

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 Bamberg Leader*, *The Times and Democrat*, Southern Carolina Regional Alliance, Bamberg County Library, Bamberg County Website and Bamberg County Courthouse Annex.

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In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., May 2, 2022 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside livestreaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Spencer Donaldson, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Clint Carter, Larry Haynes, Phil Myers, Jr. and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Chip Maier, Donald Kirby, Sh’Kur Francis, Garrett Dragano, Sue Clayton, Miriam Beard, William Molnar, John Fleming, Kenneth Bamberg and two additional visitors.

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Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Spencer Donaldson at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilman Larry Haynes.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the minutes from the April 4, 2022 regular meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the agenda was approved as submitted.

Executive Director Dr. William Molnar of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments, reported and gave an update on various programs provided to Bamberg County through LSCOG. The following items are being pursued: 1) A \$950,903 grant application has been submitted for a new well for the City of Denmark alongside the completion of a water expansion project that upgraded small waterlines; 2) The purchase of a pumper truck for the City of Denmark will be provided from a CDBG program that provided \$366,300; 3) Expecting increased funding from the new American Rescue Plan (hoping to be able to provide more affordable housing for citizens due to LSCOG administering funding for the Regional Housing Consortium); 4) LSCOG received funding of \$3.8 million to contest homelessness in the region; 5) Bamberg County Office on Aging delivered 51,401 home meals to 259 homebound seniors and 292 meals were served to 83 seniors at meal sites in the county; 6) There is a \$5,072,701 transportation project currently programmed for Bamberg County through the COG Guide Share program; 7) A mobile workforce vehicle is back operating for the service of the people; and 8) Dr. Molnar is working with Administrator Preston in proposing projects that will hopefully receive federal earmark money for completion of various projects. Dr. Molnar’s quarterly update was accepted as information.

### **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:**

#### **Southern Carolina Alliance - Monthly Report**

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance Project Manager Garrett Dragano, updated the council on 13 active projects and leads throughout the service area. Bamberg County is subject to receive approximately \$8000 per year from placement of two new companies within the multi-county industrial park in Barnwell. Councilwoman Hammond questioned the fact and stated that we want to see some activity in Bamberg County. The Council accepted this report as information.

#### **Bamberg County Treasurer - Monthly Report**

Due to illness, Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson was not present to give her report. This report will be provided at the next county council meeting.

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**Bamberg County Finance - Monthly Report**

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$6,648,789, at the end of March. Expenditures stood at \$5,854,763, for a positive general fund balance of \$794,026. This report was received as information.

**Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report**

Administrator Preston extended the coordinator of Keep Bamberg County Beautiful Sh’Kur Francis, the opportunity to report on the various activities referencing litter in the county. Coordinator Francis updated everyone on the Great American Cleanup held April 22-23. Appreciation was extended to all participants. Some of the churches picked up trash on Sunday after the cleanup was done on that Friday and Saturday. It was a great success. In excess of 2,000 pounds of litter were collected between the students and adults. The invitation was extended to council if they would inform him of any interested in serving on the KBCB, please let him know.

Administrator Preston reported that Sheriff Bamberg and his department will be moving in the new law enforcement center in September. The clerk of court, probate judge, public defender and solicitor are presently located in the modular unit located in the parking lot of the detention center. Everything came in under budget and things are working beautifully. Mr. Preston further stated that he appreciates the City of Bamberg working with the County by agreeing to let the county use the Civic Center for all family court activities, grand jury and general sessions. The Council was also updated regarding the old furniture is being moved out of the courthouse and being restored and will be returned when renovations are completed. Mr. Preston also reported that the deadline for organizations to turn in their applications for recreation funding from the County Recreation Committee will be extended an additional week. Applications are to be submitted to the county administrator’s office by 5 p.m., Monday, May 16. An application for \$350,000 S.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority grant has been submitted to pay for the upgrade of the old water tower that the county owns at the airport, along with an application for a \$12 million USDA grant for broadband expansion. Bamberg County is partnering with Orangeburg on this project and there is no match required for that grant. Administrator Preston thanked the Colston Branch Baptist Church, 1<sup>st</sup> Responders, citizens for working together while experiencing the aftermath of the tornado that devastated parts of Bamberg County. Mr. Preston distributed a copy of the budget calendar to the council for their convenience. The Council received Administrator Preston’s report as information.

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On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council agreed to enter in executive session to discuss an economic development/contractual matter.

After the executive session regarding an economic development/contractual matter, on motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council agreed to re-enter open session with no decision completed.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved second reading of a proposed ordinance to amend the existing Bamberg County Road Ordinance to accept Cardinal Road into the road maintenance system. This ordinance was sponsored by Chairman Donaldson.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved first reading of an ordinance to amend the agreement for development of a multi-county and industrial and business park to be located in Allendale County, Bamberg County and Barnwell County, South Carolina, providing for the development of a joint county industrial and business park so as to remove property in Allendale County from the joint county industrial park, and include property from Allendale County into a multi-county industrial and business park created by and between Allendale County, Bamberg County, Barnwell County and Hampton County, South Carolina, and other matters relating thereto. This ordinance authorizes the inclusion of West Frasier Timber Company, Ltd., a wood products company.

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On motion by Councilman Myers, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council gave and approved first reading of a proposed ordinance calling for a referendum to authorize the South Carolina Department of Revenue to issue temporary permits to allow for the possession, sale, and consumption of alcoholic liquors by the drink to bona fide nonprofit organizations and business establishments authorized to be licensed for consumption-on-premises sales and to allow for the sale of beer and wine at permitted off-premises locations without regard to the days of hours of sale, all in Bamberg County; and other matters related thereto.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved a resolution to recognize and honor Ronnie Hopkins, Ph.D., for his lasting academic success on his outstanding career in higher education for nearly three decades and to wish him lasting academic success on his inauguration as the 10<sup>th</sup> president of Voorhees College, and 1<sup>st</sup> president of now a University. A special presentation will take place at a later date.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Carter, council reappointed Councilman Larry Haynes to the Southern Carolina board of directors.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the calendar of events after adding a personnel committee meeting for May 10 at 5 p.m.

At this time, Chairman Donaldson called for public comments. Administrator Preston read an email received from county resident Miriam Beard stating it was illegal to restrict the public to making comments only on agenda items and also illegal to limit the means by which the public can make comments. Mr. Preston informed everyone that Ms. Beard had not been restricted from speaking. They as council members are only required to permit the public to speak when you have public hearings.

During comments from council, the following statements were pointed out: 1) thanks given to the staff for their hard work; 2) requested that all stay safe and continue wearing their masks; 3) wishing all mothers a "Happy Mother's Day"; and 4) thanks to all in attendance. Additional comments were made toward the public having the opportunity to speak at the council meetings. Dr. Goodman asked about the county being able to let the public possibly respond in written form by audio. Administrator Preston and Chairman Donaldson were asked to come up with a process through which the county's emergency ordinance would still survive, while also having individuals attend in-person and sign up to speak without compromising the health of others while exposing them to large crowds or the virus. Mr. Preston stated that the emergency ordinance passed by council allows for electronic meetings and you want to be able to do that. If you as council want to change the way you have citizens' comments, then the chairman can change it on the next agenda and you could have a sign-in sheet. It can happen if that's your preference. As of now, the public can submit their comments by email before a 12 noon deadline on the day of the meeting.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Comer, council voted to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd. Clerk to Council