

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING - February 4, 2019

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*, 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.

Bamberg County Council met 6:30 p.m., February 4, 2019 in the chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. **Present:** Chairman Kerry Trent Kinard, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Isaiah Odom, Clint Carter, Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Joe Guess, Jr., and Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Jerry Halmon, Gina Smith, Alice Johnson, Christopher Hall, Darrell Brooker, Jeanette Blume, Sarah G. Noel, Mary Tilton, Booker Patrick, Jerry Bell, Deanna Berry, Detra' Bruce, Ruthie Brown, Gail Ellis, Anthony Harley, Bill Johnson, Betty Singleton, Kay Clary, Ray Jones, Don Kirby, Norris Williams, Pansy Clayton, Libby Smith, Donna Brown, Ken Ahlin, Clarence McMillan, Carrie McMillan, Timmy Taylor, Kimberly Compton, Angela Nobels, Robert Corlin, Brad Hudson, Buzzy Bunch, Bobbi Bunch, Lynn Wallace, Cam Kittrell, Dean Fralix, Heather Ulmer, Lorie Lott and approximately 125 additional persons.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Clint Carter at 6:30 p.m., in the Chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilwoman Sharon Hammond.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the minutes from the January 7, 2019 meeting with future corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved the agenda as submitted.

During public presentations, Chairman Trent Kinard presented a plaque to former chairman Clint Carter for serving as chairman from January 1, 2018 until December 31, 2018. Councilman Carter thanked Chairman Kinard and the members of council for the plaque they presented him.

Also, during presentations, Administrator Joey Preston and Bamberg County Human Resource Committee member Mary Tilton presented Clerk to Council Rose R. Shepherd with the County Employee of the Quarter Award. Ms. Shepherd has served 30 years as an employee for Bamberg County as Clerk to Council and Administrative Assistant to the County Administrator. The award is presented to an employee who exemplify Bamberg County's commitment to high standards of service and professionalism. Comments were made by Administrator Preston and Ms. Tilton. Several members of Council made positive statements to Ms. Shepherd regarding the award. Clerk to Council Shepherd thanked the Human Resources Committee along with Administrator Preston.

Dr. Christopher Hall, Interim President of Denmark Technical College, addressed the Council by asking them to think of reasons why Bamberg County should be home to a flight school as part of a state feasibility study to determine a location for the school. In order for the school to become a reality, changes would need to be made to the airport to bring it in compliance with FAA standards, as well as to make it to house the flight school. The school would be funded by the state and federal governments. Dr. Hall was thanked for being present to enlighten the council of the stated issues. Administrator Preston reminded everyone of the \$300,000 that are received for use at the airport. The funds must be spent within a 2 year period under the guidelines of the FAA.

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Over the years, Bamberg County lost \$900,000 because no one applied for the funds.

An update was given by Bamberg County Office on Aging Executive Director Kay Clary. Ms. Clary reported the agency receives funding for five different services. She said the goal is to keep seniors living in their homes for longer periods of time instead of going to a nursing home. The office has about 27 vehicles and makes about 400 trips daily. The program transports individuals to work, grocery shopping, health care appointments and deliver hot meals to those in need. Ms. Clary told the council that their support of the program is very much appreciated.

Keep Bamberg County Beautiful Director Mary Tilton presented an overview of the group's efforts in 2018. She said the group had approximately 156 volunteers putting in 312 hours for the year. Laboring efforts included boat landing cleanups, recycling efforts and Earth Day plantings.

SouthernCarolina Alliance Senior Project Manager Darrell Booker reported on the status of projects in Bamberg County. Chairman Kinard questioned him as to why the industries are going other places and not coming to Bamberg County, it's like we are on the back burner. It seems Beaufort County and Jasper County is getting an industry once a week and Colleton is getting one daily. Chairman Kinard said if Jasper County would be willing to work with Beaufort County to possibly receive 5 percent or 10 percent of the revenue from industries they locate in those counties. Mr. Booker reminded council that it is their job to facilitate that revenue sharing agreement. After various comments, Mr. Booker offered that he along with President and CEO Danny Black meet with the council to discuss economic development for Bamberg County. Councilwoman Hammond said she and Chairman Kinard are scheduled to meet with Mr. Booker every second Tuesday and other council members are welcome to attend. Currently there are nine projects looking at Bamberg County, including two industries looking at Denmark that could bring a large number of job. They are not only looking at Bamberg County but other areas of the state as well as Georgia.

Bamberg County Chamber President Jerry Bell gave an update on upcoming events within the county. Flyers listing additional events in the community were distributed to the citizens present.

