

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

November 6, 2023

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., November 6, 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 Evert Comer, Jr., Phil Myers, Jr., Clint Carter, and Spencer Donaldson. **Absent:** Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, Richard Ness, T.M. Thomas, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Kenneth Bamberg, Dr. Willie L. Todd, Jr., Clifton Myles, Bartel Boone, Joshua Urwick, Donald Kirby, Dr. Ashley Barnes, Donna Brown and Wallace Hicks, Jr.

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

On motion by Councilman Myers, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the minutes from the October 2, 2023 meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

Dr. Ashley L. Barnes, CEO of Low Country Health Care Systems presented information and services offered to the medically underserved individuals in Bamberg County and other neighboring counties. It was stated that they are a federally funded, nonprofit health center. They have offices located in Bamberg, Allendale, Barnwell and Aiken counties. Dr. Barnes mention Padgett Family Practice and Bamberg Specialty Services as the Bamberg County providers. Approximately \$41.5 million in income is brought to the communities that are served by LCHCS. Currently, LCHCS has more than 45 providers and over 19,000 patients. Dr. Barnes extended an invitation to contact her if there is anything that Bamberg County particularly needs. The LCHCS can be reached by phone at (803) 632-2533 or by email at www.lowcountryhealth-caresystem.com. The question was asked whether they provide telehealth services. The answer was they provide telehealth services and a mobile unit is provided as well. Council thanked Dr. Barnes for a presentation of the services they provide.

Bamberg County Coroner Wallace Hicks gave a brief update from his department. He said the population is declining and our deaths are increasing. To date, the county had 144 deaths and eighteen of those deaths have been attributed to the overdosing of fentanyl. Coroner Hicks said that the majority of other deaths in the county were from cardiac arrest/heart attack.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance - Monthly Report

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance Project Director Joshua Urwick said officials from five prospective industrial projects have visited the county's CrossRhodes

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Industrial Park. Mr. Urwick further stated that they need to get the right fit for that building because it is a great building. He also reported on the expansion of an existing industry, with the county waiting on further information from the state Department of Commerce. Council thanked Mr. Urwick for the update.

Bamberg County Treasurer - Monthly Report

County Treasurer Alice Johnson gave the August and September financial reports, stating they in August the county had \$868,717.05 in income and expenditures of \$914,887.18, leaving a negative balance of \$46,170.13. When the negative balance at the end of July (\$599,843.47) was added, the county's regular account stood at a negative \$646,013.60. In September, the county had \$467,489.11 in income and expenditures of \$983,333.38, for a negative balance of \$515,844.27. When the negative bank balance at the end of August (\$646,013.60) was added, the county's regular account at the end of September stood at a negative \$1,161,857.87. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Budget - Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$1,741,358, as of the end of September. Expenditures stood at \$2,056,592, for a negative general fund balance of \$315,233. 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 of the grand opening of the county's new health department and veterans' affairs offices will be held 11 a.m. Friday, December 8. Invitations and emails have been sent out also. A \$5,000,000 check was received last week from the SRS Litigation Settlement Funds for Bamberg Consolidated Schools. An EMS Committee meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, November 30th, at 5:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers. Administrator Preston also reported that a ceremony for the opening of the new health department and veterans' affairs offices will be held at 11 a.m., Friday, December 8th. The Adjutant General is scheduled to be in attendance at the ceremony. Work at the county courthouse is continuing and that includes the stabilization of the foundation. The next phase will be the bidding out work to be done on the windows and roof. Palmetto Rural Telephone Co-Op's work to expand broad band service is still in progress. Individuals can contact the PRTC website at www.prtc.us to learn more about services and pricing or call them at (843) 538-2020. All property owners living on Salty Road have signed the appropriate paperwork so that the roadwork can go forth. This report was accepted as information.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council gave second reading to a proposed ordinance to amend Bamberg County Ordinance #18-17-4 limited regards and particulars, only, so as to add an erroneously omitted road to the County Road List; and other matters related thereto. The name of the road that is proposed to be added is Old Town Lane Road, located in Denmark.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Carter, council approved a resolution to honor the veterans of Bamberg County, South Carolina.

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On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved a resolution to honor the South Carolina National Guard.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the calendar of events after adding the EMS meeting, scheduled for Thursday, November 30th, at 5:30 p.m. in the council chambers.

Chairman Goodman called for public comments. Mr. Bartel Boone, Career Navigator for Youth Build, explained the community-based initiative providing youth 16-24 with career counseling, work experience, leadership development, GED prep, building construction and health care training. The S.C. Regional Housing Authority #3 was awarded a \$1.5 million grant to start up a Youth Build program serving Bamberg and Barnwell counties. The program focus on youth that have dropped out of high school. They have partnered with agencies such as adult education, DSS, Denmark Technical College to help get them get the education that they need. They have an office in Barnwell County, but are trying to get a working location in Bamberg County, hopefully by January 2024. Individuals can contact Mr. Boone at (803) 450-6484 or bboone@scrha3.org for additional information.

Dr. Goodman asked for comments from council. During comments from council, all present were thanked for their attendance, employees were thanked for their hard work, thanks was given to Administrator Preston and staff and all were wished a happy Thanksgiving.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Carter, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC