

## MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

- March 4, 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.

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In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., March 4, 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., Councilmen Phil Myers, Jr., Clint Carter, Larry Haynes, Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II, and Spencer Donaldson. **Absent:** Councilwoman Sharon Hammond. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, Richard Ness, T.M. Thomas, Gina Smith, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Kenneth Bamberg, Joshua Urwick, Moses Cheatham and Donald Kirby.

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Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Haynes, followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilman Clint Carter.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Dr. Goodman, II, council approved the minutes from the February 5, 2024 regular meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

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

### **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:**

#### **Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance - Monthly Report**

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance Project Director Joshua Urwick reported that they are working with SC Oak Barrel, LLC to help rebuild after the horrific tornado. Progress has been made at the state level and they are looking at some options that can possibly assist with the financial burden with tearing down and rebuilding. Hopefully the old building will be torn down and the new building will be rebuilt here in Bamberg and additional jobs added as well. They had a total of 30 jobs, but some of them had been laid off prior the tornado and at the time the tornado interrupted production, there were 13 persons employed at the plant. Project Director Urwick said he has been setting up meetings with SC Oak to Barrel chief finance officer and some others, to include the SCDOC, hopefully to try and get solutions as where to go from here. Dr. Goodman, II asked that Mr. Urwick arrange any meetings that county officials may need to have with SC Oak to Barrel or any potential company that comes to town to assure the company of the county's support. Mr. Urwick agreed and Council thanked him for his report.

#### **Bamberg County Treasurer - Monthly Report** -

Due to illness of County Treasurer Alice Johnson, her report was given by Controller Gina Smith. It was reported that the county's regular account stood at a positive \$385,618 at the end of December. She also stated that the county's regular account stood at a positive \$2,067,951 at the end of January. Council accepted this report as information.

#### **Bamberg County Budget - Monthly Report**

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$6,422,737, as of the end of January. Expenditures stood at \$5,661,652, for a positive general

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fund balance of \$761,085. The county departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

**Bamberg County Administrator - Monthly Report**

Administrator Preston reported to council on: **1)** The status of downtown 301 will not be able to be reopened until it's made safe for travel and the damaged buildings are removed. It has been difficult working with some of the private property owners trying to get their damaged buildings removed; **2)** Holman's Bridge Fire Station building will be delivered on March 20, 2024; **3)** Groundbreaking is scheduled for May between Denmark and Bamberg for a broadband system that will make high-speed internet that will be affordable for underserved communities. Environmental issues are still being worked on (*City of Denmark, City of Bamberg and Bamberg County*); **4)** Barnwell County no longer has Thorn Ambulance on contract, but they still serve Bamberg County; **5)** The graveling projects of Salty Road and Lazy Lane had major drainage issues, are now set to be let to bid the first portion of May, along with the McGee Street sidewalk project; **6)** Discussion arose regarding the coroner's salary, it was incorrectly posted on the SC State Election Commission website. The coroner has a salary of \$35,000 and the state supplements \$15,000 for the coroner. It was reported that the coroner's salary was in excess of \$50,000. Controller Gina Smith said the county reported the salary wrong to the Election Commission (reported \$15,000 supplement plus the \$36,050 that which included a 3% cost of living); **7)** The stabilization of the courthouse foundation is finished; **8)** The inside of the morgue located at the law enforcement complex is now complete; and **9)** Citizens will have the opportunity to apply for SBA loans of \$40,000 for home repair and an additional \$42,000 can be applied for childcare assistance. Council accepted this report as information.

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On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a proposed resolution supporting installation of flashing speed limit sign assemblies near Andrew Jackson Academy.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a proposed resolution supporting installation of flashing warning beacon at Clearpond Fire Station.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Dr. Goodman, II, council approved the calendar of events after adding the EMS Committee meeting for March 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.

Chairman Comer, Jr., called for comments from council. All present were thanked for their attendance, employees were thanked for their hard work and appreciation was given to Administrator Preston and staff. The Denmark-Olar Girls Basketball Team were acknowledged for making it to the finals for three years consecutively and Andrew Jefferson Academy Boys Team were acknowledged for making it to the finals as well.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Dr. Goodman, II, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, Clerk to Council