

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - April 20, 2020

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, agendas for the following meeting were mailed to all members of Council, County Attorney Richard Ness, Lower Savannah COG, *The Advertiser-Herald*, *The Times and Democrat*, SouthernCarolina Regional Alliance, Bamberg County Library, Bamberg County Website, Bamberg County Courthouse Annex and a copy posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of the County Courthouse.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 12:00 p.m., April 20, 2020 in various locations within the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex and some participated by way of teleconference. The public joined the meeting by various means of technology. **Present:** Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, Reverend Isaiah Odom, Councilmen Kerry Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Larry Haynes and Joe Guess, Jr. **Absent:** Councilman Clint Carter. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Mickey Kinard, Karen Greene, Ken Humphrey, Ruthie Brown, Dean Fralix, Sue Greenburg, Jerry Bell, Chip Maier, Harold Shepherd, Bill Johnson, Phil Myers, Dionne Gleaton, Brandi Napier and approximately 5 additional people.

Bamberg County Council Virtual meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sharon Hammond at 12:00 p.m., followed with a moment of silence in memory of those that loss the battle to COVID-19 and to the ones that are trying to recover and overcome the virus. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Joe Guess, Jr.

Chairwoman Hammond announced that during the meeting, a roll call would be taken of each council member by district, when a vote was required on each motion made.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved an emergency ordinance making a Bamberg County Council declaration of a state of emergency in Bamberg County, South Carolina in response to the public safety and health threat of the novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”), effective April 20, 2020, enacting this emergency ordinance; and other matters relating thereto including implementation of measures dealing with the state of emergency. Administrator Preston explained that this ordinance is good for 60 days and it will also, endorse the boards and committees to meet electronically or in person. He further explained that the Planning Commission needs to meet in order that the county’s comprehensive land use plan can be updated and presented to council for approval. Those voting in favor of the ordinance by super majority were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the minutes from the March 9, 2020 meeting. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved the agenda as submitted. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent.

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the February financial report noting that the county income stood at \$31,310, with expenses coming in at \$887,321, leaving a negative balance of \$856,011. At the end of February the county’s bank balance stood at a positive balance of \$666,384. Councilman Kinard commented that Treasurer Johnson’s report showed an increase from the \$606,138 balance the county had at this same time last year.

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Controller Gina Smith presented an operating cash flow statement, stating the county's cash balance increased by \$202,211 from \$3,583,335 in February 2019 to \$3,785,546 in February 2020. Ms. Smith also reported on how Bamberg County would be impacted by the federal government's passage of the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the Coronavirus Relief and Economic Security, or CARES, Act. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act provided paid sick leave and the expansion of family medical leave. This bill provides for two additional weeks of paid qualifying sick leave. Chairwoman Hammond informed that SCAC asked that we contact our representatives and make it known that we need help in South Carolina. Hopefully, we will be reimbursed for coronavirus related expenses to include lost revenue related to the coronavirus. Administrator Preston said he would work with council on a letter for presentation to the legislative delegation, requesting that the state's local government fund be fully funded. It was further stated that we should probably write to our federal delegation as well.

At the beginning of Administrator Preston's monthly update, he requested the record reflect that in the room with him was County Attorney Richard Ness, and Clerk to Council Rose Shepherd. Administrator Preston encouraged: **1)** Council to work with their district toward improving participation in the U.S. Census. Census participation can be done online; **2)** Mr. Bill Johnson and the Planning Committee will be looking at four ordinances that need to be passed by council. Bill Johnson and Rose Shepherd will set up a meeting for the committee very shortly and Chip Maier and Mary Tilton will assist with electronic logistics of the meeting; **3)** Submitted a USDA grant to construct and provide broadband services to the citizens. During the coronavirus, children are at home and unable to get online to do their school assignments. Please reach out to the legislative delegation; **4)** The county will be working with Denmark Technical College to close its Voorhees Road entrance and make the entrance way off of Highway 78 as the main entrance; **5)** Bid scheduled to be issued April 20 for roof at the old hospital; **6)** The Dally Road project is going well; **7)** Applied through FEMA for a 100% fire service grant. This report was accepted by the council as information.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council agreed to proclaim April as Fair Housing Month in Bamberg County. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved the calendar of events after changing the wording for the May 4, 2020 council meeting. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from the council. Council thanked the healthcare workers, first responders and grocery stores for their help. All were asked to wear masks and gloves when in the public and the citizen were acknowledged for adhering to the rules for the virtual meeting. Chairwoman Hammond was commended on a job well done and putting things together for the meeting. The key staff members and IT persons were also congratulated. Last but not least, Reverend Odom announced the celebration of his 87th birthday.

This being our first virtual meeting, it is noted that we had ten persons to call in to listen.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC