

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL EMERGENCY MEETING - January 22, 2024

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, agendas for the following meeting were delivered 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 and Bamberg County Courthouse Annex.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., January 22, 2024 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II, Councilmen Phil Myers, Jr., Clint Carter, Larry Haynes and Spencer Donaldson. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, Aaron Ness, T.M. Thomas, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Tiffany Kemmerlin, Corey Ramsey, Moses Cheatham, Mayor Nancy Foster and one additional visitor.

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

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilmen Haynes and Donaldson, council unanimously approved an Emergency Declaration, declaring that an emergency exists within Bamberg County with respect to damage caused by a storm on January 9, 2024 and authorizing appropriate action to be taken in connection with said emergency. With all seven (7) members of council being present and voting in favor of the action, the declaration became effective immediately following the vote of council. The devastating tornado was rated as a Category E-F 2.

During the meeting, Administrator Joey Preston thanked Bamberg Fire department, police department, sheriff's department, EMS, Emergency Services and surrounding counties for their immediate assistance on the ground. Bamberg County residents and business owners were reminded to report any damage created by the storm to the Bamberg Emergency Management Division. Prompt action is required so Bamberg County may meet the February 8 deadline to enable us to request for a declaration to obtain individual assistance. Also, all appropriate insurance claims must be filed before any assistance can be approved. So far, we have accounted for between 20-30 Bamberg businesses damaged by the storm with 10 being completely destroyed, including South Carolina Oak to Barrel, the Old City Hall, area restaurants and several store fronts. Bamberg County and City buildings were damaged, including the Courthouse roof and the Hooten-Black House. FEMA is scheduled to be here in Bamberg on Wednesday, January 24.

Chairman Comer asked for comments from Bamberg Mayor Nancy Foster and Bamberg City Councilman Corey Ramsey. County officials are working along with South Carolina Emergency Management Division to determine if citizens with property damage caused by the storm will qualify for individual FEMA or SBA assistance. Chairman Comer said it's time for all hands on deck and we are grateful to the surrounding counties for sharing their resources with us during this challenging situation.

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Comments were received from Public Information Officer Alisha Moore inviting the community to a “Keep Bamberg County Beautiful” clean-up activity scheduled for Friday, January 26 at 10 a.m. on Calhoun Street in Bamberg.

During comments from Council, all were grateful that we had no fatalities, neither were there any injuries reported. Also, all were very appreciative of all the help received from the employees, staff and volunteers.

There being no additional business to be discussed at this time, on motion by Councilman Myers, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, the meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC