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MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING - February 6, 2017

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 Advertiser-Herald*, *The Times and Democrat*, 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.

Bamberg County Council met 6:30 p.m., February 6, 2017, in the chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. **Present:** Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Isaiah Odom, Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Joe Guess, Jr., and Clint Carter. **Absent:** Councilman Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Gina Smith, Alice Johnson, Dionne Gleaton, Jerry Halmon, Mallory Biering, Detra Bruce, Deanna Berry, Darrell Booker, Kay Clary, Sarah Noel, Ruthie Brown, Jerry Bell, Bill Johnson, Doretta Elliott and Ed Darnell.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., at 6:30 p.m., in the Chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. Invocation was rendered by Reverend Isaiah Odom, followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Joe Guess.

On motion by Councilman Odom, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the minutes from the January 9, 2017 meeting with future corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved the agenda as submitted.

SouthernCarolina Alliance Senior Project Manager Darrell Booker updated council on SCA activities, including its efforts to better market the county's sites, such as the former USA Building and the Heritage Building, to industries looking for plant locations. Mr. Booker further stated that Bamberg County had a total job creation or announcements in 2016 of over 100 jobs. Presently, Bamberg County has seven active projects looking at Bamberg County, as stated by Mr. Booker. SCA secured a \$200,000 grant to make improvements to the speculative building. Improvements will be made to the parking lot, landscaping and added lights for the surroundings. Councilman Kinard requested a copy of how much each county pays SCRDA for services. Mr. Booker stated that he will provide the information as requested.

Jerry Bell, Bamberg County Chamber of Commerce Director gave an update on events within the county. A flyer listing events in the community was distributed to the citizens present. Mr. Bell encouraged everyone to support the events and the Blues Festival that's scheduled for March 4. All present were invited to feel free to advertise their events in the Chamber correspondence. It was noted that there is a need for housing in the area and Mr. Bell offered to advertise available apartments or houses for rent or sale in the newsletter.

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Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the county's total income for December was \$1,020,472. Expenses came in at \$696,863.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the county's general fund had generated \$2,981,373 year-to-date revenue as of the end of December. Expenditures stood at \$3,075,127. Overall, all departments are operating within budget and within expected bounds.

Controller Gina Smith gave a presentation on the county's long term debt. Divided into two main categories, governmental activities, including judicial, public safety and road maintenance areas, and business-type activities, which consist of the county's solid waste/landfill operation. Controller Smith said there are specific rules and means in place that require this manner in which the long term debt be presented. The county had \$10,729,040 in total debt for government activities, with \$653,887 in total debt for business-type activities, for a combined debt total of \$11,382,927 as of June 30, 2015. The county's audited financial statements ending June 30, 2016, will be presented once the audit is complete. Ms. Smith continued in her presentation by mentioning the fact that the county saved \$1.2 million in interest costs by refinancing \$8.4 million in revenue bonds that were issued in 2013 to help offset increasing debt. As a result of the county earning an A bond rating, the bonds were able to be refinanced at a lower interest rate from 8.9 percent to 3.9 percent. Bamberg County bonds are investment grade now and that is a statement that we could not have made a couple of years ago. Bamberg County had a legal debt perimeter of \$898,057 as of June 30, 2015. We want to keep that margin because we can experience some calamities and if so, we want to have a little flexibility.

County Administrator Preston reported that the county was funded money for Zone 3 and Zone 4 for patrol cars. We received two grants \$99,900 and two reduced-interest loans totaling \$125,900. Bamberg County received two of the four USDA awards issued in the state. A news release will be place in the newspaper. Sheriff Ed Darnell said, "Begin able to have equipment like these vehicles that are reliable and efficient helps us to keep our communities safer, and we are thankful for the USDA, the county administrator, county council and the employees who helped make this happen for our officers." Tax Assessor Doretta Elliott reported the county was first runner-up for the Best Experience Modifier Award from the S.C. Counties Workers' Compensation Commission, resulting in \$32,845 in insurance savings. Ms. Elliott wanted it to be known that this award is an employee award, it could have not been achieved without the help of the employees. Administrator Preston reported the creation of a mutual aid agreement between Bamberg and Barnwell counties to Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority General Manager Tix Fox. The discussion came about after the destruction of Barnwell's transfer station by a recent tornado. Mr. Preston reported that Bamberg County expects to be handling the transfer of Barnwell County's waste for at least three more months. He is hoping that some of the additional funding that we generate from assisting Barnwell County will be set aside and go towards upgrading our transfer station.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL

- 1) SCA -Met about two weeks ago and worked on formulating the budget.

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- 2) Lower Savannah COG -LSCOG Board will meet in Bamberg County Court-house Annex on Thursday, February 9, with dinner being served at 6:00 p.m., meeting starting @ 7:00 p.m.
- 3) LSCOG (TAC) (Kinard) - Reported the road improvement for (Heritage Center, Hwy. 78), was cut down from approximately \$1million to about \$132,000. A request that this be revisited. Orangeburg County motioned that this issue be discussed again (the work of the parking lot).

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Carter, council approved the calendar of events as submitted.

On motion by Rev. Odom, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the following standing committee appointments for 2017: **Administrative Finance** – Evert Comer, chairman, and members Clint Carter and Rev. Isaiah Odom; **Personnel/Education, Recreation, Health and Welfare/Intergovernmental Relations** – Larry Haynes, chairman, and members Joe Guess, Jr. and Trent Kinard; **Public Service/County Planning** – Evert Comer, chairman, and members Trent Kinard and Clint Carter; **Justice and Public Safety** – Larry Haynes, chairman, and members Clint Carter and Sharon Hammond; **Solid Waste/Recycling** – Clint Carter, chairman, and members Larry Haynes and Rev. Isaiah Odom. Councilman Kinard requested that a copy of the standing appointment list be present at each meeting.

At this time, Chairman Odom called for public comments. 1) Dr. Christopher Hall: Introduced himself as interim president of Denmark Technical College, said he stands ready to create a well-educated workforce and to partner with the council in doing that. He invited Chairman Comer to a meeting at Blatt Hall on February 27, at noon.

The council thanked the administrator and employees for their hard work and being safe and when there is an opportunity the employees should be rewarded.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Carter, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC