

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 6, 2025 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., Councilwomen Sharon Hammond and Michelle Martin, Councilmen Spencer Donaldson, Kenneth Ahlin and Larry Haynes. **Absent:** Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Gina Smith, Donna Brown, Chip Mair, Alisha Moore, Shawn Hanks, Craig Threatt, Todd Brown, Dottie Brown, Christopher Green, Mark Nettles, Denise Donaldson, Dave Clayton, Sharon Carter, Jannie Johnson, Kay Clary, Josh Urwick, Moses Cheatham, Loretta Moore, Donald Kirby, Attorney General Alan Wilson, Kenneth Bamberg and six additional visitors.

Bamberg County Council meeting was called to order by Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., at 6:00 p.m. Invocation was rendered by Councilman Larry Haynes, followed with the pledge of allegiance led by Councilwoman Sharon Hammond.

On motion by Councilwoman Hammond, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the minutes from the December 9, 2024 meeting were approved with necessary corrections should there be any.

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

Swearing in of re-elected member Councilman Spencer Donaldson (District #4), was performed by Chief Magistrate Judge Craig Threatt and during this time the bible was held by Councilman Donaldson's wife Ms. Denise Donaldson. Due to Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II (District #5), was unable to attend the scheduled meeting for his swearing in, Judge Threatt administered the oath of office to him earlier during day and the bible was held by his wife Dr. Cheri Goodman.

Newly elected members Kenneth Ahlin (District #1) and Michelle Martin (District #7), were sworn in by South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson. Councilman Ahlin's daughter held the bible for his ceremony. Councilwoman Martin had Councilman Ahlin to hold the bible during her oath of office. After the ceremony, SC Attorney General Wilson said he was honored to swear in the two newest council members and to serve the citizens of Bamberg County.

On motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council followed the County's Rules and Procedures that the changing of the gavel from outgoing Chairman Evert Comer, Jr., be passed to Councilwoman Sharon Hammond (District #2) for the year 2025. After accepting the gavel and the chairmanship, Chairwoman Hammond presented outgoing Chairman Comer with a plaque of appreciation on behalf of Bamberg County as a whole. Councilman Comer was praised for his accomplishments while serving in the capacity as chairman. Mr. Comer stated he was encouraged by the resilient nature of Bamberg County citizens and he was honored to serve as Council Chairman and he looks forward to continuing his service in District 6.

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On motion by Councilman Donaldson, seconded by Councilman Comer, council followed the County's Rules and Procedures that Councilman Larry Haynes would serve as Vice Chairman for the year 2025.

Newly elected Bamberg County Coroner Shawn Hanks was present to introduce himself to the Bamberg County Council and to all that were present and thanked them for their votes. Coroner Hanks expressed that he is excited to be of service to the citizens of Bamberg County. Council received him with opened arms and are looking forward to working with him.

County Sheriff Kenneth Bamberg recognized volunteer reserve deputy Jeffrey Todd Brown of Bamberg, for his 25 years of service to the county sheriff's department. Deputy Brown was presented with a plaque for his tireless service and dedication. Also, Sheriff Bamberg recognized his wife, who is the school superintendent, Dr. Dottie Brown and presented her with a beautiful vase of flowers. She was also recognized and thanked for the sacrifices she made as a spouse. Sheriff Bamberg thanked the administrator, the county council and the people of Bamberg County for their support in helping them serve the community.

South Carolina State University 1890 Extension Midlands Region Director Christopher Green, gave a report on 1890's summer camp schedule. South Carolina State has several camps for youth to participate in. The 1890 program's Explorer's Camp for Bamberg County will be held June 16-20 at a location to be determined later for children ages 8-13. An Achieve Campus will also be held this summer for children 8-13. Those children will be bused from Green's four-county service area to the SC State campus. The Achieve Camp for Bamberg County will be held July 7-11. The 1890 program is also sponsoring a 4-H Residential Camp that is housed at Camp Bob Cooper in Summerton. The goal is to innovate, educate and elevate the quality of life and raise the standard of living for South Carolinians. Additional information can be obtained by calling (803)813-0017 or email cgreen38@scsu.edu. Council thanked Mr. Green for coming to share the information.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Development Alliance - Monthly Report

Project Director Joshua Urwick reported that SCA have some things in motion, but will be reporting back to Bamberg County at a later date.

Bamberg County Treasurer – Monthly Report

No report was available at this time.

Bamberg County Finance – Monthly Report

No report available at this time.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported that: 1) Insurance Reserve to make a presentation soon; 2) Meeting scheduled tomorrow regarding the \$12M grant regarding Broadband; 3) Bamberg County now owns Presbyterian Street; 4) Will be meeting with Dr. Whitesides of the 1890 Program, on next week to help them come up with ways to improve Alligator Road; 5) There are ten pre-construction meetings scheduled for Tuesday, January 7th; 6) Meeting scheduled regarding the Little Swamp Community Center at 11 a.m. and 7) Cyber Training for employees is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29 @ 10 a.m. in the Council Chambers. This report was received as information.

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On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council passed a resolution establishing written public notice of the Bamberg County Council Meeting schedule for calendar year 2025.

At this time, Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from council. Council thanked the public for attending and Administrator Preston and his staff were acknowledged for their hard work. Councilman Ahlin said that his goal is to be an active contributor to the council team. Patience and persistence will hopefully be the virtues to be successful in this endeavor. Thanks was given to the citizens that attended the meeting and they were asked to please keep coming. It was requested that we all pray for a good year.

There being no further business for discussion, Chairwoman Hammond asked for a motion to adjourn. On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Comer, council voted to adjourn at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC