

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., April 8, 2024 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., Councilwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilmen Phil Myers, Jr., Clint Carter, Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II, and Spencer Donaldson. **Absent:** Larry Haynes. Others Present: Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Gina Smith, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Kenneth Bamberg, Joshua Urwick, Moses Cheatham and Donald Kirby.

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

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved the minutes from the March 4, 2024 regular meeting with necessary corrections should there be any.

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

Council received an update from Small Business Administration Public Affairs Specialist James Accurso, on the SBA program. The SBA's Disaster Loan program opened in Bamberg County on March 27, 2024. To date, 79 applications have been taken. No applications have been approved yet, but only one has been declined. It normally takes approximately 2 to 3 weeks for approval. There is no need to wait on insurance. It was announced that the center will be open from Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Thursday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, April 12. Loans up to \$500,000 are available for homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for loans up to \$100,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property. Also, economic injury disaster loans up to \$2 million are offered to businesses. Interest rates are as low as 4% for businesses, 3.25% for non-profit organizations and 2.688% for homeowners and renters, with terms up to 30%. Individuals were encouraged to take advantage of the loans, they have one year to begin paying the loan back. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability can dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services. If you need help in filling out your application, the Small Business Development Center at S.C. State University can assist you and can be reached at (803) 536-8445. Mr. Accurso was thanked for sharing this important information.

Bamberg County Coroner Wallace Hicks gave an update from his department. To date the following deaths have occurred: Natural – 124; Homicide – 6; Overdose – 6; Fatal – 4 and Suicide – 1. There was a short discussion regarding the salary for the coroner's position. The mandated portion of the salary was discussed and reviewed and can be found in 17-5-141. Another update will be done soon.

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Sheriff Kenneth Bamberg made a presentation (assisted by Ashia B. Bryant), to 911 Dispatchers who make a difference and demonstrated the commitment all First Responders exercise daily. The plaques were presented to: Dispatchers Lexus Patterson, Aja-Brianne Harriott and Claudia Carrillo. A sad event of a fatal automobile accident, resulting in a young mother losing her life after running into a river back in March, prompted the presentation of this gesture. All First Responders were praised for the outstanding work that they do on a daily basis. Others that were recognized during the setting: Bamberg Fire Department, EMS Department, Paul Eubanks, Denmark Fire Department, Orangeburg Fire Department and SC Highway Patrol.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance – Monthly Report

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance Project Director Joshua Urwick reported that they had 4 site visits since the March meeting. They are still working with SC Oak Barrel, LLC to help rebuild after the horrific tornado. Ribbon Cutting for expansion of Innovative Poultry in Olar, is scheduled for Tuesday, April 30 at 10 a.m. Project Director Urwick stated that he hope to have additional information next month. Council thanked Mr. Urwick for his report.

Bamberg County Budget – Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues of \$6,929,067, as of the end of February. Expenditures stood at \$6,377,246, for a positive general fund balance of \$551,820. 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 on: 1) Downtown 301 is reopened; 2) Thankful to SCDHEC for helping secure funding for the purchase of a Tek84 Intercept body scanner for the Detention Center (\$218,00); 3) Groundbreaking is scheduled for May 17th, between Denmark and Bamberg (Airport); 4) Salty Road and Lazy Lane will be going back out for bid the end of this week; 5) SC Research Facility had farmers from Charleston, Greenville and Myrtle Beach attend the site in Olar; 5) Holman’s Bridge Fire Department installation should be starting this week; and 6) The question was asked if a Litter Control Report be presented so that the council will have an idea as to the number of citations are issued. Council accepted this report as information.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Dr. Goodman, council approved a proposed a resolution honoring the Denmark-Olar Vikings High School Basketball Team on advancing to the 2024 SC High School League Class-A State Championship.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved a resolution recognizing Dr. Cleveland Sellers as a Voorhees University Drum Major Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

On motion by Councilman Myers, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council approved a resolution to recognize Samella Porter as a Voorhees University Drum Major Award Recipient and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

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On motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved a resolution to recognize Betty Dowling as a 2024 Denmark Technical College Alumni Hall of Fame Inductee and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved a resolution to recognize Reverend Isaiah Odom as a Voorhees University Drum Major Award Recipient and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Myers, council approved a resolution to recognize Elder Priscilla D. Spruill as a Voorhees University Drum Major Award Recipient and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Carter, council approved a resolution to recognize Richard Freeman as a 2024 Denmark Technical College Alumni Hall of Fame Inductee and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved a resolution to recognize John W. Williamson, III as a 2024 Order of the Palmetto Recipient and a Bamberg County Ambassador.

On motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, the calendar of events after adding the pet vaccination clinic for Saturday, April 27th from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m.

Chairman Comer, Jr., called for comments from council. All present were thanked for their attendance, employees were thanked for their hard work and appreciation was given to Administrator Preston and staff. Appreciation was extended for the additional ambulance placed in Ehrhardt. Prayers were offered for the dearth of Councilman Donaldson's sister-in-law (his brother's wife). Request was made to check road maintenance for 16 Dove Road.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Dr. Goodman, II, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC