

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, agendas for the following meeting were delivered to all members of Council, County Attorney Richard Ness, Lower Savannah COG, *The Bamberg Leader*, *The Times and Democrat*, Southern Carolina Regional Alliance, Bamberg County Library, Bamberg County Website and Bamberg County Courthouse Annex.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., September 11, 2023 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Phil Myers, Jr., Larry Haynes, Spencer Donaldson and Clint Carter. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, Richard Ness, T.M. Thomas, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Kenneth Bamberg, Moses Cheatham, Wallace Hicks, Miriam Beard, William Metts and Ethan Meeks.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Spencer Donaldson, followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilman Larry Haynes.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Myers, council approved the minutes from the August 14, 2023 meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Myers, the agenda was approved as submitted.

Council Chairman Dr. Goodman, II called for public comments of a proposed ordinance for approval to the amending of the master agreement for the establishment of the Quad-County Industrial Park between Bamberg, Barnwell, Allendale and Hampton counties to include Project Homegrown; and other matters related thereto. No public comments were made during this time.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Bamberg County Treasurer - Monthly Report

County Treasurer Alice Johnson gave the June financial report, stating they had \$402,350.10 in income and expenditures of \$973,442.38, leaving a negative balance of \$571,092.28. When the negative bank balance at the end of June (\$28,751.19) was added, the county's regular account stood at a negative \$599,843.47. Treasurer Johnson's report was received as information.

Bamberg County Budget - Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$136,018, as of the end of July. Expenditures stood at \$575,699, for a negative general fund balance of \$439,681. The county departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

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Bamberg County Controller - Monthly Report

Controller Smith updated that they are getting the year-end-books closed out and their goal is to turn the general ledger and the books over to the auditors by October 17. She further stated that the finance department is busy balancing accounts and reconciling accounts and making sure that everything on the books is accurate. This report was accepted as information.

Bamberg County Administrator - Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported to council of the passing of former County Councilman Robert A. Smith that served Council District 1 for several terms. Information was passed along regarding Congressman Clyburn and other officials that were in Bamberg on September 6 to celebrate a \$24 million investment in rural internet improvements in Orangeburg and Bamberg counties (\$12 million is designated to Bamberg County). Engineers Ethan Meeks and William Metts were present to explain and answer questions regarding the broadband expansion project. Mr. Meeks stated that one of the portions of this project is that it is a 100 percent federal grant. It was explained that some of the obstacles that they'll see will be environmental reviews from United States Rural Utilities Service. All of their construction will take place on the shoulder of the road in the public right-of-way, but RUS still would like to investigate whether or not there's any environmental impacts with plants, wildlife or anything with historical facilities and any other things. Further stated was if the people don't get the service on day one, they have a two to three year window to get the service. Bamberg County will own the asset. Bamberg County will be the provider. Administrator Preston mentioned that there will be an office in Bamberg with a drive-thru in the future. Staff will be at the office and if people want to buy the service, they will be able to go by and do so. If you are a customer and you sign up for service, all the construction to your home, all the in-home wiring, the wireless router, all of that is covered as a capital expense as part of the grant. The only thing you would be obligated for is your monthly bill. This is a five-year grant and individuals would have to sign up for the service within that window. There are some federal programs that the county will participate in, including the Affordable Connectivity Program. Those who qualify for ACP will get \$30 a month off their internet bill. A telephone number will be developed for individuals to call with questions regarding the broadband system. During this segment, Administrator Preston introduced the new detention center director Moses Cheatham. Mr. Cheatham has 40 years of law enforcement experience, including having served as a lieutenant in the Richmond County Sheriff's Office in Augusta, Georgia for the last 25 years. Several former jobs were mentioned that Mr. Cheatham has held. Mr. Cheatham said that he is glad to be a part of this community and he is happy to be here. Administrator Preston remarked that Bamberg County is fortunate to have found a detention center director captain who has such vast knowledge of law enforcement management. Mr. Preston announced an EMS advisory committee meeting scheduled with Thorne Ambulance Service on Thursday, October 12th at 5:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers. Also, council will have a planning retreat on Friday, October 20, 2023 at 9 a.m., at the Airport. This report was received as information.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council gave third reading to a proposed ordinance enlarging the boundaries of the Quad-County Industrial Park,

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Park II, and Park III between Bamberg County, South Carolina, Allendale County, South Carolina, Barnwell County, South Carolina and Hampton County, South Carolina to include property owned or operated by or to be owned or operated by Project Homegrown; and other matters related thereto.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved a resolution honoring the memory of Senator John L. Scott, Jr. The resolution will be signed by each councilperson, framed and presented to Senator Scott's family.

On motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the calendar of events after adding the two items from Administrator Preston's report: 1) EMS Committee Meeting and 2) Planning Retreat for Council.

On motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved a request from Lower Savannah Council of Governments that the following board members be reinstated to LSCOG Board: Council members Clint Carter, Sharon Hammond and Larry Haynes, Denmark Mayor Gerald Wright and state Representative Justin Bamberg.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, Council approved the following LSCOG standing and ad hoc committee members: Councilman Larry Haynes, Administrator Joey Preston and Bill Johnson, *transportation advisory committee*; Sharon Hammond, *regional aging advisory committee*; Nancy Foster, Dr. Dorian Newton, Donald Parler, *workforce development board*; Jewel Davis, Rena Riddle and Jerry Bell, *thoroughbred county tourism advisory committee*; Councilman Spencer Donaldson, *Regional housing consortium technical review committee*.

At this time Chairman Goodman called for public comments. Bamberg County resident Miriam Beard stated the following three concerns: 1) Bamberg County Animal Control Officer needs to be equipped - what is the status of the cat that tested positive for rabies; 2) Status of public attendance for C-Fund meetings and 3) Property taxes installment plan.

Chairman Goodman called for comments from council. During comments from council, all present were thanked for their attendance, Thorne Ambulance Service were thanked for their prompt response time, employees were thanked for their hard work, thanks given to Administrator Preston and staff and a moment of silence was given in remembrance of 911, families and the ones that loss their lives during that ordeal.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, Clerk to Council