

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING - September 14, 2015

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*, Bamberg County Library, Bamberg County Website, and a copy posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of the County Courthouse.

Bamberg County Council met 6:30 p.m., September 14, 2015, in the courtroom of the Bamberg County Courthouse. **Present:** Chairman Joe Guess, Jr., Councilwoman Alzena Robinson, Councilmen Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Clint Carter, Larry Haynes and Rev. Isaiah Odom. **Others Present:** Administrator Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Dionne Gleaton, Jerry Halmon, Kell Anderson, Mallory Biering, Jerry Bell, Ed Darnell, Ryan Slattery, Alice Johnson, Sharon Hammond, Bill Johnson, Eula Mae George, Fairey Padgett, Ms. Padgett, Betty Singleton, Cliff Thomas, James Hutto, Ms. Hutto, Amanda Sievers, Jackie Brown, Lester Williams and Danny Singleton.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Joe Guess at 6:30 p.m., in the Bamberg County Courtroom. Invocation was rendered by Reverend Isaiah Odom, followed with the pledge of allegiance.

On motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the minutes from the August 10, 2015 minutes with future corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Rev. Odom, council approved the agenda as submitted.

Public hearing and update was given to the Bamberg County Hazard Mitigation Plan by Amanda Sievers, Lower Savannah Council of Governments planning manager. Ms. Sievers said in order for the county to be eligible to receive funds from FEMA for hazard mitigation projects, public updates must be done in the county. The Hazard Mitigation Plan explains how the county is to respond to hazards such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and winter storms. The public was advised to contact her or Bamberg County Emergency Services Director Sharon Hammond with any comments. Ms. Sievers can be reached at Lower Savannah COG (803) 649-7981 and Ms. Hammond can be reached at (803) 245-4313. Chairman Guess and Councilmen Comer and Kinard made comments.

Public hearing was given to proposed ordinance identifying and designating certain roads in Bamberg County as county roads; accepting such roads into the Bamberg County Road System into the Bamberg County Road System; and other matters related thereto. A road list was attached to the ordinance with a total of 299 roads. Councilman Haynes requested that the county be certain that Turkey Cut Road be included on the list. Councilwoman Robinson asked to be certain Swan Lane is on the list. Ms. Eula Mae George made comments and asked that Reddish Road be added to the list for maintenance. Comments were made by Mr. Fairey Padgett, Bamberg County

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resident, asked that Lafayette Road be considered for maintenance. Mr. Ryan Slattery of Alliance Engineering will make contact with those persons with road concerns. Administrator Preston reminded everyone that we were not adopting a county road policy at this time, we are just identifying the roads which the county staff is authorized to work on.

County Administrator Preston announced to the council that Bamberg County now has a credit rating of "A" received from a New York City based credit rating agency Standard and Poor's. At this point, Administrator Preston and Controller Smith proceeded with an impressive power point presentation to more clearly explain the process. Mr. Preston went on to say Bamberg County has never had a credit rating before. Administrator Preston, Chairman Guess and some other key people traveled to New York in search of receiving a positive report for Bamberg County. County Administrator Preston further stated that two or three years ago, we could not get a bank to look at us when it came to taking out a loan. The positive credit rating we have obtained, will impact the repayment of bonds the Bamberg Facilities Corporation issued in 2013. A few years ago, Bamberg County was between \$2.5 million and \$3 million in the hole. Now, with Bamberg County having this rating in hand, we will be considered investment grade by our future investors and lenders. Controller Gina Smith added that with the better credit rating you have the lower interest rates are going to be. Bamberg County has worked hard to manage the budget. Controller Smith went on to say our tax levy and collection rates are improving. The total collections as percent of levy has gone up 96.2 percent. We have had an average assessed value growth from 2008 to 2014 of 2.5 percent. Retail sales in the county increased from \$5.5 million in 2012-2013 to \$12.5 million in 2013-2014. This will help the county's ability to refinance its debt. Bamberg County decreased its general fund expenses from \$8.5 million in 2013 to \$5.4 million in 2014, with 2014 general fund revenues at \$5.9 million. Chairman Guess thanked citizens for putting trust in county government to make responsible financial changes.

