

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - December 7, 2020

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*, 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., December 2, 2020 in several locations within the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex and some participated by way of teleconference. The public joined the meeting by various means of technology. **Present:** Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, Reverend Isaiah Odom, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Larry Haynes, Joe Guess, Jr., and Clint Carter.

Others Present: Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Mary Tilton, Chip Maier, Dolton Williams, Ruthie Brown, Isanita Whitfield, Dionne Gleaton, Alex Belser, K. Byrne, Farrell Pulaski, Delethia Grant, Q. Grant, Apostle Isaiah Odom, Walt Inabinet, Latoya Frolov, Mario Connelly, Gloria Loles, Sarah G. Noel, Bill Molnar, Nancia Odom, Loretta Comer and one additional attendant.

Bamberg County Council Virtual meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sharon Hammond at 6:00 p.m., followed with a moment of silence in memory of those that loss the battle to COVID-19 and to the ones that are trying to recover and overcome the virus and that we pray for the President of the United States. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Joe Guess, Jr.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved the minutes from the November 2, 2020 meeting. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the agenda as submitted. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

Project Manager Dolton Williams of SouthernCarolina Alliance, reported that they have been working with Project Groot for about two weeks. They are planning to invest \$2.5 million and 55 new jobs. Details are limited as to what can be reported at this time. Project Peninsula is planning to invest \$3.7 million and the development of 52 jobs by the first quarter of 2021. Additional information will be known between January and February as to whether they will be locating in the county or not. According to the upgrade of the Denmark water system, there has been in excess of \$2 million in upgrades. The water has been consistently tested for the past 12 months. The testing proved to be safe to drink, bathe and to use for cooking. SCA helped the City of Denmark prepare RFP's to administer a hydraulic and financial study of the water system. At the end of Mr. Williams' report, he announced Letitia Dowling as being SCA's website for the county's "Be Bamberg" marketing campaign. This report was accepted as information.

Committee and Staff Reports;

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the October financial report noting that the county income stood at \$1,573,495, with expenses coming in at \$908,314, leaving a positive balance of \$665,180. However, when the county's negative bank balance of \$770,417 as of September, the regular account stood at a negative \$112,236. This report was received as information.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$1,957,163, in year-to-date revenues at the end of September. Expenditures stood at \$2,300,480, leaving a negative balance of \$343,317. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Controller Gina Smith reported that the county's regular had seen far worse numbers in the past. There was a negative account balance of \$478,369 in October 2018. That has been turned around and that the county's cash balance from October 2020 as compared to October 2019 displayed an increase of \$129,267. To date, the county had been reimbursed \$3,101.22 by the state for compliance expenditures regarding the coronavirus. A total of \$158,507.59 was spent and submitted for reimbursement from March through November 15. Also reported on the delinquent tax sale was held with 265 parcels being sold. Total collected from the tax sale was \$1,151,826. There were 70 bidders that participated at the sale. This report was accepted as information.

Administrator Preston reported that cases for COVID-19 are steadily rising. Currently, the county has a total of 765 positive cases and 38 related deaths to date. Mr. Preston went on to inform that he is pursuing additional funding toward the hospital renovation project. Ten general contractors have already been pre-qualified to complete the work to renovate the hospital into the new law enforcement and health and human services facility. Also, the county received a \$250,000 grant from DHEC for use toward the new Bamberg County Health Department office. Avenues will be sort in securing funding for the Department of Social Services. The new fire station at Rivers Bridge is on schedule to open in mid-January. The dedication of the new Veterans memorial was a success with approximately 300 in attendance. The National Guard informed us that we are being considered for some sort of recognition as a county for our support of our Guard and reservist. Administrator Preston will keep everyone mindful of that gesture. The c-fund committee meeting is scheduled for December 16 and will be supported by zoom. The link for the meeting will be provided to Council. Administrator congratulated the twenty-one County Employees for their years of service. They were as follows:

3 Years: Jordan O. Lyons, Mary K. Tilton, W. Farrell Pulaski, Donald C. Kirby, Brandi Napier, Susie S. Sunday, Shadaris R. Garrett and KeShell E. Deloach

5 Years: Jerry E. Johnson, Mason A. Mobley, Lewis F. Brown

10 Years: Sarah G. Noel, Kay Clary, Tracy Whitt and Ashley R. Woods

15 Years: Clinton Carter, Alice P. Johnson, Norris D. Williams and Tamara Williams

20 Years: Ben Hay

30 Years: Kenneth H. Russell

The Council accepted the Administrator's report as information.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved on first reading, Ordinance #6-20-12, to reduce the assessment ration applicable to general aviation aircraft subject to Bamberg County property tax to a 4% rate based on the fair market value of the aircraft; and other matters related thereto. Those voting in favor: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom - Dist. 5, Comer – Dist. 6, Dist. 5; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved on first reading, Ordinance #6-20-13, to authorize the leasing of certain Bamberg County Airport space and facilities, the granting of certain privileges to limited fixed-base operators; the sale of aviation fuel at bulk rates; and other matters related thereto. Those voting in favor: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom - Dist. 5, Comer – Dist. 6, Dist. 5; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved Resolution #A-20-15, to state the intent of Bamberg County Council to reduce the assessment ratio applicable to general aviation aircraft subject to Bamberg County property tax to a 4% rate based on the fair market value of the aircraft; and other matters related thereto. Those voting in favor: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom - Dist. 5, Comer – Dist. 6, Dist. 5; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

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On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved Resolution P-20-16, to amend the amended and restated master agreement for the establishment of the Quad-County Industrial Park I, Park II, and Park III dated as of May 6, 2013 entered by and among Allendale County, South Carolina, Bamberg County, South Carolina, Barnwell County, South Carolina, and Hampton County, South Carolina, providing for the development of certain Multi-County Industrial Parks, so as to include additional property geographically located in Hampton County, South Carolina, and anticipated to be owned and/or operated by Yield Scientific LLC, in that portion of the Parks delineated in the Park Agreement as Park III, geographically located in Hampton County, South Carolina, and other matters related thereto. Those voting in favor: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom - Dist. 5, Comer – Dist. 6, Dist. 5; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved Resolution O-20-17, renaming the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex Building to the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex, Isaiah Odom Building, in recognition of County Councilman Reverend Isaiah Odom – Council District #5, with 42 years of untiring service. While serving on council for 42 years, five of those years were as chairman. This year, Reverend Odom did not file for re-election. Reverend Odom is the longest-serving councilperson in the county's history and the Bamberg County Council is honoring him because they thought it was most appropriate to do so. Also, Reverend Odom is one of the state's longest serving council members. Reverend Odom is a lifelong Bamberg County resident, mentor, military veteran, author, businessman, and retired pastor, most recently having served at Second Baptist Church in Barnwell for 38 years. Reverend Odom thanked the Lord for allowing him to live long enough to see these things and vowed to continue to work as long as he is on this earth. Overwhelmed with gratitude and strong emotions, he graciously thanked his constituents for what they had done and thinking of him. Administrator Preston said Reverend Odom's book "Succeeding Against the Odds" would be donated to the library system so that everyone will know who he is. Chairwoman Hammond and the other council members told him that they would miss him and wished him well. Those voting in favor: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Comer – Dist. 6, Dist. 5; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the calendar of events was approved as submitted. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Those voting in favor: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom - Dist. 5, Comer – Dist. 6, Dist. 5; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no public comments were received at this time. Anyone with concerns had the opportunity to email to info@bambergcounty.sc.gov no later than Monday, December 7, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. No written comments were submitted for public comments during this appointed time.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from the council. The Council all resounded their sentiments by wishing Reverend Odom a healthy life and letting him know that it was a pleasure serving with him.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC