

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

- October 3, 2016

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., October 3, 2016, in the chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. **Present:** Chairman Rev. Isaiah Odom, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Joe Guess, Jr., Clint Carter and Councilman Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Dionne Gleaton, Jerry Halmon, Ruthie Brown, Mallory Biering, Alice Johnson, Detra Bruce, Robert Corlin, Bill Johnson, Norma Fisher, Andy Brack Dean Van Pelt, Jerry Bell, Darrell Booker, Emily Guess, Pedie Hiers, Brad Samuel and Chris Wilson.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Isaiah Odom at 6:30 p.m., in the Chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. Invocation was rendered by Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the minutes from the September 12, 2016 meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the agenda as submitted.

An update was given on the South Carolina Low Country Promise Zone by Coordinator Dean Van Pelt. He explained that Promise Zones are high-poverty communities where the federal government partners with local leaders to address priorities including increased economic opportunities and reduced crime rates. It was further stated that the Promise Zone is working with ConnectSC to implement a broadband plan across the county and expect to have a map of all the counties in the Promise Zone with the highest available download and upload speeds with both fixed and mobile Internet sources. This will serve as a baseline and develop more points of interest including schools, libraries and work places that will have slow or no Internet service at all. Councilman Kinard had a concern that service providers would not be able to adequately address needs specific to the rural area. Mr. Van Pelt responded that a map would be created to show what is currently available and then work with some of the service providers to see if there is an opportunity for them to address those shortcomings across the entire Promise Zone. It was explained that this is not a quick thing to get fixed and it is expensive to build towers and to increase service. The Promise Zone is also exploring a partnership with the Richland County Sheriff's Department Crime Lab, which would enable us to have crime scene evidence processed there on behalf of the law enforcement agencies within the Promise Zone. Mr. Andy Brack, president of the non-partisan Center for a Better South, pointed out that approximately \$14 million in grant

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funding has been awarded to organizations within the Promise Zone. Chairman Odom thanked the gentlemen for an explicit presentation.

Darrell Booker, senior project manager at SouthernCarolina Alliance, presented council with project updates. He reported on Project Forte, a wood-related company that is expected to create up to 130 jobs and make a \$31.5 million capital investment. It was further pointed out that Bamberg is one of the company's favorite sites that is also in contention with Hampton County. Due to the wood basket that Bamberg County has as compared to what Hampton County has, they rely more on the Bamberg County site for their first facility. SouthernCarolina Alliance is also in early discussion with an existing industry soon to expand its current site and creating the potential for 45 to 50 jobs.

Jerry Bell, Bamberg County Chamber of Commerce Director gave an update on previous happenings within the county. It was again announced and all were invited to attend Bamberg County Chamber banquet that will be taking place November 17, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in Olar at 714 Dana Avenue. Nominees for this year are: Glenda Barton, Sandra Zorn Humphries, Nancy R. Jones and Trent Kinard.

Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the county's income for August was \$1,232,539. Expenses came in at \$561,065, leaving a positive balance of \$671,473.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the county's general fund had generated \$916,335 in year-to-date revenue as of the end of August. Expenditures stood at \$1,250,928, reflecting a negative balance of \$334,593. Overall, all departments are operating within budget and within expected bounds.

In the absence of County Administrator Preston due to the death of his mother, Ms. Betty Preston, Finance Director Thomas reported that the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new courthouse annex is scheduled for Friday, November 18 at 3:30 p.m. Also, paving for the annex parking lot is to be completed by that time. Included during this time, Keep Bamberg County Beautiful Director Mallory Biering reported the county received a \$10,000 recycling grant from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control to install recycling bins and trash cans at county boat landings, along with a \$6,281 Keep America Beautiful grant for additional recycling bins. Also, KBCB received a \$20,000 KAB grant to develop an Educational Experience Park including a nature trail, community garden and fish pond. Persons using the park will also be able to learn about composting and recycling. KBCB Director Biering announced that the last countywide cleanup for the year will be at 8 a.m., Saturday, November 19.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL

- 1) SCA -Meeting was held in Barnwell, SC.
- 2) Lower Savannah COG -Councilman Carter reported that they were scheduled to have a meeting this month but he had not received a notice. Will find out the information and will have Clerk to Council Shepherd email the information to Council.

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- 3) LSCOG (TAC) (Kinard) -No report.
 - 4) LSCOG Housing Consortium -Meeting was held at the Aiken Electric Cooperative. The December meeting is scheduled to be held in Bamberg on Thursday, December 1 at 10:00 a.m.
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Councilman Carter voiced concern that the Bamberg County C-Fund Committee Chairman was not properly allocating the funds that are used to improve roads. He said it was his understanding that over \$200,000 is going to be spent somewhere else. Councilman Kinard stated that the chairman has allocated money to the state over and beyond the 20 percent that he is obligated to give the state and these disputes were done, as he understands, without the knowledge of the committee members. The procedure used for handling the funds designated for Bamberg County by C-Fund Committee Chairman Harold Johnson was called into question. After discussion of this matter, Council Chairman Odom said the council doesn't appoint the C-Fund Committee and they do not have authority over them and suggested that the matter be taken up with Bamberg County Legislative Delegation because they appoint and have the authority over that committee.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved, with the exception of Councilman Kinard abstaining, on second reading an ordinance restating and affirming the Bamberg county Fire Service Area, the Bamberg County Fire Service Coordinator, and the Bamberg County Fire Advisory Board; repealing and revoking all prior ordinances and resolutions inconsistent therewith' and other matters pertaining thereto.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the ratification of County Administrator Joey R. Preston's 2016-2017 contract with an amendment to add \$300 a month to his contract for health insurance. Stated by County Attorney Richard Ness, there is a stipulation that entitles the administrator to merit increases and/or cost of living increases equal in percentage to the amounts budgeted for all employees in the annual budget.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the calendar of events after adding the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Friday, November 18 at 3:30 p.m.

It was agreed to table the appointment of a representative from Bamberg County to serve on the Lower Savannah Council of Governments Board replacing Mr. Jasper Varn. Councilman Carter said that he should have a replacement by that time.

At this time, Chairman Odom called for public comments. No public comments were made.

The council thanked the employees for their hard work. Councilwoman Hammond asked the council to recognize for the month of October, Breast Cancer Awareness and Domestic Violence Awareness. Chairman Odom asked that we remember Administrator Preston in his time of bereavement in the loss of his mother.

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On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, council adjourned from the public segment of the meeting to enter in executive session to discuss a contractual matter regarding healthcare. The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC