

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., July 1, 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 Clint Carter, Larry Haynes, Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II and Spencer Donaldson. **Absent:** Councilman Phil Myers. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Gina Smith, Donald Kirby, Linda Bell, Jerry Bell, Alisha Moore, Kenneth Bamberg, Joshua Urwick, Moses Cheatham, Louis Whitesides, Ken Ahlin, Chip Maier, Catherine Russell and one additional visitor.

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

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the minutes from the June 3rd, and June 24th, meetings were approved with necessary corrections should there be any.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the agenda as presented.

Dr. Louis Whitesides, Vice President, SC State University Public Service and Agriculture Executive Director of the 1890 Research Extension was present to give an update and future planning for the program. The basic subject of discussion was the planting of cover crops and at this time chickpeas are being experimented as a crop. He continued by saying that ReVive is a new line of cover crop mixes from Mixon Seed Service designed to make it easy to meet specific crop management goals. ReVive SC State 1890 Mix is a unique cover crop seed mix customized through the collaboration of Mixon Seed Service and South Carolina State University to meet the needs of South Carolina climate-Smart Agriculture farmers/practitioners and others across the Southern United States. Dr. Whitesides invited the council to the farm located on Alligator Road in Olar for a more in depth visit. Chairman Comer thanked Dr. Whitesides for his report.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Development Alliance - Monthly Report

Project Director Joshua Urwick reported that SCA met three times since the last Bamberg County Council meeting. They are presently working with the Department of Commerce regarding some projects. Project Lightning has slowed down and hopefully will have something before long. Council thanked Mr. Urwick for his report.

Bamberg County Treasurer's Report

In the absence of County Treasurer Alice Johnson, County Controller Gina Smith gave the April financial report, stating the county had \$2,881,686.97 in income and expenditures of \$887,511.41, for a positive balance of \$1,994,175.56 at the end of the month.

July 1, 2024....continue

Bamberg County Finance Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund had year-to-date revenues as of the end of April of \$8,098,043 with expenses coming in at \$8,137,303, for a negative general fund balance of \$39,260. He further stated that the county departments continue to operate within their budgets.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported to council on: **1)** USDA is scheduled to be here at Annex – July 11th, at 5:30 p.m., to speak with citizens regarding possible loans and grants for damages caused by the tornado that hit the County earlier this year; **2)** S.C. Department of Commerce selected the county to participate in its S.C. Rural Development Strategic Planning Initiative. The initiative is aimed to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities across the state and explore strategies to help them. They will be meeting with the County about what they plan to do; **3)** Graveling will begin July 22, on Lazy Lane and Salty Road with notices going out this coming week to homeowners along those roads; **4)** A county's water tower project will be put out for bid later in July; **5)** We have received two bids for the McGee Street sidewalk project, with that project scheduled to begin by the first of August; **6)** Work on the old courthouse roofing should begin in August; **7)** Continued transformation of the old hospital into a multiservice complex also continues. Demolition is underway for the establishment of a new Emergency Operations Center.

Keep Bamberg County Beautiful Coordinator Alisha Moore and Aiken resident Catherine Russell, a KBCB board member, reported on group activities. They reported June as Community Service Month. This is where a few volunteers from the community go out and collect their community service hours. A total of 630 pounds of trash was collected during the month of June, covering 17 miles. Ms. Russell talked about the group's ongoing multi-phase work to clean up the county veterans cemetery (starting July 10), and hopefully get it added to the National Register of Historic Places. Council accepted this report along with Administrator Preston's monthly report.

On motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a resolution to assign certain roles to the USDA Online Financial Reporting and Compliance System. This resolution will allow Administrator Preston to manage the \$12 million federal grant the county received to develop its broadband system to help make high-speed internet affordable for underserved communities.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved the calendar of events after adding a July 18th special called meeting scheduled for 1 p.m., for the purpose of having a public hearing and third reading of an ordinance certifying the Rockland Industries property as a textile mill site under the S.C. Textiles Communities Revitalization Act.

Chairman Comer called for public comments. In follow up to a previous meeting, Bamberg resident Ken Ahlin was present and addressed the council with numerous statements/comments, one being how the county's budget is handled/presented to the public. After listening to the concerns coming from Mr. Ahlin, Chairman Comer informed him that his comments will be taken under advisement.

July 1, 2024....continue

At this time, Chairman Comer asked for comments from council. All thanked the public for being in attendance. The employees were thanked for their hard work. All were wished a happy holiday. A thank you was given to DSS for all that they do. Final words were that we all need to work together, we are too small to have a divide.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC