



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: News Media

From: Bamberg County Administration

Date: March 13, 2026

Re: Bamberg County's Fiscal House Is in Order with 11th Consecutive Unmodified Audit Opinion

Bamberg, South Carolina (March 2026) –Bamberg County has once again earned an unmodified audit opinion, formerly known as a clean audit opinion, with zero internal control issues and an increase to the general fund balance of nearly \$3 million. During Tuesday night's County Council meeting, Controller/CPA Gina Smith and Audit Manager/CPA Will Walls of Love, Bailey, and Associates presented the FYE June 30, 2025, Bamberg County Audit Report. Remarkably, Bamberg County earned an unmodified audit opinion for the eleventh consecutive year, demonstrating good fiscal stewardship and serving as the most important measure of financial stability. An unmodified audit provides a sense of pride for elected officials and staff, builds and confirms confidence in management, and positively impacts the county's ability to borrow funds at favorable interest rates.

Bamberg County Controller Gina Smith stated, "Once again, I am pleased to present the annual audit with an unmodified audit opinion. This audit opinion is the highest level of assurance that a county can achieve and represents the best possible outcome, providing confidence that the financial statements fairly present the results of operations. It means that the auditors obtained sufficient and appropriate evidence that there are no material departures from generally accepted accounting standards."

After Controller Smith announced the unmodified audit, Councilman Evert Comer, Jr. led the attendees in a round of applause for another successful audit, and Ms. Smith noted that such enthusiasm is both appreciated and warranted.

An unmodified audit in government is crucial for maintaining public trust and ensuring accountability for the following reasons:

- **Demonstrates responsible use of taxpayer money:** A clean audit signifies that public funds are being managed effectively and in accordance with regulations. This assures citizens that their tax dollars are being used for their intended purposes.

- **Enhances transparency:** Clean audits make government operations more transparent by providing an independent assessment of financial practices. This allows the public to understand how their government is spending money and makes it easier to identify potential issues.
- **Builds public trust:** When governments demonstrate sound financial management through clean audits, it fosters trust between citizens and their government. This trust is essential for a healthy democracy.
- **Facilitates effective decision-making:** Accurate financial information from unmodified audits enables government officials to make informed decisions about resource allocation, program development, and policy implementation.
- **Reduces the risk of fraud and waste:** Unmodified audits help identify weaknesses in internal controls that could lead to fraud, waste, or abuse of public funds. By addressing these weaknesses, governments can protect taxpayer money and ensure its proper use.
- **Improves government efficiency:** The audit process can identify areas where government operations can be streamlined or improved, leading to greater efficiency and cost savings.
- **Strengthens accountability:** Unmodified audits hold government officials accountable for their financial decisions and actions. This promotes responsible governance and ensures that public resources are used in the best interests of the community.

In addition to earning an unmodified audit, Bamberg County closed the FYE 2025 books under budget by \$252,000 and increased the general fund balance by approximately \$2.8 million. Notably, the Bamberg County Detention Center finished approximately \$30,000 under budget, reflecting responsible financial management. Over the past four to five years, Bamberg County's fund balance has steadily increased. Last year, the Unassigned Fund Balance increased significantly, rising from approximately \$3.7 million in FY24 to approximately \$5.1 million in FY25.

Maintaining a strong unassigned balance provides:

- Cash flow stability
- Financial flexibility
- Protection against unexpected expenses

Audit Manager Will Walls congratulated the entire Bamberg County Financial Staff: "Bamberg is fortunate to have such a skilled financial team, which is not always possible for smaller counties with limited resources."

Bamberg County Council Chairwoman Michelle Martin stated, "We continually strive for fiscal excellence, and an unmodified audit allows us to serve our constituents as effectively and efficiently as possible. Many thanks to Bamberg County's superb financial team for helping us achieve our 11th consecutive unmodified audit."

According to County Administrator Joey Preston, "Despite the many challenges we have faced over the last several years while working with a limited staff and budget, Bamberg County's financial team worked diligently to ensure we not only achieved an unmodified audit but also increased our fund balance surplus." Preston continued, "Our FY25 audit serves as a source of

pride for our County Council, administration, citizens, and staff, and I commend Gina and the entire financial team for another job well done.”

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For more information on this press release, email info@bambergcounty.sc.gov.