

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.

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In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bamberg County Council met 6:00 p.m., March 10, 2025 in Council Chambers with limited seating for the public alongside live streaming of the meeting provided for public view. **Present:** Chairwoman Sharon Hammond, Councilwoman Michelle Martin, Councilmen Spencer Donaldson, Kenneth Ahlin and Larry Haynes. **Absent:** and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Gina Smith, Shawn Hanks, Kenneth Bamberg, Joshua Urwick Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Kay Clary, Grant Gibbons, Moses Cheatham, Dave Clayton, Sue Clayton and three additional visitors.

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

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the minutes from the February 3, 2025 meeting were approved with necessary corrections.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilwoman Martin, council approved the amended agenda with an added item listed under L-1 Other Items: (Appointment to the LSCOG Board of Directors).

Bamberg County Coroner Shawn Hanks updated the council on the new Grief Share Program and Fentanyl Awareness Outreach. There were 4 Bamberg County residents that died of Fentanyl overdoses in 2024 and right now there are 12 autopsies pending for cause of death. There is a rise of Fentanyl use and deaths and Coroner Hanks will be offering NARCAN Training and a grief share program. It was further stated that 2 new people will be joining the Coroner's team very shortly. Council thanked Coroner Hanks for the update and the work he is doing.

#### **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:**

##### Southern Carolina Development Alliance - Monthly Report

Project Director Joshua Urwick reported that they had 3 site visits. SCA is expecting the Council to give second reading to Project Black Jack this evening. Mr. Urwick said there is some information about Project Black Jack that's floating around in the public, but there are specifics that SCA cannot discuss at this point. Information that's prematurely discussed can kill a project quickly. It has happened before. Presently, they are working with contractors at the Barrel Plant and hopefully additional information will be available at the next council meeting.

##### Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported that: 1) Received was a Body Armor Grant for the Sheriff's Department in the amount of \$9,266, for the purchase of body armor vests; 2) We are still waiting and hoping within the next 30 days to receive settlement funds of \$1.1 from storm damage the county sustained from the recent storms; 3) Several meetings have been held with FEMA regarding where we stand

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with our claims from the storms; 4) The roofing project on the old council chambers has been completed and the main portion of the courthouse has been done; 5) The McGee Street sidewalk project is underway. The outline of how EMS units and the fire departments will get into the helicopter pad will change a little, but it will be better than it now stands; 6) Bamberg County Council Retreat is scheduled for March 21-22 and a FACT Sheet will be distributed to the council; 7) Roadwork to help reduce the flooding on Riley Drive- the application has been done and it will take about 50 days before we receive the paperwork; 8) Roadwork on Church Street in Denmark will be provided with funds from the C-Fund Committee; and 9) Denmark Water mainline was cut last week – one line has been repaired, but didn't realize there was an additional line that needed to be repaired. A meeting has been scheduled with CEO Walter Bennett of MUSC to discuss the water situation (no backup for water problem in plan). Councilman Comer addressed the water issue in Denmark by stating, if Denmark, Bamberg and possibly Barnwell, could come to the table and discuss to see what could be worked out to solve the water problem as it relates to the water condition that greatly involves the Bamberg-Barnwell Emergency Center. This issue will be looked into.

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On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council passed a resolution authorizing and approving the acceptance of certain loan assistance monies from the South Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority; authorizing the council chairman to execute that certain loan assistance agreement between Bamberg County and the South Carolina Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority; and other matters relating thereto. Voting in favor: Haynes, Donaldson, Comer, Martin and Hammond. Voting not in favor: Ahlin. Councilman Ahlin requested a copy of the report pertaining to the resolution. Dr. Goodman was absent.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a special source revenue credit agreement between Bamberg County, South Carolina, and Project Black Jack.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council gave second reading to an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a special source revenue credit agreement by and between Bamberg County, South Carolina and a Company currently known to the County as Project Black Jack with respect to certain economic development property in the County, whereby such property will receive certain special source revenue credits in respect of investment in infrastructure. Voting in favor: Hammond, Ahlin, Haynes, Donaldson, Comer and Martin. Dr. Goodman, II was absent.

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

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved the appointment made by Chairwoman Hammond, of Mayor Wilma Letecia Edmonds to the Lower Savannah Council of Governments Board of Directors, to serve as a representative from Bamberg County.

At this time, Council heard comments from the public. 1) Grant Gibbons, chief public defender for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial Circuit, addressed the council on possible ways the county could reduce costs associated with its overcrowded detention center. Housing federal inmates, implementing a home detention

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program and using the services of a jail attorney, or prisoners' rights attorney, were a couple of approaches shared. Mr. Grant offered his assistance in pursuing any one of these options and to assign additional staff to help implement. Bamberg County Detention Center Captain Moses Cheatham said most of the inmates being held at the center are being held on serious charges that would make them ineligible for some of the programs. Mr. Gibbons thought it to be good to take a look at it and possibly try it for six months. He offered assistance to do whatever he could to make it work. Sheriff Bamberg thanked Administrator Preston and Council for always working to provide various grants for his department for the much needed equipment and supplies. 2) Kay Clary, Executive Director of Bamberg County Office on Aging, spoke regarding funding cuts that have affected the programs at the Office on Aging, especially the Meals on Wheels for the seniors. She mentioned that many of the seniors depend on the meals and don't have the means to get adequate meals. Presently, they are receiving funds from Bamberg County, First Baptist Church of Bamberg and First Baptist Church of Denmark. Approximately two years ago, they were delivering 200 meals daily and now they are down to providing 75. Ms. Clary was asking for additional assistance with the program.

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 noted that the public should be allowed to speak on whatever they would like to and that council need to change the allotted time limit for public speaking. The Denmark-Olar Boys Basketball Team were congratulated for winning the Class A State Championship in Florence, SC. The D-O Vikings won against Abbeville Panthers. It was asked that the ordinance be checked to see wat it says about public comments. Referencing the Meals on Wheels, it was mentioned that the churches in the County be contacted for their support toward the program and the community should do all they can to help. Also, March is Women's Month and all were asked to give a thanks and a smile to the women.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council voted to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC