



Palmetto Excel Center  
Finance Committee Meeting

December 31, 2025

#### ROLL CALL

**Board Members present:** Herbert Drayton III, Chris Harvey, Amy Mims, Dr. Fran Welch

**Staff & Consultants present:** Jeremy Easley, Megan Friedman, Mary Ann Gilmer

#### CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was called to order at 1:30PM by Amy Mims to vote on hiring a new lobbyist for Palmetto Excel.

#### LOBBYIST SELECTION & RATIONALE

- The Executive Committee vetted two candidates to replace the previous lobbyist, who had offered a discounted rate of \$3,500/month.
- Carol Stewart (Declined):
  - Rate: \$5,000/month.
  - Required a second lobbyist for budget work, increasing the total cost to \$8,000/month.
    - This higher cost was deemed too difficult to absorb.
- John Brassini (Approved):
  - Rate: \$5,000/month.
  - Requires a 12-month commitment, standard for his nonprofit-only practice.
  - Has greater bandwidth than Stewart, enabling more frequent communication and a more hands-on approach.
  - Already works with PGW, creating a clear path for collaboration.
  - Vetted positively by former Rep. Katrina Sheely, who confirmed his strong connections in Columbia.

#### FUNDING THE COST INCREASES

- The new rate creates a \$1,500/month variance against the previous budget.
- This variance totals \$9,000 for the remainder of the 2025-26 fiscal year.
- The increase will be covered by a budget surplus from:
  - Open staff positions.
  - Savings on operating supplies.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Brassini's mandate is to advance two primary goals:
  - Secure state budget funding for the upcoming fiscal year.
  - Identify and secure a new authorizer for Palmetto Excel.
- He has existing relationships with key legislators (e.g., Shannon Erickson, Sean Bennett) and education leaders (e.g., Ellen Weaver), which are critical for achieving these goals.

## BOARD VOTE

- A motion to hire John Brassini was made by Amy and Herbert, then seconded by Fran.
- The motion passed unanimously.

## NEXT STEPS

- Email John Brasini re: 12-mo lobbyist contract (Jan 1 start); request signature
- Schedule recurring syncs w/ John Brasini + Palmetto Goodwill

## ADJOURNMENT

Amy Mims adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:45PM. Next Committee meeting will be scheduled for January.

Recording of this meeting can be accessed here: [VIEW RECORDING - 15 mins](#)