

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - August 8, 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*, Southern Carolina 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., August 8, 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, Phil Myers and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. Absent: Larry Haynes. Others Present: Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Arron Ness, Gina Smith, Alice Johnson, Chip Maier, Dr. Willie L. Todd, Jr., James Bowden, Brenda Bowden, Dr. William Molnar, Sh'Kur Francis, Donald Kirby, Brian Warner, Kenneth Bamberg and two additional visitors.

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 Councilwoman Sharon Hammond.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the minutes from the July 11, 2022 regular meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

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

Chairman Donaldson called on Dr. Willie L. Todd, Jr., President and CEO at the Denmark Technical College, for a progress and status report of the college. President Todd offered a very notable and impressive update of positive development and outlook involving student education and the renovation of buildings at the college. Also, technological enhancements, high-level faculty recruitment, online programming are included in the ways the college is working to engage, educate and empower students for the future. President Todd went on to report that the college's unrestricted net cash position has improved since fiscal year 2019. The net position increased from a negative \$432,102 in FY 2019 to \$842,460 in FY 2021. The college's retention diligence and graduation rates have steadily increased. Enrollment last fall was 612 students and the goal for this year is 700. Last year they actually serviced almost 1,000 students because there were 612 students in the academic programs, and 279 students involved in the workforce programs. Alongside the college improving the education program and the renovation of buildings, a new entrance area off Highway 78 is included in the enhancement of the campus. Dr. Todd mentioned numerous upgrades and the implementation of various new educational programs and new sports programs for the students as well. A new health and science building is being planned to provide additional space for the nursing and certified nursing assistant programs. Another important point stressed was that the college has worked to support its students, including dual-enrolled students at Jefferson Davis Academy and Allendale-Fairfax, Bamberg-Ehrhardt, Blackville-Hilda and Denmark-Olar high schools. DTC provided 25 computers to each of those schools. Any student can use them, but they are to be used to support the students who are dual-enrolled at those schools. Computers were also provided to the Allendale Correctional Institution. Evening classes are offered and the possibility of offering weekend classes is being considered and the expansion of more online classes at DTC. Dr. Todd thanked the Council for their assistance and he is looking forward to the continued relationship. He further stated that he is looking toward a bright future for the college and his goal is to put the "Tech" back into Denmark Tech. At the conclusion of Dr. Todd's report to Council, he introduced Mr. James W. Bowden, Sr., the honoree for the evening. Dr. Todd said, "I'm thrilled that we chose to name the range after a trailblazer for equality in the power industry and a champion of Denmark

Technical College.” “Our ‘Putting the TECH Back in Denmark Tech’ campaign is proving that a technical education can lead to a lucrative and rewarding career and James Bowden is a shining example of that notion.” The County Council honored Mr. James W. Bowden, Sr., with a framed resolution recognizing and naming him as a Bamberg County Ambassador. Mr. Bowden graduated from Denmark Tech in 1972 in the electronic technology program and again in 1993 in industrial technology. He was the first African American vice-president at Duke Energy and was employed with them for 42 years and retired in 2010. In June 2022, Denmark Tech launched The James W. Bowen, Sr. Electrical Line-worker Range, that consist of several unpowered lines on standard 40-foot power poles for students to practice their line work. The range, which was sponsored by Santee Cooper, is already in use by the first group of line worker students. Dr. Goodman commented that Mr. Bowden has played an invaluable role as corporate leader and innovator and the Council couldn’t be more pleased to honor the transformative work he is doing. Chairman Donaldson applauded Mr. Bowden’s professional career and noted the significance of the program for the students and the community. Mr. Bowden thanked Council for the recognition and said of his being named an official ambassador of Bamberg County, it was a total surprise because his commitment was based only on the fact that the program will change the course of our students’ lives for generations. He further stated that this is a great community and he is proud to know that the electrical line worker program at Denmark Tech will enhance the quality of life for the people of Bamberg County. The Council continued to praise Mr. Bowden for his commitment and dedication.

### **Committee and Staff Reports:**

#### **Southern Carolina Alliance – Monthly Report**

Southern Carolina Alliance Project Manager Brian Warner updated the Council on present projects. He said that there has been additional meetings with an industrial project named Project Skyfall. There is another project by the name of Project Beam that could possibly generate 75 jobs and a \$20 million capital investment. Another prospect considering the CrossRhodes Spec Building is Project Echo with anticipation of providing 75 jobs. Project Manager Warner informed that the Rural Infrastructure Authority grant for sewer expansion located near Phoenix Specialty Manufacturing is approaching completion. Council thanked Mr. Warner for the update on the various projects.

#### **Bamberg County Treasurer – Monthly Report**

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the June financial report noting that the county income stood at \$1,022,658, with expenses coming in at \$867,984, leaving a positive balance of \$154,673. This report was received as information.

#### **Bamberg County Finance – Monthly Report**

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$9,222,515, in year-to-date revenues at the end of June. Expenditures stood at \$8,225,671, leaving a positive balance of \$1,072,637. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

#### **Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report**

Administrator Preston reported that the hospital restoration and courthouse renovation projects are continuing to move forward. The removal of the hazardous materials have started and the courthouse is now cleaned out. An update was given on Palmetto Rural Telephone Co-Op (PRTC) regarding broadband expansion service. Phase 1 service installations are underway. Splicing/testing work in Phase 2 is currently being completed, with service installations to take place between September 1 and April 1, 2023. Administrator Preston presented a millage report of increases from counties in South Carolina for 2022. Bamberg County was the only county in South Carolina that reduced millage of a 3.5% decrease. Bamberg County received \$2.7 million in ARPA funds, some of which the county has already used. Some was paid out for vaccinations for employees and some of it used in the budget. We have a healthy fund balance that we are pleased with. We’ve already gone through one examination review

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from the feds that said we were on target with how we're managing the ARPA funds. Thursday, August 18<sup>th</sup> there will be an Airport Board meeting at the Airport at 11 a.m. Also, an EMS Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 12 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The Council accepted the Administrator's report as information.

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On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved a resolution honoring the memory of the late Hallman E. Sease. Mr. Sease was a successful businessman, farmer, civic leader, coach and community role model. A framed resolution will be presented to the family in his honor.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved a resolution recognizing the success of the Bamberg Dixie Youth All-Star Team and appointed them as county ambassadors of Bamberg County. They will be recognized and presented a resolution in honor of this triumph.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, the calendar of events was approved after adding three additional events.

Administrator Preston addressed the agenda item regarding requested roadwork on Bristow Road in Denmark. This is a road that the county scrapes for Denmark. Denmark buried a waterline in the middle of the road and they didn't bury it deep enough. The waterlines are exposed and we will not do any work on that road until they bury it deeper. The city has begun working on properly burying the water line and other exposed waterlines.

A public comment was sent in by Bamberg resident Ken Ahlin and was read by Administrator Preston. The letter will be included along with these minutes.

At this time, Chairman Donaldson called for comments from the council. All persons present were thanked for attending and invited to continue coming. Brief statements were made referencing the SCAC Conference that was held in the Isle of Palms. A comment was made that there are more positive things going on than negative things in Bamberg County. Also, the schools and students were wished a safe and prosperous school year.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Comer, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC

**From:** ahlink@atlanticbb.net <ahlink@atlanticbb.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 8, 2022 8:40 AM  
**To:** info@bambergcounty.sc.gov  
**Subject:** \*EXTERNAL\*Public comments for Aug 8th county council meeting

I am writing to solicit an official answer from county council on the bait and switch that was used to violate the 2012 sales tax referendum.

This is a financial nightmare for the citizens and the city/county long term stability. In the 2012 referendum, The number one priority (verbatim from the referendum) was "**County- Courthouse renovation and expansion for judicial and administrative need - \$3,541,423**"

The verbiage for the conditions as set forth in the referendum read as follows " **the County Council reserves the right to make adjustments to the projects accordingly which do not add, delete, or change the priorities of the projects as originally submitted by the Capital Project Sales Tax Commission**".

The voters agreed to a courthouse renovation and expansion for judicial need. The key word here, when we voted, was **and!** Now that we gone further in debt to pay for this endeavor that we already voted on, this has become an untenable situation for the county and the tax payers.

Would please respond in an official capacity to reconcile the violation of Capital Project Sales Tax Commission?

Also, the need of the citizens to have to e-mail comments in advance is violation of our first amendment to the US Constitution and your own organizational procedures. This needs to change now!

And lastly, the Bamberg Facilities Corporation is funded by the taxes that are levied, therefore it is the citizens right to have the accounting of these accounts made available to the public.

These are all serious issues that need to be addressed and/or reconciled. As it is now, our representative form of government is not transparent at all and there is malfeasance based on the above.

Could you provide a written response to these issues, as I have not received any previous requests/e-mails sent. Litigation the last the county needs.

Sincerely,

Ken Ahlin

302 Berte Carter Dr

Bamberg, SC 29003