

**MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - January 11, 2021**

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., January 11, 2021 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, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Larry Haynes, Spencer Donaldson, Jonathan Goodman, Phil Myers, Jr., and Clint Carter. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Mary Tilton, Chip Maier, Dolton Williams, Dionne Gleaton, Paul Eubanks, Melinda Johnson, Kay Maxwell, Walt Inabinet, Bill Johnson, Bill Molnar, Jaela Tyler, Michaels1, Ruthie Brown, Adrienne Blume, Isaiah Odom, Sue Weiler Greenberg, Nina Haynes, Karen O'Byrne, Harold Shepherd, Farrell Pulaski, Sarah G. Noel and two additional attendants.

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 Larry Haynes.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the minutes from the December 7, 2020 meeting. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Myers – Dist. 1; Haynes – Dist. 3; Donaldson – Dist. 4; Goodman – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent during the vote.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the agenda as submitted. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Myers – Dist. 1; Haynes – Dist. 3; Donaldson – Dist. 4; Goodman – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 was absent during the vote.

Chairwoman Hammond welcomed the newly elected councilmen as members of the council. The new members are as follows: Councilman Phil Myers, Jr. – Council District 1; Councilman Spencer Donaldson – Council District 4 and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II – Council District 5. Councilman Clint Carter was re-elected to his seat (Council District 7). The Councilmen responded that it is an honor to serve.

At this time, outgoing Chairwoman Hammond passed the gavel to incoming Chairman Larry Haynes and made comments from her tenure. Chairman Haynes thanked Councilwoman Hammond for the good job she had done during the course of 2020.

According to the rules and procedures of Bamberg County Council Policy, Councilman Donaldson will serve as vice chairman until December 31, 2021.

Project Manager Dolton Williams of SouthernCarolina Alliance, reported that they have been working with Project Atlantic and they expect to create 40 jobs and a \$40 million capital investment. Project Atlantic Is looking at CrossRhodes Industrial Park as a possible location. Project Groot expects to provide 115 jobs with an investment capital of \$10 million. Project Barn Door was another industry that visited the Freudenberg facility recently. To date, they have not committed to the facility, but the project could bring 20 to 30 jobs to Bamberg County. This report was accepted as information.

**Committee and Staff Reports;**

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the November financial report noting that the county income stood at \$164,665, with expenses coming in at \$743,181, leaving a negative balance of \$578,516. However, when the county's negative bank balance as of November, the total deficit stood at a negative \$690,752. This report was received as information.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$2,528,015, in year-to-date revenues at the end of November. Expenditures stood at \$3,027,607, leaving a negative balance of \$499,589. Pointing out that the property tax collections normally increase in December and January, revenue should increase in next month's report. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Controller Gina Smith reported that from March 1 to June 30, 2020 payment that the county had applied for from the state for expenditures made in addressing the coronavirus, the county was approved for and have received \$84,717.56. The county has also been approved to receive \$70,626.45 in reimbursement money for the period from July 1 to November 15 (Phase 2). Councilwoman Hammond requested that during the meeting, the council need to be privy to Controller Smith's reports that are being presented to them. It was agreed that it would be done. This report was accepted as information.

Administrator Preston reported on the COVID-19 death total in Bamberg County as being 41 as of January 10. Bamberg County is the 10<sup>th</sup> highest in the state. Phase 1A of the vaccine for COVID-19 will be available on January 15. There is not a location as of yet that you can go for the vaccine in the county yet. Walgreens in Orangeburg will be administering the vaccine. The vaccine will probably be available by the end of January or mid-February. Administrator Preston advised everyone to continue wearing the masks and to continue safe distancing. The building permit revenue has increased. There were 377 permits issued and \$78,923 collected in 2020. It was further reported that the hospital renovation project is moving along. Three bids were received on the renovation project. Those bidding: Brantley Construction Company - \$3.2 million; M.B. Kahn at \$3.4 million and Solid Structures at \$3 million. It is expected to award the bids within the next two to three weeks. Administrator Preston welcomed the new council members and offered to provide a tour of the facility at their pleasure. The Council received this report as information.

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On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved on second 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. Councilman Carter stated that he would not vote on the ordinances because he did not receive his agenda packet; therefore, he had no information. Councilman Carter was informed that agenda packets were delivered to all members of council as customary.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved on second 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.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved Resolution #C-21-1 establishing written public notice of Bamberg County Council meeting schedule for calendar year 2021. Meeting dates are as follows: January 11, February 1, March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7, July 12, August 9, September 13, October 4, November 1 and December 6, 2021.

The calendar of events was reviewed and approved as submitted.

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, two written no public comments were received at this time. Administrator Preston read the comments from Bamberg County residents Sue Clayton and Ken Ahlin. Both were concerned with not being able to meet in person with council and transparency. Anyone with concerns had the opportunity to email to [info@bambergcounty.sc.gov](mailto:info@bambergcounty.sc.gov) no later than Monday, January 11, 2021 at 12:00 noon.

At this time, Chairman Haynes asked for comments from the council. Councilman Myers was concerned about residents requesting to speak at the meetings and he also suggested that a Zoom link be provided for the citizens. Dr. Goodman said that we need to do a better job of letting the county know what is going on and giving the citizens the opportunity to join in on Zoom. Councilman Carter stated that he was in agreeance with Councilman Myers' comments. Councilman Comer welcomed the newly elected councilmen and agreed with the Zoom presentation as long as we get some rules in line. Councilwoman Hammond wished all a happy New Year and pray we come together in sorting out our projects. Councilman Donaldson wished everyone a prosperous and safe year.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Comer, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC