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University of South Carolina

BOARD OF TRUSTEES – CALLED

January 7, 2022

The University of South Carolina Board of Trustees convened in a called meeting at 11:20 a.m. on Friday, January 7, 2022 in the President's Conference Room in the Osborne Administration Building and via Microsoft Teams video and audio conference.

Members present were Dr. C. Dorn Smith III, Chair; Mr. Thad H. Westbrook, Vice Chair; Mr. Alex English; Mr. Hubert F. Mobley; Ms. Leah B. Moody; and Mr. Mack I. Whittle Jr. Participating via Microsoft Teams were Mr. C. Dan Adams, Mr. J. Egerton Burroughs, Mr. Brian C. Harlan, Mr. Richard A. Jones Jr., Mr. Toney J. Lister, Mr. Miles Loadholt, Ms. Emma W. Morris, Ms. Rose Buyck Newton, Mr. Robin D. Roberts, Ms. Molly M. Spearman, Mr. John C. von Lehe Jr., Mr. Eugene P. Warr Jr., and Mr. Charles H. Williams. Dr. C. Edward Floyd was absent.

Others in attendance were Secretary Cameron Howell; University Architect and Associate Vice President for Facilities, Design and Construction Derek Gruner; General Counsel and Executive Director of Compliance Programs Terry Parham; University Treasurer, Associate Vice President and Chief of Staff Division of Administration and Finance Joe Sobieralski Assistant; Vice President, Media and External Engagement Jeff Stensland; IT Production Manager Matt Warthen; and Board support staff. Interim President Harris Pastides participated via Microsoft Teams, along with Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Center for Civil Rights History and

Research; Dr. Walter Edgar, Professor Emeritus of History; and Mr. Bill Funk Sr. with R. William Funk and Associates.

## OPEN SESSION

### I. Call to Order

Chair Smith called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and asked those in the room to introduce themselves. Secretary Howell confirmed Trustees and others in attendance by Microsoft Teams video conference.

Chair Smith called on Mr. Jeff Stensland to introduce members of the media. Mr. Stensland introduced Caleb Bozard with the *Daily Gamecock*, Lucas Daprile with the *State*, and Jessica Holdman with the *Post and Courier*.

Chair Smith stated notice of the meeting and agenda had been posted and the press notified as required by the Freedom of Information Act; the agenda and supporting materials had been circulated; and a quorum was present to conduct business.

### II. Recommendation to the Board of Trustees Regarding Honoric Naming of 700 Lincoln Street

Chair Smith asked Mr. Whittle, Chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, if the Committee had a recommendation for the Board of Trustees.

Mr. Whittle replied that the Finance and Infrastructure Committee recommended that the Board of Trustees vote today to name the University's student housing building at 700 Lincoln Street in Columbia in the honorific memory of Celia Dial Saxon.

Chair Smith thanked Mr. Whittle and noted, before he asked for a motion in response to the recommendation from the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, that he would like the Board and some distinguished guests to discuss the proposed recommendation, in the interest of providing important context for University stakeholders,

the public, and the press.

State statute empowers the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees to oversee matters related to the University's physical plant and real estate, Chair Smith continued. The Board delegates some specifics of this authority to the Board's Finance and Infrastructure Committee, as is described in Section 4 of Article VIII of the Board's Bylaws. These Bylaws specify standards that the Finance and Infrastructure Committee must apply to any naming of a University building.

To the credit of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, Chair Smith stated, its members have considered these Bylaws thoroughly and diligently since the Presidential Commission on University History issued its final report to the Interim President in July of 2021. The Presidential Commission's report suggested, in part, some names of significant persons of color for future namings of University buildings. With potential names supplied by the Presidential Commission and with input from scholars, the Finance and Infrastructure Committee considered current and future buildings available for honorific namings, along with the biographies of worthy persons who might be honored with the designation of building names at the University of South Carolina. The Committee's process for consideration of other building names will continue, and this process may be memorialized in University policy if advisable.

Chair Smith thanked Mr. Whittle and the other members of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee for their excellent work to prepare the Board for today's meeting, and he thanked the Committee in advance for its continued work.

For the reasons to be outlined that day, Chair Smith continued, the Finance and Infrastructure Committee recommended that the Board of Trustees name the student housing facility at 700 Lincoln Street in honorific memory of Celia Dial Saxon. The

Committee believes that 700 Lincoln Street is a fitting location to be named in honor of Mrs. Saxon, whose life and works were truly exemplary.

In an article published the previous year in the *Journal of African American History*, scholar and University of South Carolina alumna Dr. Alexandria Russell asserted that Saxon is “the most memorialized African American woman in the history of South Carolina.” The Blossom Street Elementary School in Columbia was renamed in Saxon’s memory in 1930. By the 1940s, the chapter of the National Honor Society at Booker T. Washington High School, where Mrs. Saxon had served as principal, was named for her as well. In 2008, the Ward One Neighborhood organization, Historic Columbia, and the University placed a historical marker near the site of the former Celia Dial Saxon School, which closed in 1968 and was demolished in 1974. That marker notes, among other things, that Saxon “was a founder of the Wilkinson Orphanage, Wheatley WYCA, and Fairwold Industrial School.” In addition, the Celia Saxon Neighborhood in Columbia includes a street, an apartment complex, a health center, and a shopping center named for Mrs. Saxon. She was inducted posthumously into the South Carolina Black Hall of Fame in 1995. Mrs. Saxon is recognized in the African American Wall of Fame in the Russell House, and she is featured in the Booker T. Washington High School Auditorium Building exhibit. These memorials to Mrs. Saxon’s legacy celebrate her roles as an educator, community organizer, public servant, scholar, and civic leader. She taught generations of students at Howard School and at Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia.

Although the city and its communities have honored Celia Dial Saxon over the course of nearly a century, the University of South Carolina has been slower and later, in comparison, in honoring Saxon and her ties to the University. Mrs. Saxon was one of the earliest Black students to attend the University of South Carolina, and indeed she graduated

from the University in 1877. The University was integral to Saxon's long career as an educator, and connections between Saxon and the University are evident at various points in her biography. Professor Josiah Morse, chair of the department of psychology and philosophy at USC, eulogized Saxon at her funeral in 1935. Saxon's granddaughter, Thelma Woodbury Lewis, lent to the University's South Caroliniana Library some of Mrs. Saxon's personal belongings, including her 1920 voter identification card. Yet, to date, the University of South Carolina has not celebrated Celia Dial Saxon, who earned a University degree and was a stalwart of the Columbia community, with adequate praise and recognition.

The University of South Carolina hopes to begin to remedy this omission today, by naming 700 Lincoln Street in honorific memory of Mrs. Saxon, Chair Smith stated. Furthermore, the University must take the responsibility from this point forward to educate University stakeholders and the Columbia community about Saxon's life and accomplishments, about the lessons the University community should learn from her perseverance, and about the University's pride in being a part of her remarkable personal and professional trajectory. The University must embrace this responsibility to celebrate Mrs. Saxon thoroughly and often for the duration of the University's life, which—the Board believes—will be perpetual.

Chair Smith called on Dr. Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History and Director of USC's Center for Civil Rights History and Research, to provide additional scholarly commentary regarding Celia Dial Saxon.

Dr. Donaldson stated that, at the age of fifteen, Celia Emma Dial wanted to become a teacher. A former slave born in 1857 and owned by the McColloch family, Saxon enrolled in the Normal School. She was educated on the University of South Carolina campus from 1874-1877, critical years during the period of Reconstruction, a transformative moment in

our nation's history, and an era when the institution was described as "The Radical University."

Celia Saxon walked the Horseshoe. She took courses in campus buildings. She knew Professor Richard T. Greener. She studied in what is now the South Caroliniana Library. Her graduation ceremony took place on May 31, 1877 in Rutledge Chapel. During the ceremony, she read an essay entitled "The Duty of the Hour."

Following graduation, Saxon committed her life to education and taught for 57 years. Her final years were spent as a social studies, geography, and civics teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, whose last building remains a part of our campus.

Chair Smith thanked Dr. Donaldson and then called on Dr. Walter Edgar, Professor Emeritus of History, to provide additional remarks. Because Dr. Edgar's voice could not be heard through the online connection, Secretary Howell read aloud the statement that Dr. Edgar had prepared.

Secretary Howell stated for Dr. Edgar that the University should remember that Celia Dial Saxon was not only one of the first Black women to attend the University of South Carolina, but also one of the first women.

Her achievements were wonderful and, given the Jim Crow world in which she lived, a testament to her faith, her spirit, and her determination. By the 1890s, Saxon had earned a national reputation within the segregated world of Black America. She was a member of the executive committee of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. She was one of the founders of the South Carolina Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and represented it at national meetings. She truly was a national figure by the end of her life.

Chair Smith thanked Dr. Edgar for his statement and then called on alumnus and Trustee Alex English, who attended the Celia Dial Saxon School on Blossom Street in

Columbia. Chair Smith stated Trustee English first suggested to the Board of Trustees that Saxon would be a worthy honoree for any building to be named at USC in memory of a prominent graduate of color.

Mr. English stated that he attended elementary school at the Celia Dial Saxon School on Blossom Street. “I have very fond memories of the school and of the Ward One neighborhood as it looked in the 1950s and 1960s. Very little of that neighborhood remains, due to gentrification and the expansion of the City of Columbia and University of South Carolina. It is important that we remember Celia Dial Saxon and her influence on Black communities in Columbia. She was one of the first graduates of the USC Normal School. Naming 700 Lincoln Street is an honor befitting Mrs. Saxon’s legacy. The University of South Carolina has a lot of work to do, to come to terms with the University’s past and with the role of minority groups in the University’s past. Who was included and who was excluded are at issue. Who has been recognized and who is yet to be recognized are at issue.”

Celebrating Celia Dial Saxon today is a very good first step, and Mr. English described himself as proud to participate in this celebration. He stated that, like his colleagues on the Board of Trustees, he looks forward to continuing the work to include and recognize additional, deserving members of the University of South Carolina community.

Chair Smith thanked Mr. English. Before the Board entertained a motion to name 700 Lincoln Street in memory of Mrs. Saxon, Chair Smith asked Interim President Dr. Harris Pastides to provide final comments.

Dr. Pastides stated that that day, the University achieved an important first, but it would certainly not be the last tribute of its kind. He described himself as grateful to be one among many on the long, determined journey that paved a path to today’s decision to

memorialize Celia Dial Saxon, whose role in university history is well deserving of this honor. Mrs. Saxon was one of the individuals identified by the Presidential Commission on University History to be at the forefront of future naming opportunities. Dr. Pastides applauded the Board of Trustees for their commitment to carry forward the work that was begun by the history commission.

Dr. Pastides stated that, in renaming 700 Lincoln in Ms. Saxon's honor, the University takes a step toward continued reconciliation with the Ward One community, which was displaced by the University's growth along the western edge of its campus, making way for an area that is now home to the Carolina Coliseum, the Darla Moore School of Business, the Koger Center for the Arts, and other university buildings. While the University cannot alter its history, it can dedicate itself to addressing its history by recognizing the community members and neighborhoods that were displaced and by mending relationships with those who have been affected by decisions of the past.

"Let us now continue the momentum this day establishes," Dr. Pastides concluded.

Chair Smith thanked Dr. Pastides and noted, as the Board prepared to take action, that, in August of 2020, when he began his service as Chair of the Board of Trustees, he announced the Board's intent to name University buildings in honor of significant black leaders who improved the University and the community. Chair Smith stated the Board fulfilled its promise today, although the University is admittedly late in its long history in taking this action. He also stated Trustee Alex English was absolutely correct to note that more work and more actions are required.

Dr. Smith noted the Board would continue to consider honorific namings and other acts to memorialize the University's rich and diverse populations. Again, Chair Smith thanked Trustee Whittle and the Finance and Infrastructure Committee for their diligent

work to prepare the Board for today's proposed action. He thanked Trustee English as well, along with University faculty and administrators for the data and historical context provided to the Committee as it considered its decisions. In particular, he thanked Dr. Donaldson, Dr. Edgar, and University Architect Derek Gruner.

Today's proposed action is but a step in a longer journey to fulfill the University's responsibility to its rich and diverse populations, just as Alex English has stated, Chair Smith continued.

700 Lincoln Street, situated where the families of Celia Dial Saxon's students lived, in proximity to the site of the school that bore her name, in view of the very blocks where she once resided, is a fitting location to be named for Mrs. Saxon and to celebrate her remarkable life.

Chair Smith called for a motion for the Board of Trustees to name the student housing facility located at 700 Lincoln Street in Columbia, South Carolina, in honor of Celia Dial Saxon, a celebrated educator who was born enslaved in Columbia in 1857, graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1877, and who educated and influenced generations of African Americans in Columbia through a teaching career that spanned 57 years.

Mr. English made the motion, which Mrs. Moody seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Smith stated that the University looks forward to opportunities to celebrate Celia Dial Saxon in February, during Black History Month. He noted details regarding these events would be forthcoming. Similarly, the University looks forward to celebrating Celia Dial Saxon when appropriate signage and educational context are installed at 700 Lincoln Street. Further details regarding Saxon and this honorific naming would be made available to

the public and the press by the University's Office of Communications and Public Affairs. Trustee Alex English would be available to the press for on-camera interviews beginning at approximately 1:15 p.m. The Office of Communications and Public Affairs would provide guidance for press outlets regarding Mr. English's availability.

#### MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Smith stated there was a need for Executive Session for discussion of candidates for the position of President of the University of South Carolina. Mr. Westbrook so moved, and Mr. Whittle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Smith stated no action would take place in executive session. He asked the following persons to remain in the meeting: Trustees, Secretary Howell, and Mr. Funk. He asked all others to exit the meeting.

Chair Smith stated that the Board would adjourn immediately following Executive Session, upon re-entering Open Session.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

– Executive Session Removed

#### RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

#### III. Adjourn

Chair Smith declared the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cameron Howell  
Secretary