

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING - September 10, 2018

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*, Southern Carolina 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.

Bamberg County Council met 6:31 p.m., September 10, 2018 in the chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. **Present:** Chairman Clint Carter, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Isaiah Odom, Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., and Joe Guess, Jr. **Absent:** Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Dionne Gleaton, Gina Smith, Alice Johnson, Jerry Halmon, Mary Tilton, William Molnar, Dawn Strickland, Barbara Beard, Donald Parler, Jerry Bell, Ed Darnell, Ray Jones, Brittany Barnwell, Sarah Noel and Bill Johnson.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Clint Carter at 6:31 p.m., in the Chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. Invocation was rendered by Reverend Isaiah Odom, followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Kinard and Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the minutes from the August 13, 2018 meeting with future corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council agreed to add and executive session item to discuss a personnel matter.

Dawn Strickland, CPA from McGregor Company, LLP in Orangeburg, SC, provided the Bamberg County Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2017 audit and reported it to have received an unmodified opinion. This is also the same as previously received, a clean opinion. Ms. Strickland pointed out four material weaknesses and one important deficiency were noted within the audit. The first material weakness was the general accounting principles. It was recommended the county implement policies and procedures that improve the transfer and/or incorporation of the various departments' financial activities into a general ledger system. The second material weakness involved the preparation of financial statements. The third material weakness was concerning lack of control over capital assets and the fourth material weakness was the lack of adequate internal controls over family court collections. The county addressed each weakness that was pointed out in the audit. Ms. Strickland reported the county's only significant deficiency involved the delinquent tax sales funds. It was reported that funds held in the bank account from past delinquent tax sales consisted of several parcels with unresolved balances held or deficits owed. The recommendation was that the matter be investigated and resolved so that only the correct balances required to be held for the five-year period from the public auction sale date are on deposit.

Controller Gina Smith reported that this is the third year in a row the county received a clean audit opinion. Several positive facts were addressed that related to the county's budget. Councilwoman Hammond requested that the council hold a workshop to go through the findings to make sure the county and the staff are prepared for next year. Administrator Preston agreed to schedule a workshop in the future.

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Bamberg County Chamber President Jerry Bell gave an update on upcoming events within the county. Flyers listing additional events in the community were distributed to the citizens present. Mr. Bell reminded everyone of the Bamberg County Chamber Banquet to be held the first Thursday in November. The update was accepted as information.

Treasurer Alice Johnson reported that the county's total income in July was \$479,814, with expenditures coming in at \$850,215, leaving a negative balance of \$370,401.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had \$709,465 in year-to-date revenue as of the end of July. Expenditures stood at \$583,153, leaving a balance of \$126,313. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets.

Administrator Preston announced congratulated Bamberg County Emergency Services Director, Brittany Barnwell, for being awarded the South Carolina Certified Emergency Managers Certificate. Ms. Barnwell was present and thanked all for their well wishes toward her achievement. She further informed the public of hurricane Florence's location and prediction of land arrival and the possibility of hitting land at a 4 or 5. Also, we were told where shelters will be located and appropriate steps to follow. Administrator Preston said that Chairman Clint Carter will be serving as a member of the SCAC Land Use Committee. Bamberg County officials are waiting for the date to be set for signing of the USDA documents for the purchase of the three approved firetrucks. It was announced that SCAC will take on a new committee item for pursuing the health insurance premium issue as related to PEBA. In the near future, some tours will be given of the old courthouse to invite the public to come in and see the condition of the building and the proposed plan for its preservation. The public works department is working on the mosquito control, including the placement of traps around the county. When citizens make a request for mosquito spaying or road grading and when the employee shows up to render the service and they are not at home, a sign is placed on the door letting them know that the request was completed. Administrator Preston will be scheduling a meeting/interview with Mr. Jeremiah Hammond to discuss the moving project performed of the old courthouse.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL

- 1) SCA (Haynes, Comer & Odom) -Rev. Odom reported he feels that SCA is working diligently and they are doing their best.
- 2) LSCOG -Meeting was held last month. The next meeting is scheduled for the 2nd Thursday in October.
- 3) Lower Savannah COG (TAC) -Construction of a bike path between Bamberg and Denmark is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2019
Wrote letter in reference to the Edisto River and voting regarding the river will be in Columbia Sept. 13 at SCDHEC 2600 Bull Street.
- 3) LSCOG Housing Consortium - No quorum. Will meet by email and vote electronically.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved a resolution recommending and requesting that a joint study group representing all stakeholders in Bamberg County conduct a study of the feasibility and practicality and political climate for combining some or all of the local government law enforcement agencies and assets in Bamberg County. The resolution will direct Administrator Preston and Council Chairman Carter to organize

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a committee that would include representatives from all Bamberg County municipalities and communities. The group would consist of elected officials and administrative staff from all Bamberg County law enforcement agencies including, the Sheriff's Office and the municipal police departments. Councilman Kinard, the sponsor of the resolution, said, "If we don't start combining some of these services within our small counties, we're not going to be able to make it." A request was made that the group look into this study to include the firefighters, so that they would be dually trained and noting the average firefighter in Bamberg County is over 50 years old. Councilman Odom stated that a similar study was conducted in the county some years ago. Administrator Preston said he would check with former Bamberg County deputy administrator Booker Patrick to see what information is on file about that previous study. Councilman Comer asked if there would be a professional facilitator to take care of getting this study done. Chairman Carter said he supports the concept as long as the county doesn't encounter any additional costs.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved a resolution declaring the county's intent to reimburse itself for certain expenditures made prior to the county's consummation of a federally tax-exempt financing.

On motion by Councilman Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved second reading approval to a proposed ordinance to amend the agreement for a joint county industrial park among Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, and Hampton Counties so as to enlarge the boundaries of the park and other matters related thereto Project Blackberry.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council gave second reading to an ordinance authorizing pursuant to Title 12, Chapter 44 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976, as amended, the execution and delivery of a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes agreement by and between Bamberg County, South Carolina and a certain company as sponsor, identified for the time being as Project Blackberry, to provide for a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes incentive and certain special source revenue credits; and other related matters.

On motion by Councilman Odom, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, the calendar of events was discussed and approved.

On motion by Councilman Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the appointment of Robert "Bob" Smoak to the Bamberg County Planning Commission as a representative from District 1. Other council members will submit their district appointment at the October meeting (Districts 2, 4, 5 &6),

Council made various comments and the new media had no additional questions.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council entered in executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

There being no further business to be discussed, on motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council agreed and the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC