

MINUTES OF BAMBERG COUNTY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING - October 5, 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*, SouthernCarolina 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.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., October 5, 2020 in several locations within the Bamberg County Courthouse Annex and some participated by way of teleconference. The public joined the meeting by various means of technology. **Present:** Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, Reverend Isaiah Odom, Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Larry Haynes, Joe Guess, Jr., and Clint Carter. **Absent:** Councilman Trent Kinard. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Adam Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Mary Tilton, Chip Maier, Dolton Williams, Ruthie Brown, Arnold Ray, Bridget Kinard, Bill M., Walt Inabinet, L. S. Scorpio., Carrie J., Harold Shepherd, Daniela McMillan, M. Moore., Dionne Gleaton, Yolonda Buchanan, Audie Raye, Minnie Miller, Paul Eubanks, David Smith, Sue Greenberg, Sarah Noel, Bill Johnson, Trevor Kinard, Darrell Booker, Jennie Cromer, Alex Abel, M. Johnson and two additional attendants.

Bamberg County Council Virtual meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sharon Hammond at 6:00 p.m., followed with a moment of silence in memory of those that loss the battle to COVID-19 and to the ones that are trying to recover and overcome the virus and that we pray for the President of the United States. Invocation was rendered by Reverend Isaiah Odom, followed with the pledge of allegiance by Councilman Larry Haynes.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the minutes from the September 14, 2020 meeting. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1 and Carter – Dist. 7 were absent during the vote.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the agenda as submitted. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1 and Carter – Dist. 7 were absent during the vote.

Public hearing was given to an ordinance making permanent certain measures taken in response to a Bamberg County Council declaration of a state of emergency in Bamberg County, South Carolina in response to the public safety and health threat of the novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”), and implementing certain other measures to enable more effective means of delivering government service to the citizens of Bamberg County, including, without limitation, the permanent authorization of the conduct of public meetings in Bamberg County by electronic means; and other matters relating thereto. There were no comments from the public. On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council voted that the public hearing be closed. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilmen Kinard – Dist. 1 and Carter – Dist. 7 were absent during the vote.

Committee and Staff Reports;

Bamberg County Treasurer Alice Johnson reported the August financial report noting that the county income stood at \$717,596.82, with expenses coming in at \$638,632.04, leaving a positive balance of \$78,964.78. However, when the county’s negative bank balance of \$493,770.86 as of July 31, 2020 was subtracted, it left the county with a negative bank balance of \$414,806.08 as of August 31, 2020. After entertaining several question, this report was received as information.

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Finance Director T.M. Thomas reported the general fund generated \$954,670 in year-to-date revenues at the end of August. Expenditures stood at \$1,069,272, leaving a negative balance of \$114,603. All departments are continuing to operate within their budgets. This report was received as information.

Controller Gina Smith reported that the county's general fund account will soon be enhanced with local option sales tax funds. Tax notices are being mailed out and as funds are received, funds will be transferred in the property tax rollback account. So far, according to the CARES Act money, Bamberg County has been approved for \$3,431.22 by the state, for compliance expenditures for the coronavirus. Overall, we applied for \$87,338 covering the months of March through June. Our Phase One expenditures are still under consideration. When following up on the status for future reimbursements, information was received (Monday, October 5, 2020), that we would be getting reimbursed for our payroll expenses. We are now going forward with focusing on the coronavirus for the period of July 1 through November 15, 2020.

Administrator Preston reported that cases for COVID-19 are steadily rising. Currently, the county has a total of 650 positive cases as of October 4, and 35 deaths to date. A graph was displayed on the screen to depict the coronavirus configuration. Also announced during Mr. Preston's report was that the Voter Registration and Elections Office received a \$16,597 grant from the Center for Tech and Civic Life. The funds will be used for the purchase of personal protective equipment for staff, poll workers and voters, hazard pay and training expenses. Presently, there are two locations where voters can vote early: the Voter Registration and Elections Office located at 1234 North Street and the J. Carl Kearsse Agriculture Building located at 847 Calhoun Street. Conveying the fact that a lot of people in Denmark do not have the means to travel to Bamberg to vote, Councilman Guess asked if some of the grant funds could be used to set up a location in Denmark for early voting. Administrator Preston replied that he would be certain to get that information to the Voter Registration Office. Another item reported on was the status of the roof completion at the proposed law enforcement complex (old hospital). It is expected to be completed within the next two weeks. Everything is still on schedule. The bidding of the project will probably take place near the middle of November. The Rivers Bridge project for the new fire substation is moving along and plans are to close it out in November as well. The new school building in Denmark has been annexed to the City of Denmark. On November 11, Veterans Day, the County and City of Bamberg will be dedicating the Veterans Memorial at 11:00 a.m. at the site. The Council accepted the Administrator's report as information.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council approved an ordinance making permanent certain measures taken in response to a Bamberg County Council declaration of a state of emergency in Bamberg County, South Carolina in response to the public safety and health threat of the novel coronavirus ("COVID-19"), and implementing certain other measures to enable more effective means of delivering government service to the citizens of Bamberg County, including, without limitation, the permanent authorization of the conduct of public meetings in Bamberg County by electronic means; and other matters relating thereto. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Kinard – Dist. 1 was absent during the vote and Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 opposed.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a resolution recognizing October 2020 as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Bamberg County. This resolution was sponsored by Council Chairwoman Hammond. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Kinard – Dist. 1 was absent during the vote and Councilman Carter – Dist. 7 abstained.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a proclamation declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Those voting in favor of the motion were:

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Councilmen Haynes – Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Kinard – Dist. 1 was absent during the vote.

On motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, the calendar of events was approved as submitted. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Councilmen Haynes - Dist. 3; Guess – Dist. 4; Odom – Dist. 5; Comer – Dist. 6; Carter – Dist. 7 and Chairwoman Hammond – Dist. 2. Councilman Kinard – Dist. 1 was absent during the vote.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no public comments were received at this time. Anyone with concerns had the opportunity to email to info@bambergcounty.sc.gov no later than Monday, October 5, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. Two written comments were submitted for public comments during this appointed time. No comments were received prior the meeting. 1) Ken Ahlin – Suggested that meetings be held in-person with appropriate safety measures at the Bamberg Civic Center. 2) Sue Clayton - Asked that the virtual meetings be discontinued.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from the council. Comments were that everyone take the coronavirus seriously and to have consideration for others. All were encouraged to vote during the election.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Guess, seconded by Reverend Odom, council adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC