

## MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

- March 9, 2020

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*, Southern Carolina Regional Alliance, 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.

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Bamberg County Council met 6:30 p.m., March 9, 2020 in the chamber of the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex. **Present:** Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, Reverend Isaiah Odom, Councilmen Kerry Trent Kinard, Evert Comer, Jr., and Joe Guess, Jr. **Absent:** Councilmen Clint Carter and Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Adam Ness, Dionne Gleaton, Candace Fralix, Dean Fralix, Ruthie Brown, Don Kirby, Farrell Pulaski, Missy Quattlebaum, Miriam Beard, Richard Reid, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Jerry Bell, Danny Black, Mary Tilton, Ray Davis, William Molnar, Christy Parker, Dolton Williams, Brad Hudson and approximately 10 additional people.

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Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sharon Hammond 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 Trent Kinard.

Chairwoman Hammond made initial comments by saying her heart goes out to those that have loss jobs at Rockland Industries in Bamberg. We now have a grocery store in Bamberg and we need to support it. Please be patient during this time.

On motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved the minutes from the February 3, 2020 meeting with future corrections should there be any.

On motion by Reverend Odom, seconded by Councilman Kinard, council approved the agenda as submitted.

Updating the members of Council on the Coronavirus was Ms. Christy Parker, DHEC's regional emergency preparedness manager. Ms. Parker shared copies of fact sheets from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding the virus. The question was posed whether or not the virus is in the containment stage or the mitigation stage? Ms. Parker replied, "We're not in containment, we are still seeing cases come in." Presently, there are two people on call and another employee is doing backup. The office staff is working between 18 to 20 hours a day going through cases and taking calls. The South Carolina public health lab can run approximately 100 tests a day, but are trying to keep it regulated to those who essentially qualifies. Qualifications for getting tested would be those who have a travel history, to include those that have been in contact with someone with a confirmed case of the virus and health care workers. Ms. Parker continued by explaining the difference between isolating and quarantining people. Isolation is for the ill, quarantine is for those who have contact with the ill. All present were advised to keep their hands washed, stay out of public settings especially if you are an elderly person and if you have respiratory challenges.

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Don't touch your face. Should you need to cough or sneeze, do it into your elbow. The more mature population, especially those with respiratory disease should stay out of public gatherings because they are more apt to contract the virus. Surfaces that are frequently touched should be sanitized frequently for the sake of all involved. The Council expressed gratitude to Ms. Parker for sharing vital information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Dolton Williams, project manager for the Southern Carolina Alliance, updated the county on endeavors being made to help the community recover during the loss of 133 jobs at Rockland Industries. A job fair is being held on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, at the Bamberg Civic Center. Help will be offered to dislocated employees and others, aid in assisting with completion of job applications, alongside preparation of resume's. Thomas P. Miller & Associates has been contracted to work on an Opportunity Zone prospectus. Southern Carolina Alliance is going to use the Opportunity Zone tool as a means to market the county. The contract is a working document and SCA can add or take away, whatever they may need to do. Mr. Williams further stated that there are 14 active projects in the county, including a battery manufacturer that could bring a \$35 million investment and 64 jobs and a manufacturer of plumbing fixtures which could bring in \$33 million investment and 220 jobs. Appreciation was expressed for the update presented by Mr. Williams.

Bamberg County Chamber of Commerce Director Jerry Bell gave an update on the upcoming events for Bamberg County. Flyers were available for those present. Mr. Bell encouraged the public to support sponsored events throughout Bamberg County.

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the December financial report that noted the county income stood at \$1,045,077, with expenses coming in at \$683,734, leaving a positive balance of \$361,343. Showing a negative bank balance at the end of November was subtracted, it left a negative balance of \$28,569 at the end of December. The January financial report showed an income of \$2,547,110 and expenses of \$996,145, leaving a positive balance of \$1,522,395.

Controller Gina Smith noted that Treasurer Johnson reports on only one of the county's bank accounts. There were some of the other bank accounts have seen increases (including the county's capital reserve and fire service funds). Also, the county had \$756,085 of cash on hand in December and another \$663,899 of cash on hand in January.

Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$5,666,132 in year-to-date revenues at the end of January. Expenditures stood at \$4,106,082, leaving a positive balance of \$1,560,049. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets.

Administrator Preston reported on the following: **1)** Thanked SCA President Danny Black and Project Manager Dolton Williams for their assistance with the new grocery store in Bamberg; alongside a representative from SC Dept. of Commerce in attendance at the grand opening; **2)** Jim Stripenger from Broadband will be at the Council Chambers from 10a.m. – 2p.m. and council is invited; **3)** Department of Revenue will be here April 23<sup>rd</sup>, do discuss millage; **4)** Received

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an abundance of calls inquiring when are the political signs coming down; **5)** Planning Committee will meet soon and we are waiting to have first reading of their pending ordinance; **7)** Attended the SC Rural Summit in Clemson and some of the speakers were: Jackie Booker (Orangeburg native), Maceo Nance, Bonnie Ammons and Kathy Schwarting; **8)** County assisted the Cheese & Cracker with filling out an application for help; **9)** Plans are being made to have Assessor Doretta Elliott and Bill Johnson attend a council meeting to talk about property values; and **10)** Received excessive rain and most of our roads are dirt and the public works crew will have to wait until they dry out to work on them. Administrator Preston's report was received as information.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved proposed resolution #B-20-6, authorizing Rural Utilities/USDA Broadband grant funding to construct and offer broadband services to the citizens.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Guess, council approved proposed resolution #R-20-7, supporting the efforts of the Regional Medical Center to develop an ambulatory emergency center. Councilman Kinard abstained from the vote.

On motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Reverend Odom, council agreed to proclaim the day of April 3, 2020 as Elizabeth Evelyn Wright Day in Bamberg County – #E-20-8. Elizabeth Evelyn Wright was the founder of Voorhees College, located in Denmark. Mr. Richard Reid, historian/archivist for Voorhees College, informed the council and public of Elizabeth Evelyn Wright's journey, trials and difficulties and how she arrived at Voorhees College and what she accomplished during her tenure. Mr. Reid accepted a framed proclamation from Bamberg County and he thanked them for the recognition.

On motion by Councilman Kinard, seconded by Councilman Comer, council proclaimed the month of March 2020 in Bamberg County as Women's History Month –W-20-9.

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

Appointment of two vacant board members for the Economic Development Committee from Council Districts 3 & 7, will be placed acted on at a later date.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond recognized the public that had signed up prior the beginning of the meeting to make public comments. The following seven citizens made comments: Rachel Jensen (Fortress Road in Ehrhardt – 8/10 mile of dirt road, problems getting in and out – children unable to meet school bus); Michael Whitlock (requesting help on Fortress Road in Ehrhardt); John Gleaton (consider 5 minutes instead of 3 minutes for public comments - trash on Shilly Road and Church Street in Denmark); Brad Hudson (FOIA request); Ken Ahlin (requesting information on broadband); Dean Fralix (taxes for Rockland) and Miriam Beard (social media).

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Chairwoman Hammond called for comments from Council and the news media. All were thanked for attending the meeting, voicing their concerns and reminded that we work together and be diligent.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC