

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING - January 5, 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.

Bamberg County Council met 6:30 p.m., January 5, 2015, in the courtroom of the Bamberg County Courthouse. **Present:** Chairman Larry Haynes, Councilwoman Alzena Robinson, Councilmen Joe Guess, Jr., Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., Clint Carter, and Rev. Isaiah Odom. **Others Present:** Administrator Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Jerry Halmon, Alice Johnson, Phyllis Overstreet, Dorothy Robinson, Rosa Verner, Nina Haynes, Kell Anderson, Linda Keyton, Martha Guess, Sarah G. Noel, Mallory Hoffman, Robert Corlin, Ed Darnell, Gina Humphreys, and three other guests.

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

On motion by Councilperson Robinson, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the minutes from the December 1, 2014 meeting.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved the agenda after deleting the report the personnel committee report from the agenda until the February meeting.

Councilperson Alzena Robinson was sworn in for her new term by Ms. Rosa R. Verner and the bible was held by Mrs. Dorothy Robinson.

Councilman Larry Haynes was sworn in for his new term by Clerk to Council Rose R. Shepherd and the bible was held by Ms. Nina Haynes, witnessed by other family members.

Councilman Evert Comer, Jr., was also sworn in for his new term by Clerk to Council Shepherd and the bible was held by Ms. Gina Humphreys.

Councilman Joe Guess, Jr. was installed as council chairman for 2015, taking over from outgoing chairman Larry Haynes, who was presented with a plaque for his service.

Councilman Rev. Isaiah Odom was selected as vice chairman for 2015, by district rotation as set forth by the Bamberg County Council.

A report was given by Kell Anderson, project manager with Southern Carolina Alliance on economic development efforts in the community. Mr. Anderson noted a "spec" building project

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for the Crossroads Industrial Park was awarded an additional \$173,000 grant from Edisto Electric Cooperative. The funds for the project so far total \$848,000.

Jerry Bell, Executive Director of the Bamberg County Chamber of Commerce, reported on upcoming events to be handled through the Chamber. Brochures were distributed to all persons present.

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported that Bamberg County had net revenue of \$513,482 for the month of November.

Finance Director Thomas reported the county's general fund departments have collectively spent 38% of their budget, which is a little less than the anticipated 42% and is considered normal. Special Revenue Funds: E/911 Management, Road Maintenance and Rural Fire Service, overall revenues in these three funds through November are \$329,789 representing 38% of the budgeted amount of \$871,947. On the expenditure side all three of these departments are operating within budget and within expected levels at 32%. Budgeted revenues for Landfill/Solid Waste Department are \$1,050,951. Through November we have collected \$331,034 representing 31% of the annual budget. The Landfill and Finance staff continue to work to collect past due Landfill Tipping Fee Revenue. Year-to-date collections for landfill tipping fees are \$186,566 which represents 50% of the annual budget of \$370,000. Past due accounts are being actively managed and the total past due (over 90 days) has been reduced to \$80,600 as of the end of November. However, he noted an increase in fees paid to the Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority are impacting the budget as the tonnage sent to the facility from the county is increasing, reversing a trend of decreased tonnage from the past few years.

Controller Gina Humphreys reported the monies past due over 90 days has dropped from \$127,000 in August to \$53,112. She said actions the county can consider moving forward, such as denying the use of the landfill to anyone whose payments are in arrears as well as the possibility of adding a 1 to 1.5 percent service charge to past due accounts and making use of the state's Debt Set-Off Program. Ms. Humphreys further reported on two ongoing issues that have prevented the county from having unqualified, or clean audits the past several years. These include an updated capital asset listing for the county, not done since 2011, and completing the reconciliation of 10 years' worth of county jail inmate accounts.

Administrator Preston indicated staff intended to determine where the increases are coming from and determine what controls, if any, can be put in place. Mr. Preston requested the Chairman call a special meeting in February in order to take a look at the audit. Also, we are anticipating a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Courthouse Annex in January. Clerk to Council Shepherd will be getting in touch with several dignitaries to attend the ceremony. The Keep America Beautiful program was awarded two grants in December, one for \$8,000 to be used for beautification projects across the county and a \$5,000 grant to assist with implementation of the litter enforcement program. Both grants were awarded by PalmettoPride. A road list will be provided for the council members at the February meeting and a Report To The People will be provided by Administrator Preston.

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REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCIL

- 1) Lower Savannah COG -Meeting was held in Blackville. Bamberg County received the Board Attendance award.
 - 2) SCA -Attended a very informative meeting in Columbia on 1/27. Anticipating a trip to be scheduled for Wash., D.C.
 - 3) Three Rivers -No meeting
 - 4) LSCOG (TAC) -Highway 78 roadwork completed. Meeting scheduled for January 22 in Aiken.
 - 5) LSCOG Housing Consortium -No meeting
 - 6) Bamberg County Tourism & Recreation -Next Meeting scheduled for 1/26 @ 5:30 p.m. Mr. Craig Walker is working on getting a cross section of committee participants. Notices will be sent to the committee to remind them of their upcoming meeting.
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On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilperson Robinson, council approved a proposed resolution establishing written public notice of the Bamberg County Council Meeting Schedule for 2015.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved a resolution formalizing the county's partnership with the Southeastern Housing Foundation in an application to the federal Housing and Urban Development agency for a Neighborhood Initiative Program for improvement of blighted properties.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Reverend Odom, council appointed Rep. Justin Bamberg to the Lower Savannah Council of Governments Board as a legislative ex officio member.

Administrator Preston told council he would like to get a better idea when our audit would be completed before setting a date for the 2015 Planning Retreat. Councilperson Robinson asked that a different location be looked at for the retreat.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the calendar of events as submitted.

On motion by Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved the ratification of plans for the Bamberg County Airport. These plans were submitted to the state Aeronautics Commission and state Budget and Control Board. Plans include 1) Capital Improvement Plan; 2) 2015 Pre-Application for FAA Fund (\$166,667 amount of grant that would provide for land acquisition and obstruction clearing at the airport); and 3) 2016 Pre-Application for FAA Fund (\$495,000 amount of grant that would provide for airport amenities, including an automated weather observation system and identifier lights for the end of the runway).

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Comments from Council

The council members thanked Councilman Haynes for the job he had done during his tenure as council chairman.

There were no comments from the news media.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC