

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, agendas for the following meeting were mailed to all members of Council, County Attorney Richard Ness, Lower Savannah COG, *The Bamberg Leader*, *The Times and Democrat*, SouthernCarolina Regional Alliance, Bamberg County Library, Bamberg County Website, Bamberg County Courthouse Annex and a copy posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of the County Courthouse.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., October 4, 2021 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Larry Haynes, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Spencer Donaldson, Phil Myers, Jr., Clint Carter and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Chip Maier, Tiffany Kemmerlin, Kenneth Bamberg, Garrett Dragano, Phil Clarke, Donald Kirby, Miriam Beard, William Molnar, Sh’Kur Francis, Allen, Bryan Holcomb, Booker Patrick and several additional attendees.

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

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, the council approved the minutes from the September 13, 2021 meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

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

Mr. Phil Clarke, Ambulance Operations Supervisor for MedShore, introduced six of the eleven 2021 graduating class of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) students held at Denmark Technical College. This is the first Emergency Medical Technician Academy held at DTC and this will be an ongoing working relationship between MedShore and DTC. This program was provided through a grant from S.C. Department of Labor through Apprenticeship Carolina. The program participants were fortunate to attend the \$2,500 course at no cost to them. Also, through the apprenticeship program, students were able to begin employment with MedShore and attend class at the same time. Mr. Clarke announced that the next EMT Academy will probably start up in November. Council congratulated the participants and thanked Mr. Clarke for their support.

Mr. Allen Cook, Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative Managed Services Engineer and Mr. Bryan Holcomb, PRTC engineer, spoke to the Bamberg County Council of their dual phase plan for the county. They are in the first phase of construction and it is scheduled to be complete by the end of this year, and service installations to be completed between February 1 and April 1 of 2022. The second phase of construction is scheduled to extend from February 1 through August 31, 2022, and service installations scheduled to begin November 1, to March 1 of 2023. A grant from the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff Broadband Infrastructure Program has provided for construction of a buried all-fiber network in the county. This construction process will provide for the much needed high-speed broadband connections to the rural residents in parts of the county. Construction has started in the Hadwin Road area that is located in the Orange Grove Community, and once they finish there they will be moving to the Clear Pond Community. In the Clear Pond area, PRTC is expecting to install a cabinet, or a hub there to be the centralized location. After completion of Phase 1, they will begin working in the Ehrhardt area. Mr. Cook further stated that soon fiber optic services will be available at the airport and as time goes on more underserved areas of the county will be targeted and provided assistance for those areas. Councilman Comer was concerned about the affordability of the service for some people and whether assistance programs were available for that. Mr. Cook responded that when a state or federal program has any program

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that offers assistance to the public, PRTC participates by providing assistance as needed. The presentation was concluded by informing everyone that they can be contacted by going to their website at prtc.us to learn more about services and pricing, or call them directly at 843-538-2020. Administrator Preston pointed out that the co-op's broadband expansion efforts are just one of many being made, but are different from the broadband expansion work that the county is conducting in partnership with Orangeburg County. There are three different projects that's being worked on right now to make certain that all of Bamberg County gets broadband. It is the goal to have 100 percent broadband in the county. Mr. Cook and Mr. Holcomb were thanked for their presentation regarding a positive update for broadband expansion for Bamberg County.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Alliance - Monthly Report

Southern Carolina Alliance Project Manager Garrett Dragano stated that over the region, currently there are 75 active projects. A total of 14 announcements have been made in the region, creating \$121 million in capital investment and 411 jobs. Right now Bamberg County is up to 14 active projects, nine site visits came about from 35 projects being submitted and two announcements were made. Arnett Engineered Solutions LLC was announced on August 11, with plans to invest \$2.5 million and the creation of 19 jobs. Arnett Engineered Solutions LLC, is a pump and valve manufacturer and provider. South Carolina Oak to Barrel LLC, has plans to invest \$6.8 million and the creation of 122 jobs. This company was previously operated by Black Water Barrels. Project Manager Dragano said there are two projects that are looking at Bamberg County and one is Project Canvas, which could make a \$400,000 investment and create 80 jobs, and Project Superior, which could invest \$1.5 million and create 25 jobs. Mr. Dragano was acknowledged for his monthly presentation to the Council.

Bamberg County Treasurer - Monthly Report

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported for the month of August. The county had \$618,225.06 in income and the expenditures were \$665,054.08 leaving a negative balance of \$46,829.02. After adding the positive bank balance at the end of July 190,882.28 the county's regular account stood at a negative \$237,711.30.

Bamberg County Finance - Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$643,726, at the end of August. Expenditures stood at \$1,019,082, for a positive general fund balance of \$46,235. Mr. Thomas said all departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported on the COVID-19 figures. Bamberg County had a total number of 1,839 confirmed COVID-19 cases, this report has increased since last month's report. It was reported 58.7 percent of county residents have had at least one vaccine shot, up from 54 percent in August. Also, 50.1 percent of residents have had both vaccinations, up from 45 percent since his last report. The county's first fire service banquet will be held Saturday, November 13th, at the Andrew Jackson Academy gymnasium at 7 p.m. The Bamberg County Code of Ordinances can now be found online on the county's website. It was reported that 69 applications for the SC Stay-Plus Program were received. The applications were for the request for rental assistance. During the month of September, we had 64 sales. Each time a plane flies in and out, that's a part of the overall formula that the feds use when they start setting aside federal money for the grants to make infrastructure improvements at the airport. The FAA President, Mr. Terry, flew in at the airport for a tour of the airport, alongside the Bamberg County Mayors and the event will be covered in the *Airport Magazine*. A donation from the Columbia-based Alpha Team Tech Solutions donated more than \$50,000 of computer equipment to Denmark Technical College. A letter will be written in that regard. The town of Ehrhardt requested the use of their CPST money for use for a roof instead of what was initially

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requested. Administrator Preston said that a letter must be written to the members of council for approval of the change. The 2021 Retreat is scheduled for the Council on Friday, October 29th, beginning at 9:00 a.m. This report was received as information.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Carter, council approved resolution #I-21-14, consenting to an assignment of all the interests of Black Water Barrels LLC, as sponsor, in the fee-in-lieu of Ad Valorem Taxes and incentive agreement with Bamberg County, South Carolina, to South Carolina Oak To Barrel, LLC.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved resolution #H-21-15, acknowledging and thanking Pharmacist Donna Avant and Ehrhardt Pharmacy for their service to the Bamberg County community and providing telehealth opportunities to Bamberg County citizens and for those reasons, being recognized as official Ambassadors of Bamberg County.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Dr. Goodman, council approved resolution #N-21-18 celebrating and recognition of the 140th birthday of The Times and Democrat newspaper.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved resolution #B-21-16, recognizing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Bamberg County.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved proclamation #D-21-17 declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Bamberg County.

The calendar of events was accepted after adding October 23rd as County-Wide Clean-Up and November 13th - Fire Service banquet at Andrew Jackson gymnasium at 7 p.m.

The appointment of SCA Economic Development Advisory Board members for Districts 3 and 7 will be addressed once appointee names are submitted by district members from 3 and 7.

Chairman Haynes called for public comments. Administrator Preston read comments from county resident Miriam Beard that had been submitted by email on the county's website. Several items of concern were: 1) Bamberg County Airport; 2) Emergency Shelter and 3) Animal Control. Administrator Preston said he will schedule an appointment with Ms. Beard to discuss her concerns.

Council members made various comments to include a few: thanking the staff for their hard work; to stay safe and continue wearing their masks, get your COVID-19 vaccines, continue to pray.

On motion by Councilman Myers, seconded by Councilman Carter, council voted to adjourn at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC