconded by Rosey Anderson. The motion was approved unanimously.

No Action Taken

E. Adjournment

- A. Announcement of Next Meeting

Regular Board Meeting scheduled for March 17, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at Barnwell Schools Administration Building.

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 7:22 p.m.

Chair

Betty Huggins

Clerk

Rosey Anderson