

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - May 18, 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., May 18, 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, Adam Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Gary Bailey, Sidney Evering, Mary Tilton, Ray Jones, William Molnar, Sarah Sandifer, Ruthie Brown, Sue Greenberg, Walt Inabinet, Trevor Kinard, Chip Maier, Harold Shepherd, Bill Johnson and Brandi Napier.

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 Trent Kinard.

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

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved the minutes from the April 20, 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 Guess, 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.

Presentation of the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Audit for Bamberg County was given by Mr. Gary Bailey, CPA of Love, Bailey and Associates – Spartanburg, SC. Mr. Bailey informed the County as earning an unmodified (clean) audit and he thought we had good control in place. He reported that they have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, the financial statement of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of Bamberg County, South Carolina, as of and for the year ended June 30, 2019, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise Bamberg County, South Carolina's basic financial statements and issuance of report thereon dated April; 29, 2020. There were three findings with one already has been corrected: 1) Family Court – Lack of internal controls over the collection and receipting of the family court funds. Auditor's Recommendation: The bank account should be reconciled monthly to the receipts collected and the balance held agreed to the funds required to be disbursed with any discrepancies resolved in a timely manner. These issues appeared to be resolved by the closing of fiscal year 2019; 2) Magistrate Collections: Sufficient time is not allocated to monthly reconciliations of activity by County personnel. Auditor's Recommendation: The bank account should be reconciled monthly to the receipts collected and the balance held agreed to the funds required to be disbursed, with any discrepancies resolved in a timely manner and discrepancies exceeding the aggregate annual amount

of \$100 be reported to the SC Court Administration as required. The audit went smooth with no issues obtaining information in a timely manner. Chairwoman Hammond asked if there were any question for the auditor. Councilman Kinard asked if the firm of Love & Bailey had any previous dealings with Mr. Preston. Mr. Bailey answered no. Councilman Kinard stated that the previous auditor had family here in Bamberg County. Also, Councilman Kinard asked that the record reflect that Councilman Carter has been absent for the past three meetings. Chairwoman Hammond announced that she was not aware that the Audit Company was being changed. Love, Bailey and Associates were thanked for their service to Bamberg County.

Following Mr. Bailey's presentation of the Bamberg County FY 2018-2019 Audit, Controller Gina Smith followed up with highlights from the Bamberg County Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Audit. Controller Smith will provide each member of council with a copy of the in depth Bamberg County Audit Summary that she formulated for their convenience and information. Alongside earning an unmodified (clean) audit, it displays the following outcome for Bamberg County: 1) Demonstrates good fiscal stewardship; 2) Impacts borrowing ability and rates; 3) Sense of pride to elected officials and employees; 4) The most important measure of financial stability and 5) Builds and confirms confidence in management. Included in the presentation, Ms. Smith expounded on various topics and areas within the FY 2018-2019 Annual Financial Report (as presented by Love, Bailey and Associates). Controller Smith pointed out areas that some of the departments need to improve. Council accepted this presentation as information.

Attorney Ray Jones, bonding attorney for Bamberg County and a partner in Parker Poe and Associates, commented that he has seen the fund balance for Bamberg County grow. This is huge. The improvement over the last 4 o5 years is substantial. Mr. Jones said, "Bamberg County receiving the positive audit that they did, it is beneficial and Bamberg County is in a position to borrow." Council thanked Mr. Jones and his partner Sidney Evering and the rest of the firm for their assistance.

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the March financial report noting that the county income stood at \$334,059, with expenses coming in at \$806,627, leaving a negative balance of \$472,568. At the end of March the county's bank balance stood at a positive balance of \$193,816. Chairwoman Hammond opened the floor for questions for Ms. Johnson. Councilman Kinard requested a copy of a complaint letter Ms. Johnson received from a county citizen that she read in open session at a previous council meeting. Treasurer Johnson responded that she would provide him with a copy of the letter received. No other comments were received from council.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$6,158,409 in year-to-date revenues at the end of March. Expenditures stood at \$5,497,087, leaving a positive balance of \$2,456,443. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Administrator Preston reported on the following: **1)** Rivers Bridge Fire Station – moving forward as scheduled; **2)** Solar plan - \$8.8 million – moving forward as planned; **3)** CPST renovation of old hospital – 7 bidders showed up from across the state; **4)** Managed to get a list of roads and a copy will be sent to council and they will be posted on the website. The C-Fund committee gets about \$62,000 per month, but with the COVIC-19 pandemic only about \$23,000 will be received instead; **5)** Census Count – Not doing well, Rose will be sending information regarding all mayors and council members names, so that they can be contacted and encourage them to encourage their constituents to fill out their Complete Count forms online. This information will affect how much funds we will get for the county, schools, etc.; **6)** Detention Center – State has stopped receiving prisoners. We are having to keep them longer and it is being contemplating whether we will start invoicing the state for housing prisoners; **7)** Memorial Day – The sculpture is not ready, but we will be putting up the flags for the occasion. Applied through FEMA for a 100% fire service grant. This report was accepted by the council as information.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council gave first reading to a proposed ordinance to adopt the amended Comprehensive Plan for Bamberg County in compliance with

May 18, 2020....continued

South Carolina Code §6-29-520 and §6-29-530. 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 Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved proposed Resolution #P-20-11, requesting and supporting the Federal Government’s efforts to pass additional pandemic relief bills directly supporting state and local governments. 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 Comer, council approved proposed Resolution #B-20-12, requesting funding for rural broadband access. 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 Comer, the calendar of events was approved as submitted.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no public comments were received at this time because public comments concerning agenda items were to be emailed to info@bambergcounty.sc.gov no later than Monday, May 18, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. No emailed questions or concerns were received from the public prior to the meeting.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from the council. Council commented on the Department of Commerce providing \$500,000 toward broadband coverage for the county. The IT staff was thanked for technical assistance for the meeting. Voting is now available by mail and at the Voter Registration office. 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.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Reverend Odom, council adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC