

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., July 14, 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 Evert Comer, Jr., Spencer Donaldson, Kenneth Ahlin and Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II. **Absent:** Larry Haynes. **Others Present:** Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Joshua Urwick, Ian McLeod, Loretta McLeod, Shawn Hanks, Don Kirby and three additional visitors.

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

On motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, the minutes from meetings held June 2, 2025, June 23, 2025, and June 27, 2025 were approved with necessary corrections.

On motion by Councilwoman Martin, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved the agenda as presented.

Council recognized 2025 Bamberg-Ehrhardt High School graduate Ian McLeod, for being one of 13 students from across the state who received a \$5,000 S.C. Association of Counties Board of Directors Scholarship. Chairwoman Hammond presented a plaque that referenced his accomplishments. Ian graduated with a GPA of 4.7 and he plans to study cybersecurity at the University of South Carolina Aiken this fall. We all applaud Ian for his endeavors.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS:

Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance - Monthly Report

Project Director Joshua Urwick of Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance reported the county had had a couple of site visits since the last council meeting. There are several projects that are interested in the Wolfe site in Denmark. SCA is about to complete the due diligence through the Palmetto Sites program. Mr. Urwick said that they have another project, Project Inspiration and they are moving quickly. Hopefully, there will be additional information to report on at the next meeting.

Bamberg County Treasurer – Monthly Report

County Treasurer Alice Johnson stated that the balance of the county's regular account stood at a negative \$180,317 at the end of March. County Controller Gina Smith said, "Two main reasons for that are that the receipts on hand were in the county coffers, but not in that bank account. Also, other funds owe the county general funds back money as well. This report was accepted as information.

Bamberg County Finance – Monthly Report

Finance Director T.M. Thomas gave a general fund report for March, with revenues standing at \$10,623,706. Expenses stood at \$7,615,906, leaving a positive balance of \$3,007,801. This report was accepted as information.

July 14, 2025....continue

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported: 1) Tour for Project Circular is forthcoming and they are paying their employees \$20-\$30 per hour; 2) City of Denmark has purchased an approximately \$35,000 valve which will assist in managing water flow and pressure throughout the water distribution system. The company that refurbished the tank now has to come back to get the tank flushed out, cleaned and filled back up with water. South Carolina Department of Public Health will have to test the water before the tank is brought back into operation, then there will be a ribbon cutting; 3) Denmark Water and Sewer Supervisor Cedric Hudson, is cooperating with the county in addressing the city's water pressure issues. He's checking on the fire hydrants that need replacing; 4) Looking to have the county engineer present at the next meeting to present an update on the development of the broadband system; 5) We are expecting a grant that's coming our way to rewire the entire county with some emergency sirens. 6) Dashboard meeting is looking to be scheduled during the week of July 28th; 7) A TAC meeting is scheduled in Barnwell on July 16th at 10 a.m.; and 8) Reminder of SCAC classes that will be offered at the SCAC Conference in August. Council accepted this report as information.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Martin, council passed a resolution to negotiate a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes agreement between Bamberg County and Project Circular; identifying the project; and other matters related thereto. The company plans to bring an approximately \$45 million capital investment to the county.

On motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved a resolution affirming support for the Bamberg Job Corps Center and urging elected officials at all levels to advocate for its continued operation. South Carolina's only Job Corps Center and 99 other contractor-operated centers were scheduled for closure following the U.S. Department of Labor's decision to pause their operations by June 30. A judge has since temporarily stopped the Trump administration from moving forward with its efforts to eliminate the centers.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilwoman Martin, council approved first reading of an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes and incentive agreement by and between Bamberg County, South Carolina and Project Circular to provide for payment of a fee-in-lieu of taxes; authorizing certain infrastructure credits and; other related matters.

On motion by Councilwoman Martin, seconded by Councilman Comer, council approved the calendar of events after adding one additional event (LSCOG meeting in Orangeburg – August 14 @ 6 p.m.).

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council appointed Denmark Mayor Harold Johnson to serve on the Lower Savannah Council of Governments' board of directors. He will be replacing former Denmark Mayor Dr. Gerald E. Wright.

Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from council. Council thanked the public for coming out, thanks extended to all county employees for their hard work, thanks to all for the support during the bereavement of Mr. George Donaldson (brother of Councilman Donaldson). All were asked to continue praying for those in Texas (referencing the flooding), and if you are not signed up for Code Red in the county, please do so.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Councilwoman Martin, seconded by Councilman Comer, council voted to adjourn at 7:14 p.m. Respectfully submitted,