Council heard a report from Kell Anderson, Southern Carolina Alliance project manager, that the alliance is working on several projects including Project Cowboy, which could bring 137 jobs and a \$9.45 million capital investment to the county. Other projects mentioned were: Project Thunderball - \$3.3 million capital investment, Project Worth, Project Max, Project Royale, Project Riker and Project Crumb.

Jerry Bell, Executive Director of the Bamberg County Chamber of Commerce, reported on upcoming events and passed out flyers for upcoming events. Mr. Bell invited everyone to the First Candle Lights in the Dark Roast and Toast Banquet at 7 p.m., Friday, September 18, 2015 at the Bamberg Job Corps Center. Sheriff Ed Darnell will be one of the persons recognized.

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported that Bamberg County's total income for June was \$1,579,604. Expenses came in at \$533,156, reflecting a positive balance of \$1,046,448.

Finance Director Thomas reported the county's general fund generated \$6.7 million in year-to-date revenue as of the end June. Expenditures stood at \$6.4 million. Budgeted revenues for Landfill/Solid Waste Department are \$1,050,951. We have collected, through June, \$946,598 representing 90% of the annual budget. Year-to-date collections for landfill tipping fees are \$464,361 which exceeds the

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annual budgeted amount of \$370,000. Compared to the same point in time last year collections were \$383,750 and this has shown an improvement over last year. On the expenditure side, the department has spent \$971,118 which is 92% of its budget and is within normal range. Despite the overage in Solid Waste Contract line of \$64,834 due to the increased tonnage in the landfill that we have echoed all fiscal year long, the solid waste/landfill was able to finish around \$79,833 under total budget in this department. The council received this report as information.

Administrator Preston informed the Council of the appointment of Chairman Guess to the Land Use Committee appointed by SCAC 2015 President. He also announced that the Sheriff's Department is scheduled to receive six patrol vehicles within the next few days. Also, Administrator Preston reminded the council of the tour scheduled for Thursday, September 24 to the Blanchard/Caterpillar facility in Columbia, S.C. Transportation for the tour will leave the Courthouse at 9:00 a.m. and will return approximately 2:30 p.m. Bamberg County's new website will be launched in about two weeks. The question was asked when will the courthouse annex be completed. Administrator Preston said it should be ready by the spring of next year.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL

- 1) Lower Savannah COG -Meeting scheduled for 10/8/15@ 6:30 p.m. in Denmark at Voorhees College. Councilman Carter will email the Council a report regarding Promise Zone information. LSCOG Exec. Dir. will be introduced at the next Bamberg County Council meeting.
- 2) LSCOG (TAC) -The Denmark Project is still on schedule...hopefully will be completed by October or November 2015.
- 3) LSCOG Housing Consortium -Reception was held.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, council gave third reading to an ordinance identifying and designating certain roads in Bamberg County as county roads; accepting such roads into the Bamberg County Road System; and other matters related thereto.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, council gave second reading, in title only, to an ordinance amending the Bamberg County Code of Ordinances in certain limited regards and particulars pertaining to litter officers and code enforcement officers of the county and uniform ordinance summons; and other matters related thereto. Administrator Preston said this ordinance is needed so that the county's litter officers can write a summons for people who violate the litter ordinance. It also allows the county to send its litter officers to the police academy to receive their certification.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved the calendar of events as submitted.

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At this time, Chairman Guess called for public comments. Mr. James Hutto, Bamberg County resident and businessman, was concerned about a Bamberg County employee driving around his property without permission. He further stated that he had visible No Trespassing signs posted around the property. Mr. Hutto suggested that in the event someone needs to be on his property, he would appreciate if they would first check-in at the office. Mr. Dennis Powers was present and was excited to praise the council for what they do. He asked if they could just get an emergency room in the county.

Chairman Guess called for comments from the council and news media.

Haynes: Thanked Administrator Preston and everyone else for their hard work.

Kinard: Thanked the staff for doing a great job with the budget. Will be meeting with Broadband regarding paying for services that people do not receive. Informed Council of an FOIA request that he filed with SCDOT and the chairman of the Bamberg County Transportation Committee. Local meetings were not being attended and business could not be handled in a timely manner.

Carter: Thanked the employees and staff for their hard work.

Robinson: Thanked the employees and asked that the department heads attend the LSCOG meeting on Thursday, October 8, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

Guess: Thanked the finance department for the job they had done.

No comments were made from the media.

There being no further business for public discussion, on motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Kinard, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC