

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., January 5, 2026 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairwoman Michelle Martin, Councilwoman Sharon Hammond and Councilmen Evert Comer, Jr., Larry Haynes, Kenneth Ahlin, Spencer Donaldson and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Kenneth Bamberg, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Donald Kirby, Kathy Rhoad, Aaron Ness, Mark Carter, Sharon Carter, Robert Benfield, Moses Cheatham, Dr. William Molnar and two additional visitors.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Council Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II, followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilman Spencer Donaldson.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the minutes from the December 15, 2025, meeting with any necessary corrections.

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

The changing of the gavel from outgoing Chairwoman Sharon Hammond was passed to the incoming Council Chairwoman Michelle Martin (Council District #7) for the year 2026. After accepting the gavel and chairmanship, Chairwoman Martin presented outgoing Chairwoman Hammond with a plaque of appreciation on behalf of Bamberg County as a whole.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, a motion was made that the rules of council be suspended for the election of a vice chairman for 2026. Questions were posed regarding the reason for the suspension of the rules – to no avail. After a short discussion relating to the motion of suspension a vote was taken. Voting in favor: Councilmen, Haynes, Donaldson, Goodman and Comer. Voting not in favor: Councilwomen Martin and Hammond and Councilman Ahlin. An added motion was made by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, to extend the service of vice chairmanship for Councilman Larry Haynes for an additional year (2026). Voting in favor: Councilmen, Haynes, Donaldson, Goodman and Comer. Voting not in favor: Councilwomen Martin and Hammond and Councilman Ahlin.

Public hearing was given to an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee-in-lieu of tax agreement by and among Bamberg County, South Carolina and one or more affiliates known for the time being as "Project Inspiration" providing for both fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes and special source revenue credit incentives providing for an amendment to the amended and restated master agreement for the establishment of the Quad-County Industrial Park I, Park II, and Park III dated as of May 6, 2013 by and among Allendale County, South Carolina, Bamberg County, South Carolina, Barnwell County, South Carolina, and Hampton County, South Carolina, providing for the development of certain multi-county industrial parks, so as to include additional property in that portion of the parks geographically located in Bamberg County, South Carolina; and other matters related thereto. (*Project Inspiration*)

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This company anticipates hiring 40 people. Bamberg resident Mark Carter was interested in knowing if the ordinance was done by percentage among the counties involved. The answer was yes.

The second public hearing was an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of an amended and restated solid waste service agreement with the Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority ("Authority") to extend the term thereof through 2050, update tonnage commitments and the increase annual tipping fees; authorizing the issuance by the authority of its revenue bonds in an amount not to exceed \$30 million to fund the construction of a new phase; and other matters relating thereto. Administrator Preston pointed out that other landfills charge about twice as much as we will be paying.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Update of Proceedings by Southern Carolina Alliance Representative Kathy Rhoad of Southern Carolina Alliance, reported that SCA is working on Project Inspiration and Project Knox. Project Beagle and Project Fogle, in addition to the design of the county's speculative industrial building. More information will be shared later.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported on the following: 1) Hopefully, next week the Treasurer will have completed accounts. Explained the council members will need more timely financial data as they get ready to compile information for the county budget. Temporary assistance from other county financial employees was offered to the Treasurer, but it was declined. In October and November, we were getting numbers from July; 2) Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 8th; 3) Matchboard is scheduled to launch this month; 4) Pre-bid meeting was held for the EOC; 5) Scandinavian Race/40 mile relay is scheduled for January 24th at 7 a.m.; 6) Church Street project had water issues – looking to schedule a ribbon cutting in February; 7) Groundbreaking for Riley Drive was done today, January 5; 8) Detention Center – waiting for some grant money and doctors and nurses are now provided at the Detention Center – the doctor is out of Easley and available 24/7; and 9) Dashboard Kickoff in January. Council accepted this report as information.

Prior discussion of a resolution establishing written public notice of Bamberg County Council meeting schedule, Chairwoman Martin requested council change the council meetings to first Tuesdays instead of first Mondays to accommodate her and residents, that desired to attend the school district board meetings on first Mondays. She expressed decisions being made by the school board affect her/others tax base as well. Additional comments were made. On motion by Councilman Ahlin, seconded by Councilwoman Hammond, council agreed to change the council meetings to the first Tuesdays of each month, unless another issue for date change is necessary (holidays, etc.). Voting in favor: Councilmen Ahlin, Comer, Donaldson, Goodman and Councilwoman Hammond and Chairwoman Martin. Voting not in favor: Councilman Haynes. The next council meeting will be scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 6 p.m.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved a resolution of intent to participate in the South Carolina Counties' Property and Liability Trust. Mr. Robert Benfield from South Carolina Association of Counties was present to explain and answer questions. Councilman Ahlin opposed approval.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved third reading of

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an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee-in-lieu of tax agreement by and among Bamberg County, South Carolina and one or more affiliates known for the time being as "Project Inspiration" providing for both fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes and special source revenue credit incentives providing for an amendment to the amended and restated master agreement for the establishment of the Quad-County Industrial Park I, Park II, and Park III dated as of May 6, 2013 by and among Allendale County, South Carolina, Bamberg County, South Carolina, Barnwell County, South Carolina, and Hampton County, South Carolina, providing for the development of certain multi-county industrial parks, so as to include additional property in that portion of the parks geographically located in Bamberg County, South Carolina; and other matters related thereto. (*Project Inspiration*)

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council gave third reading to an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of an amended and restated solid waste service agreement with the Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority ("Authority") to extend the term thereof through 2050, update tonnage commitments and the increase annual tipping fees; authorizing the issuance by the authority of its revenue bonds in an amount not to exceed \$30 million to fund the construction of a new phase; and other matters relating thereto. Councilman Ahlin voted no.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the calendar of events as submitted.

Public comments were called for at this time. No public comments were made.

Chairwoman Martin called for council comments. Some of the following comments were made: 1) Public thanked for their attendance; 2) Recognition of Ms. Carrie Eaddy being 100 years old (Council District #4); 3) Thanked everyone for what they do; 4) Personal congratulations to the Bamberg-Ehrhardt Football Team; and 5) Thanks to the staff.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council voted to adjourn at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, Clerk to Council