Treasurer Alice Johnson reported for the month of December the county had income of \$893,463 and expenses of \$751,801 for a difference of a positive \$141,661, but due to a shortfall in November there is a difference overall of negative \$746,280.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had \$3,482,958 in year-to-date revenue as of the end of December. Expenditures stood at \$50,389 leaving a balance of \$3,432,570. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets.

Attorney Ray Jones of Parker Poe Law Firm in Columbia, informed those present that by refinancing the bonds, the county was able to cut the interest rate from 8 percent to about 4 percent. The county was able to save \$1.2 million on interest. This was generated from an \$8.4 million loan through the Bamberg County Facilities Corporation, a nonprofit entity charged with managing the county's revenue bonds. Mr. Jones said the current payments, about \$4 million to \$5 million of the \$10 million loan will be paid off over the next seven years. Councilman Guess said the reason we took this loan is that we could have the money up front rather than wait for the sales tax money to trickle in. Chairman Kinard said, the other reason is we would be \$2 million in the hole. The next step to bankruptcy. Chairman Kinard asked Mr. Jones if guidance is provided by his law firm as the county goes through approving a loan. Mr. Jones said they will make sure you have margins.

Administrator Preston informed council of the closure of a portion of Highway 70 between Denmark and Hilda (over the Little Salkehatchie River), for bridge improvement project. Projected date to reopen is August 31, 2019. A C-Fund meeting will be scheduled about the second week of March. Administrator Preston requested council to appoint the Bamberg County Council Administrative/Finance Committee to work with Controller Smith and himself to pursue health insurance issues for the employees. We are also looking at offering a Bamberg County Academy for the citizens that will assist in educating them with county government skills. Administrator Preston's report was received as information.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL

- 1) SCA (Haynes, Comer & Odom) -A board meeting was held. Darrell Booker gave a confidential report concerning Bamberg County.
 - 2) LSCOG -No additional information.
 - 3) Lower Savannah COG (TAC) -The larger counties are receiving the money and we should be treated fairer. Will to follow up for additional funds.
 - 4) LSCOG Housing Consortium -Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday in Aiken.
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On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Reverend Odom, council gave first reading to approve an amendment to an ordinance to amended and restated master agreement for the establishment of the Quad-County Industrial Park I, Park II, and Park III (Project Can Can).

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council agreed to table an ordinance that would allow county taxpayers to pay their taxes on an installment plan. Treasurer Alice Johnson had questions about the proposal. Additional research will be pursued before presenting this ordinance for reconsideration. Councilman Comer opposed this ordinance.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a resolution 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 by and among Allendale County, South Carolina, Bamberg County, South Carolina, Barnwell County, South Carolina and Hampton County South Carolina.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a proposed resolution to improve transparency and bring clarity to the distribution of dollars received from taxes by County, City, and School Districts on Bamberg County tax notices. Opposed the resolution: Councilmen Guess and Odom.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Carter, the calendar of events was approved.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Carter, council reappointed Councilman Larry Haynes to the Southern Carolina Alliance Board of Directors beginning April 2019.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Guess, council appointed Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., to a vacant seat on the OCAB Community Action Agency, Inc., Tripartite Board of Directors.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the appointment of Ms. Susan Gail Ellis to the Bamberg County Property Maintenance Code Appeals Board.

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On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved the appointment of the Bamberg County Council 2019 Standing Committees.

Administrative/Finance:

Chairman – Trent Kinard
Sharon Hammond
Evert Comer, Jr

Personnel/Education, Recreation, Health & Welfare/Intergovernmental Relations:

Chairman – Joe Guess, Jr.
Trent Kinard
Sharon Hammond

Public Service/County Planning:

Chairman – Larry Haynes
Joe Guess, Jr.
Isaiah Odom

Justice and Public Safety:

Chairman – Sharon Hammond
Evert Comer, Jr.
Trent Kinard

Solid Waste/Recycling:

Chairman – Trent Kinard
Larry Haynes
Isaiah Odom

At this time, Chairman Carter called for public comments. Those speaking: Kim Compton (Concerned Citizens), Heather Ulmer, Gail Ellis, Ken Ahlin, Betty Singleton, Brad Hudson, Jeanette Driggers, Deanna Berry, Bobbi Bunch, Buzzy Bunch, Dean Fralix, Lynn Wallace and Lauri Lott. These citizen had various concerns about issues within Bamberg County. Each citizen had three minutes to present their concern. The citizens were invited to submit their concerns in writing to the Chairman or County Administrator to be addressed.

The members of Council commented to the public, thanked them for their attendance and assured them that their concerns were heard.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the meeting was adjourned at 10:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rose R. Shepherd, Clerk to Council