

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., March 13, 2023 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Phil Myers, Jr., Evert Comer, Jr., Spencer Donaldson, Larry Haynes, and Clint Carter. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Gina Smith, Alice Johnson, Chip Maier, Donald Kirby, Kenneth Bamberg, Tiffany Leaf, Joshua Urwick, Miriam Beard, Ruth McMillon, William McMillon, and three additional visitors.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilman Spencer Donaldson.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the minutes from the February 6, 2023 meeting with necessary corrections should there be any and on motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved the minutes from March 6, 2023 meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the agenda was approved as submitted.

Bamberg County Coroner Wallace Hicks, Jr., reported that there were 17 deaths and 21 autopsies completed in 2021 and 171 deaths and 24 autopsies completed in 2022 with 2 being fatalities. So far this year, his department has transported seven bodies for autopsies and they have had 36 deaths. When asked the cost of an autopsy, the answer was \$1,300 per autopsy. Coroner Hicks said he was concerned about the number of suspicious deaths in the County and he offered the suggestion that there is a need in the County for a crime scene investigator. At this time, Sheriff Kenneth Bamberg said that we have law enforcement and what they can't investigate themselves, SLED is contacted to intervene. All were left knowing that when there is a suspicious death or homicide, it is always thoroughly investigated. Coroner Hicks was thanked for sharing information from his department.

Council listened to a presentation from Tiffany Leaf, project director of the GEAR UP program (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), at Voorhees University. GEAR UP is a federally funded, unrestricted grant program, intended to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and achieve in postsecondary education. Ms. Leaf continued by saying they presently serve 92 students at Denmark-Olar Middle School and 127 at Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School. GEAR UP offers six or seven year grants to states and partnerships to deliver services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve a total unit of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the group through high school. Also, the GEAR UP funds are used to provide college scholarships to low-income students. Everything they do for the students is free, there is no cost to the students or the parents. Ms. Leaf informed that they have a graduation coach that does two days at Bamberg, two days at Denmark and she alternates her Fridays. Ms. Leaf was asked if they have reached out to the other high school in Bamberg County, she wasn't aware of any others, but they would be willing

March 13, 2023....continue

to do so. Councilwoman Hammond offered to provide Ms. Leaf with a contact list of the local churches from which she can work. Council expressed gratitude to Ms. Leaf for her presentation.

A public hearing was given to a proposed ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of an infrastructure credit agreement to provide for infrastructure credits to Project Homegrown; and other related matters. No public comments were made.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Alliance – Monthly Report

Southern Carolina Alliance Project Manager Josh Urwick stated that since the last council meeting, SCA has had four site visits. There has been interest expressed in the spec building and more will be reported on that at a later date. SCA has another project that is in discussion about another expansion in Bamberg. Project Homegrown will maintain its current payroll and create 30 new jobs over the next five years as stated by Administrator Preston. The Council thanked Mr. Urwick for the report.

Bamberg County Treasurer – Monthly Report

County Treasurer Alice Johnson gave the January financial report, stating they had \$2,814,950.30 in income and expenditures of \$1,127,558.86, leaving a positive balance of \$1,783,077.36 at the end of January. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Finance – Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$6,622,268 as of the end of January. Expenditures stood at \$5,059,443, for a positive general fund balance of \$1,562,825. Overall, January was a good month as it relates to collections. The county departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Controller – Monthly Report

Controller Gina Smith reported on the January cash report that included the cash balances of all the county's operating accounts. The total of all the accounts in January had increased by \$174,145 above the same time last year. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported that the asbestos-abatement work has been completed, to include the removal of the carpet, ceiling tiles and shelving. At the old hospital project, furniture is scheduled to be installed on March 24th for the new health department. According to the punch list, there is about 10% left before completion of the Sheriff Department. There will be use of code blue for anyone needing to have use of it if staff is not available on site. Dedication of the Veterans Park is scheduled to take place on Memorial Day, more information will be given on this matter. Also a report was given on the improvement of roads inside Denmark Technical College - this improvement is one of the C Fund Committee projects and will be starting within the next two weeks. This report was received as information.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved third reading of a proposed ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of an infrastructure credit agreement to provide for infrastructure credits to Project Homegrown; and other related matters.

March 13, 2023....continue

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a resolution authorizing an amendment to the amended and restated master agreement for the establishment of the quad-county industrial Park I, Park II, and Park III to include additional property in the park.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the calendar of events was approved as submitted.

Chairman Goodman called for public comments during this section of the meeting. Public comments were made by county resident Ruth McMillon. Ms. McMillon spoke about the condition of her road – Oak Grove Road, as being extremely muddy and boggy. The home is actually located on Able Road, but Oak Grove is a route she takes to access her home to save time and gas. Chairman Goodman said her request would be taken into consideration and the council will get back to her with a written response.

During comments from council, they thanked the public for attending, thanked the employees for their diligence and hard work, Councilman Carter thanked Administrator for his hard work and that he is not appreciated enough. Councilwoman Hammond wished everyone a Happy Easter, Councilman Myers and Councilman Donaldson wished all a good St. Patrick's Day and Councilman Comer extended gratitude to those responsible for the audit for the County and all were told to stay safe.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC