

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., May 12, 2025 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilwoman Michelle Martin, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Spencer Donaldson, Kenneth Ahlin, Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II and Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Gina Smith, Shawn Hanks, Kenneth Bamberg, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Holly Hayes, Karen Williams, Norris Williams, Imani Williams, Donald Kirby, Joshua Urwick, Shauntina Benson, Clarence Blocker and two additional visitors.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Kenneth Ahlin, followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilwoman Michelle Martin.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the minutes from the April 7, 2025 meeting were approved with necessary corrections.

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

Council received a presentation on the county's development of a communicating dashboard by Ms. Holly Hayes, president of ISI Consulting of Chapin, S.C. The objective is to be live and operating by June 1, if all the other updated information is available the dashboard would be linked to the county's existing website. The purpose of the dashboard is to give progress on big projects and the goals of the council members. It is also, used for the promotion of transparency and to inform residents of progress being made in the county. Administrator Preston stated that an opening launch is not the final product, we will keep working on it.

Sheriff Kenneth Bamberg gave an update from the Bamberg County Sheriff's Office, as well as made a presentation to one of the retiring deputies. He started by informing that he is operating the department with 13 people and that is including him in that number. They are a few short, but they will be looking at increasing those persons down the road. Sheriff Bamberg thanked his officers by letting them know that it is appreciated that they put service above self. He continued by praising his entire staff along with the deputies. Lt. Norris Williams retired from the Bamberg County Sheriff's Department on April 30. Sheriff Bamberg presented him with a retirement award and told him that he will be missed and it has been appreciated that he stepped in to help him develop to become a better leader. Also, Sheriff Bamberg presented Lt. Williams' wife (Karen) with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Sheriff Bamberg continued by presenting Sgt. Shauntina Benson with a bouquet of flowers for her work at the office and her graduation from college. Sgt. Benson is in charge of the community engagement program and is the handler for the "R-U-OK" program. To-date, there are about 61 participates.

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Additional comments were made regarding the additional staff that has been hired and is now in training and another certified officer will be joining the department later this month. He thanked county council and others for their support of the sheriff's office.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance - Monthly Report

Project Director Joshua Urwick of Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance reported that Black Horse Steel Works was continuing to hire full-time staff. A tour to visit Black Horse will be arranged in the very near future. Council requested for more convenience for them to be able to participate, that the tour be arranged for a late afternoon. SCA had 30 spot visits and new projects are being worked on. Innovative Poultry Products in Olar now has 20 employees. A café is located on site and it is an added convenience for the employees as well. They are making 90 percent of their own components for all of their parts in-house. Also, they are making the big Poultry Hawk machines and they're making the screws that go in them. Oak to Barrel is still working on a possible ribbon cutting in June. The Council received this report as information.

Bamberg County Treasurer – Monthly Report

Report unavailable.

Bamberg County Finance - Monthly Report

Report unavailable.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported: 1) A need to schedule an EMS Committee meeting; 2) Water project for Family Circle – the Family Circle water line extension project is anticipated to be complete in five and a half months. The 90 residents that live along those lines will be able to have access to water, it's going to open up other areas of the county as well; 3) The county received notification that \$12 million federal grant funding the county received from the USDA to develop its broadband system to help make high-speed internet affordable for underserved communities had been released; 4) S.C. Lieutenant Governor's Office responded to the county's request for them to help in sustaining funding for Bamberg County's Meals on Wheels program. Now, we have got to wait for authorization. Don't think it will be authorized by July 1, which mean we may have to wait until the summer or fall; 5) New Mayor in Denmark, Harold Johnson, and Bamberg's Mayor Corey Ramsey were recognized at the May LSCOG meeting; 6) There is an engineer working with Denmark to get the water project flowing – there are a lot of issues we've got to rectify and work through; 7) Well over 100 people showed up for the micro-chip animal clinic at the Animal Shelter; 8) Dr. Willie Todd, Denmark Technical College's President will be leaving and moving on to Alabama beginning July 1; 9) Progress is being made on the Junkyard Project on Hwy. 601; 10) Membership sign-up for the MUSC Gym - located next to Walgreens on Main Highway are now being accepted and it's open 24/7; and 11) Dr. Molnar from LSCOG and Bamberg County Coroner Hanks will be present to give reports at the June meeting. Council accepted this report as information.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilwoman Martin, council passed a resolution to approve the mission, goals and objectives as set forth by Bamberg County Council.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Dr. Goodman, council approved a resolution honoring the life and legacy of Miss Lucia M. Odom.

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On motion Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council gave first reading approval to a special source revenue credit agreement between the county and Project Knox.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council gave first reading approval, in title only, to adopt the operating and capital budgets of Bamberg County for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026, and to make appropriations for such Bamberg County budgets for county ordinary purposes and for other county purposes for which the county may levy a tax; to provide for the levy of taxes on all taxable personal and real estate properties in Bamberg County for such county ordinary purposes, including sufficient tax to pay the principal and interest on outstanding indebtedness of Bamberg County maturing during said fiscal year; and to provide for other matters relating to Bamberg County and Bamberg County budgetary matters, including, without limitation, certain capital expenditures and related lease-purchase financings and general obligation bonds of the county. Bamberg County Controller Gina Smith addressed council by saying we are still in the process of finalizing revenues and expenditures. Additional information will be provided at the second budget reading.

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

Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from council. Councilman Ahlin asked that Ordinance #1-13-8 be amended and placed on the agenda for June 2. Councilman Comer stated that his wife (Ruth), lost her brother. Councilman Donaldson extended condolences to the Capers and Davis families. Congratulations were given to Administrator Preston (for his son's graduation), to Councilman Ahlin for his daughter's graduation and Sgt. Shauntina Benson from the Sheriff's Department. All were thanked for being in attendance.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Dr. Goodman, council voted to adjourn at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC