

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - September 14, 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 6:00 p.m., September 14, 2020 in several 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, Joe Guess, Jr., and Clint Carter. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Mary Tilton, Chip Maier, Emory Langston, Dolton Williams, Ruthie Brown, Sidney Evering, Eric Carrier, Sarah Noel, Dionne Gleaton, Bill Johnson, Farrell Pulaski, Gary Morris, Tiffany Kemmerlin, Walt Inabinet and two additional attendants.

Bamberg County Council Virtual meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sharon Hammond at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Joe Guess, Jr.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the minutes from the August 10, 2020 meeting. Voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Haynes – Dist. 3 - absent during the vote.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, 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; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

Public hearing was given to a proposed ordinance to adopt the amended Comprehensive Plan for Bamberg County in compliance with South Carolina Code §6-29-520 and §6-29-530. Emory Langston, Planning, Community and Economic Development Administrator for Lower Savannah COG along with Eric Carrier of LSCOG were present to explain and answer any questions the public may have had. Given the opportunity, there were no questions presented from the public. On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council agreed to close the public hearing after no concerns were presented.

Chairwoman Hammond read for the public's benefit, a public hearing notice regarding a proposed ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee agreement by and between Bamberg County, South Carolina and Project Joker providing for a payment of a fee in lieu of taxes and other matters related thereto. Project Joker is better known as Phoenix Specialty Manufacturing Company – Bamberg, SC. Phoenix is expanding its company and will be investing approximately \$5.5 million and increasing the number of employees by 35 over the next three years. There were no comments received from the public. On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council agreed for the closing of the public hearing.

Also, a public hearing was given to a proposed ordinance to amend the amended and restated Master Agreement for the establishment of the Quad-County Industrial Park I, Park II, and Park III, dated as of May 6, 2013 by and among Allendale County, South Carolina, Bamberg County, South Carolina, Barnwell County, South Carolina, and Hampton County, South Carolina, Providing for the development of certain multi-county industrial parks, so as to include additional property in that portion of the parks geographically located in Bamberg County, South Carolina, and other matters related thereto. There were no comments

September 14, 2020....continued

received from the public. On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council agreed to close the public hearing.

Committee and Staff Reports;

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the July financial report noting that the county income stood at \$234,474.72, with expenses coming in at \$1,131,096.36, leaving a negative balance of \$896,621.64. Treasurer Johnson also reported that the county's bank balance stood at a positive \$402,850 at the end of June, leaving a negative balance of \$493,700.86 as of July 31, 2020. Ms. Johnson pointed out the county's large expenses were due to the county having three payroll periods.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$547,336 in year-to-date revenues at the end of July. Expenditures stood at \$582,550, leaving a negative balance of \$35,214. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Controller Gina Smith reported that the general fund account showed a large amount spent, this was caused because of the three payrolls for the employees for the month of September. The county is still expecting to hear about the reimbursement from the state for expenditures referencing the coronavirus. Bamberg County applied for \$87,338 for the months of April, May and June. Hopefully, we will receive funds to compensate what we have spent. The next period that we can file for reimbursement of expenditures would be from July 1 through December 2020. When submitting overtime for reimbursement, the state will only reimburse for overtime hours used, no regular time will be eligible reimbursement.

Administrator Preston reported that cases for COVID-19 are steadily rising. Currently, the county has a total of 553 cases as of September 13, and 33 deaths to date. Bamberg County has been reported on in the New York Times as being #1 in South Carolina when it comes to the size our county. Since the September 14th council meeting there were 104 positive cases and 11 deaths in the county. Previously, Bamberg County has been testing about 55 to 60 per day and now it has scaled back to about 10. Councilman Guess was concerned about people not wearing masks and the number of deaths we have had in the county. Chairwoman requested that the COVID-19 information presented to the council, be shared with the municipalities. Presently, the county is working with the City of Denmark in applying for a CDBG to purchase a pumper tanker. Administrator Preston reminded everyone to encourage the residents to complete the U.S. 2020 Census because it will cease September 30. Also, be reminded that the surveyors are now going door-to-door for completion of census applications. Chairwoman Hammond was congratulated on being appointed to the SCAC Land Use Committee. Denmark Technical College has requested to take a socially distancing picture alongside the council, presenting them the funds that has been allocated by the county. The Rivers Bridge fire substation is slated to be complete by November. It was stated that a fire substation needs to be built in Councilman Guess' district. The Council accepted the Administrator's report as information.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved an 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 September 15, 2020; and other matters relating thereto including implementation of measures dealing with state of emergency. 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 opposed.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved an emergency ordinance requiring use of face coverings and other protective measures in emergencies and certain other situations;

September 14, 2020....continued

and matters related thereto. This ordinance will continue for an additional 60 days beginning September 5, 2020 in the unincorporated areas. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved third reading of a proposed ordinance to adopt the amended Comprehensive Plan for Bamberg County in compliance with 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; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved third reading of an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee agreement by and between Bamberg County, South Carolina and Project Joker providing for a payment of a fee in lieu of taxes and other matters related thereto. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

Next item to be addressed was the renewal of contract for County Administrator Preston. Chairwoman Hammond voiced that she could not take any action of the contract renewal item because she didn't have any information on it and the council had not discussed it. Councilman Kinard asked for the floor and stated that they were there to vote on the renewal of the contract for the County Administrator. Councilman Carter said he had not seen a copy of the contract in his packet and he was not going to vote on something he had no information on. Councilman Kinard made a motion to renew the contract, it was seconded by Councilman Comer. Other council members responded that the contract was previously discussed among the full council and they all had knowledge of it. It was pointed out that the contract was the same as last year, nothing changed. Councilman Kinard called for the question several times, to no avail. After a lengthy discussion and the concluded statement by Chairwoman Hammond and Councilman Carter that they had not received a copy of the contract prior the meeting, the motion prevailed that County Administrator Joey Preston's contract would be extended one additional year (from July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2022). Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1; Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6. Opposing the motion: Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, the calendar of events was approved 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; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no public comments were received at this time. Anyone with concerns had the opportunity to email to info@bambergcounty.sc.gov no later than Monday, September 14, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. No comments were received prior the meeting.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from the council. Comments and gratitude were stated.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Reverend Odom, council adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC