

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - September 12, 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 6:00 p.m., September 12, 2022 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. Present: Chairman Spencer Donaldson, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Clint Carter, and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. Absent: Councilmen Phil Myers and Larry Haynes. Others Present: Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Gina Smith, Alice Johnson, Chip Maier, Sue Clayton, Sh’Kur Francis, Donald Kirby, Dave Clayton, Miriam Beard, Cathy Scarborough, Dwayne Smiling, Candace Fralix and Kenneth Bamberg.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Spencer Donaldson at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, followed with the pledge of allegiance.

On motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the minutes from the August 8, 2022 regular meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

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

Chairman Donaldson recognized Mr. Dwayne Smiling, the Executive Director of the Becoming Beloved Community Initiative at Voorhees University and Ms. Cathy Scarborough, founding director of the university’s Rural Community Development Institute. Director Smiling updated that they previously purchased the old elementary school in Denmark and that is where that program will be housed. They are working with architects to develop a design for the building. The initiative has three components: A Women’s Empowerment Center Institute, a Social and Environmental Justice Institute and a Rural Community Development Institute. They are relentlessly trying to find funding for all of the institutes. Mr. Smiling stated that they want to continue to have a great rapport with Bamberg County Council and with the City of Denmark and an invitation was extended for all to visit the site and share their input. Ms. Scarborough said a community needs assessment is being deliberated to see what is actually needed and what matters are wants. A complex method is being pursued. They have received a \$25 million grant from the Department of Education for GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). The first summer program was introduced this year. This is a federal grant program that is focused on increasing the college and career readiness of low-income students in communities nationwide. The program is designed and the projection is to provide space for families and the community to come in after 5 on weekends to use the broadband services at the facility. It will take time, it is a process. Council thanked Mr. Smiling and Ms. Scarborough for their attendance and taking time to share this valuable information with the public.

Committee and Staff Reports:

Southern Carolina Alliance – Monthly Report

Due to illness, Mr. Brian Warner was not present.

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Bamberg County Treasurer – Monthly Report

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the July financial report noting that the county income stood at \$200,975.64, with expenses coming in at \$1,219,857.54, leaving a negative balance of \$1,018,881.90. When the positive bank balance at the end of July (\$154,673.62) was added, the county's regular account stood at t negative \$864,208.28. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Finance – Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$171,681, in year-to-date revenues at the end of July. Expenditures stood at \$719,524, leaving a negative balance of \$547,843. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Controller – Monthly Report

Controller Gina Smith said the county was working to get its books ready for the upcoming annual audit.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported that the Council retreat will be held Friday, October 7 at the county airport conference room beginning at 9 a.m. The Fire Service Banquet is scheduled for Friday, November 4 at Ghents Branch Baptist Church in Denmark at 6:30 p.m. Also, groundbreaking for the Denmark fire station will be Tuesday, October 11 (Holman's Bridge Road – Jamisonville Community) at 2 p.m. Administrator Preston continued with the update by stating that the C Fund Committee allocated the county some money for gravel and we have been able to gravel some small roads that were in need. The S.C. State 1890 Research & Extension Program is seeking farm assistants to work at its Research and Demonstration Farm at 1678 Alligator Road in Olar. Interested persons may apply at SC State University – 1890 Research and Extension Program. The Blue and White Ball honoring the late Willie Caldwell will be held at DTC on Saturday, September 17 at 7 p.m. Renovations are moving along at the old hospital – the Sheriff will probably be the first to move in followed by the Health Department. In the near future a tour will be scheduled at the Barrel Plant and everyone will be notified of the date and time. The Council accepted the Administrator's report as information.

The calendar of events was approved after adding several items that generated from Administrator Preston's monthly report. The calendar will be updated with the additional events.

During public comments, Bamberg County resident Miriam Beard requested a report on airport operations. Also, inquired why some of the ARPA funds be used to fund an animal control department. Ms. Beard followed up with another concern that none of the council attended an open forum of September 6, that was sponsored by The Concerned Citizens of Bamberg County. Councilman Carter responded that he didn't attend the forum because his daughter, a high school senior, had a volleyball match.

At this time, Chairman Donaldson called for comments from the council. All persons present were thanked for attending and invited to continue coming. Council thanked the staff for their hard work. A comment was made that there be more transparency in the future.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Carter, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC