

**MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING - November 9, 2015**

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, and a copy posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of the County Courthouse.

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Bamberg County Council met 6:30 p.m., November 9, 2015, in the courtroom of the Bamberg County Courthouse. **Present:** Chairman Joe Guess, Jr., Councilwoman Alzena Robinson, Councilmen Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Clint Carter, Larry Haynes and Rev. Isaiah Odom. **Others Present:** Administrator Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Dionne Gleaton, Jerry Halmon, Jerry Bell, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, William Molnar, Danny Black, Sharon Williams, Kay Maxwell, Sam McGill and Major Ken Pipkin.

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Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Joe Guess at 6:30 p.m., in the Bamberg County Courtroom. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Trent Kinard, followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Evert Comer, Jr.

On motion by Rev. Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the minutes from the October 5, October 12, and October 19, 2015 meetings with future corrections should there be any.

On motion by Rev. Odom, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved the agenda after rescheduling for December 7, 2015, presentation of a resolution to the family of Ms. Essie M. Carroll. Family members were unable to attend because of the inclement weather condition in Columbia.

A presentation was given by Sam McGill, vice president and general manager of Atlantic Broadband. Information was given about the company's cable services in Bamberg County. Broadband upgraded the high-speed data speeds in Allendale, Bamberg and Barnwell counties to 128 megabits down. Mr. McGill said they now offer over 200 channels of TV and unlimited phone service. Also, the company is launching its video-on-demand services in Bamberg and surrounding areas this week, along with working to reduce programming costs. There are 48 local employees, two of them are not within our service area.

Dr. William Molnar, LSCOG executive director, was introduced and welcomed by Councilman Haynes, Councilman Carter and Councilwoman Robinson. September 1, 2015, Dr. Molnar replaced former director Connie Shade at her retirement. He said, the SC Works Center in Denmark assists the Lower Savannah COG in focusing on workforce development, along with the agency's work and the adult education programs in Bamberg and Barnwell counties to support a GED Boot Camp program. Also, LSCOG entered into an Incumbent Worker Training (ITW, grant program with Kinsouth Corporation located in Denmark. Dr. Molnar said he is in quest of getting more county residents who own their own homes into LSCOG's home rehabilitation

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program. In 2014, there were five homeowner rehabilitation units done in Bamberg county for approximately \$225,000. Also, three rental units for approximately \$175,000 were done. Procurement of more Community Development Block Grant funds is also being targeted, along with “bicycle and pedestrian strategy projects” this will include the entire LSCOG region. Dr. Molnar said he is pleased with the success of Bamberg County’s Handy Ride public transit system that is mobility managed by LSCOG. Council thanked Dr. Molnar for the update on LSCOG’s relationship with Bamberg County.

Bamberg County Council listened to a report from Kay Maxwell, Marketing Director of SCRDA. Since September, companies from Italy, France, Turkey, Germany, Austria, China and India have come through this area and several of those have looked at sites in Bamberg County. As of November 3, 2015 SCRDA has developed 108 new leads for prospective companies. SCRDA has personally met with 86 of those companies. Ms. Maxwell mentioned that there is something that the citizens of the county can do to help attract new industry. Companies are coming through and they see our area as nice and clean or littered. They meet people at the convenience store and local diner and talking to people, so we really need to have a great positive, unified attitude when wanting to seek new industry. They are still pursuing projects that have been carried over from 2014.

Jerry Bell, Bamberg County Chamber Director, reported that the Chamber had a successful banquet in Ehrhardt at the Ehrhardt Fire Station. The Bamberg County Chamber of Commerce Waddy Thompson Citizen of the Year was awarded to Hallman Sease of Ehrhardt. Also, recognized at the banquet was Linda Bell of Govan, who received the Evelyn McMillan Chamber Volunteer. The Emma Ruth Dowling Unity Award was awarded to Dorothy Lee of Olar.

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the county’s total income for August was \$396,410. Expenses totaled \$568,056. She said because of the positive balance at the July, we have end up with a positive balance at the end of August.

Finance Director Thomas reported the county’s general fund generated \$6.5 million in year-to-date revenue as of the end of August. Expenditures stood at \$750,714.

Controller Gina Smith reported on the county’s Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) valuation. Bamberg County has begun following new accounting rules adopted by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), to justify account for retiree health costs as it moves toward a clean audit opinion. In Bamberg, the unfunded retiree health care bill amount to \$104,376, which will cost the county \$11,211 annually over 30 years to pay off. Presently, the county has accounted for those health care costs on a pay-as-we-go basis without showing the growing costs of future health care benefits for retirees. The county has implemented the GASB rules to address the issue, which also includes a Net OPEB Obligation (NOO), of \$47,080. Controller Smith said we are not going to have to write a check for these, but they are going to be on our financial statements every year going forward. This will result in a reduction of our fund balance. She also delineated the county’s new delinquent tax posting process. Palmetto Posting, Inc., of Spartanburg, was hired under a one-year contract to assist in the tax posting process. A

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total of 1,253 properties were posted, representing a total of \$718,517 in delinquent taxes owed the county. \$230,107, or 32 percent of that amount has been collected to date. The company will provide Bamberg County with images of the properties, a copy of their delinquent tax notices and their GPS locations. Administrator Preston said the report protects the county from possible litigation over a delinquent tax sale and makes it easier for bidders to view the properties they are considering buying. He further stated that the report would be placed on the county's website with a link to allow individuals to view the properties. Councilwoman Robinson asked that the information not be placed on the website until further discussion at a later date. She further stated her only negative concern was outside companies come in and just look at your data, come in one day and outbid everybody else and don't want people to lose their property and for big business to come in and turn around and sell it back to the people at double the price.

Administrator Preston introduced U.S. Army Maj. Ken Pipkin of the South Carolina National Guard. Major Pipkin said the National Guard units assisted the county with road repaid and road assessment following the September flood. He said they tried to get our roads passable through a temporary patch or repairs so that we can catch back up and get all the money straight with FEMA, in order to make the permanent repairs later. They worked on eight roads. Administrator Preston said recent rainfall beyond the flooding has caused continued road problems. As of November 9, roads such as Double K, Oliver, Apache and Sweet Pea were washed out. Blown pipes are creating problems along other roads, including Dragon, Combine and Hi-Ki Pen roads.

#### **REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL**

- 1) Lower Savannah COG -Will pursue the LSCOG Minutes be emailed to Clerk to Council Shepherd so that they can be included in each council member packet.
  - 2) LSCOG (TAC) (Kinard) -Spoke with Bobby Crider and U.S. Hwy. Project on slate for Spring completion.
  - 3) LSCOG Housing Consortium -No meeting.
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On motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the calendar of events as submitted.

On motion by Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the appointment of James Sojourner to the Bamberg County Planning Commission as the District 5 representative.

There being no public comments, Chairman Guess called for comments from the council members.

Comer : Asked when will the county's heavy equipment arrive. Mr. Preston said one piece will be delivered the end of December and the remaining pieces in January 2016.

Carter : Concerned about the fee paid to Palmetto Posting. Felt that as broke as the County is why are we spending \$31,325.

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On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Rev. Odom, council adjourned at 8:45 p.m., to enter in executive session to discuss a contractual matter with SCA – Danny Black.

After executive session, no action was taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC