

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL SPECIAL CALLED MEETING – May 16, 2022

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*, 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 6:30 p.m., May 16, 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., Larry Haynes and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Absent:** Councilman Phil Myers, Jr. and Councilman Clint Carter. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Gina Smith and Chip Maier.

Bamberg County Council Special Called meeting was called to order by Chairman Spencer Donaldson at 6:30 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 Dr. Goodman, the agenda was approved as submitted.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council agreed to give first reading, in title only, to an ordinance to adopt the operating and capital budgets of Bamberg County for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023, and to make appropriations for such Bamberg County Budgets for County ordinary purposes for which the county may levy a tax; to provide for the levy of taxes on all taxable personal and real estate properties in Bamberg County for such county ordinary purposes including sufficient tax to pay the principal and interest on outstanding indebtedness of Bamberg County maturing during said fiscal year; and to provide for other matters relating to Bamberg County and Bamberg County budgetary matters. Controller Gina Smith was in attendance to present information for the proposed Fiscal Year '22-'23 Budget for Bamberg County. Ms. Smith pointed out that the proposed budget did not yet include any fund totals, but a 3.5 mill property tax decrease is expected, along with 3% cost-of-living pay increase for employees. Several items are being proposed and included, but not limited to, new computers in the offices of the clerk of court, assessor, clerk to council and litter control and a \$5,000 increase in funding to all nine fire stations. A \$100,000 homeowner with two vehicles with an average value of \$15,000 could expect to see a \$20 decrease in their property tax bill, while a \$50,000 homeowner with two vehicles with the average value of \$15,000 could look to see a \$14 decrease. The 3.5 mills decrease is coming from debt service and it's coming from the refinancing of the installment purchase revenue bonds that we did last November and December. Controller Smith said the state has budgeted for Rural Infrastructure Fund money, and this current fiscal year, we received \$322,000. The budget includes a proposed Retention and Recognition Plan, which would bring employees to the midpoint of their pay grade scale after seven years of employment (this is in addition to the cost-of-living increase). The county is also proposing that a part-time dispatcher position be reclassified to full time and paid the amount of \$43,345. The county detention center will be updated with a new camera system and along with computer software would be needed if the county decides to implement a property tax installment payment plan. There is also a proposal to add Juneteenth as an official paid holiday. The day commemorates the end of slavery by marking the day enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, learned of their freedom. Some other items expected to be included in the budget: increasing funding for Denmark Technical College from \$34,085 in FY '22 to \$54,850 for FY '23 (money must be used on building improvements or capital projects). Also included in the budget is funding for 800 megahertz radios with this being done in two

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phases. These radios will improve our officer safety, consistent radio contact throughout the county, multicounty communication and direct communication with Medshore. After presenting and explaining items within the proposed FY '22-'23 budget for Bamberg County, Chairman Donaldson called for the vote from the present council members for first reading in title only. Council voting in favor of first reading of the budget were: Councilwoman Hammond, Councilman Haynes, Dr. Goodman, Councilman Comer and Council Chairman Donaldson. Council members not in attendance were: Councilman Myers and Councilman Carter.

Chairman Donaldson called for council comments. The council gave thanks to the employees for their hard work. Controller Smith was given special thanks for her diligent and extensive work in during this process. Second reading of the budget is scheduled for Monday, June 6, 2022.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Dr. Goodman, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, Clerk to Council