

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., June 2, 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, Dr. Jonathan Goodman, II and Larry Haynes.

Others Present: Joey R. Preston, T.M. Thomas, Richard Ness, Alice Johnson, Gina Smith, Kenneth Bamberg, Chip Maier, Alisha Moore, Loretta Moore, Curtis Tyler, Betty Mack, Landon Johnson, William Molnar, James Clasp, Michelle Orr, Ian McLeod, Don Kirby, Sharon Carter, LaToya Broxton, J-Nae Perdue, Nykeisha Thornton, Christopher Gantt, Moses Cheatham, Faith Vice, Haley Thorpe 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 Councilman Evert Comer, Jr.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, the minutes from the May 12, 2025 meeting were approved with necessary corrections.

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

In appreciation and observance of National Correctional Officers Week, Captain Moses Cheatham of the Bamberg County Detention Center recognized officers J-Nae Perdue, Christopher Gantt and Nykeisha Thornton for their quick action in preventing damage or loss of life during a fire at the detention center in January. Officer Gantt and Officer Thornton went into the unit, got the inmates out, put them on the recreation yard, then they successfully extinguished the fire. During that time, Officer Perdue contacted all emergency services. Their quick response prevented any need for any medical services. Officer Gantt was presented with an Officer of the Year award and Staff Sgt. LaTonya Broxton was presented a Supervisor of the Year award. Both recipients gave comments of gratitude for receipt of their awards.

On motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved the report coming from Bamberg County Recreation Committee Chairman, Curtis Tyler, Jr. The committee had a total of \$14,000 to work with and there were 20 applicants that applied with 19 being successful. Recipients were: **Bamberg County Youth Baseball** (ages 6 & under); **Bamberg County Softball** (girls 7-8); **Bamberg Youth Softball** (girls 9-10); **Bamberg Youth Softball** (11-12); **Bamberg Youth Baseball** (ages 7-8 boys); **Bamberg Youth Baseball** (ages 9-10 boys); **Bamberg Youth Baseball** (ages 11-12 boys); **Bamberg Youth Baseball** (ages 13-14 boys); **Summer Enrichment/Recreation Program** (grades 6-7); **Summer Enrichment/Recreation Program** (grades 8-9); **Bamberg County First Steps** (pre-school & parents); **City of Denmark and Denmark Tech** (ages 3-18); **Bamberg Youth Basketball** (ages 5-8); **Bamberg Youth Basketball** (ages 9-10); **Bamberg Youth Basketball** (ages 11-14); **Health Hometown Initiative**; **Kamp Future** (ages 7-8); **Kamp Future** (ages 9-10) and **Kamp Future** (ages 11-12). Mr. Tyler was thanked for the commitment and dedication of the Bamberg County Recreation Committee.

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During this presentation, Sheriff Kenneth Bamberg recognized Faith Vice and Haley Thorpe, two new dispatchers in the dispatch operations center. Newly hired deputies were introduced and recognized: deputies Michelle Orr, Ira James and James Platt, along with Landon Johnson, who is working on his deputy certification. There are still a few vacancies at the sheriff's office and they are diligently working to get them filled. On behalf of council, Chairwoman Hammond thanked everyone for stepping up and making sure to continue serving Bamberg County.

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 and that the speculative building at the CrossRhodes Industrial park was getting a lot of traction. A couple of international companies have sent them RFIs. The Barrel Company is still trying to get things worked out for them. Hopefully, there will be additional information to report on at the next meeting.

Bamberg County Administrator – Monthly Report

Administrator Preston reported: 1) Received information on Friday, May 30, no explanation was given to Administrator Preston that the Bamberg Job Corps would be closing in June; 2) Group tour is scheduled for Black Steel Company on June 17th at 3:30 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. (will inform); 3) Low Country Health Care Systems breakfast is scheduled for Thursday, June 25th at 10 a.m, at the DTC Board Room; 4) Water Tank – still waiting for Denmark to help get the water back on. It will take 6 to 8 more weeks before being able to get the water back on; 5) Permit has been received for Riley Road project; 6) Dashboard - asking council to review their calendar for a date next week and let us know when they can meet; and 7) FEMA is meeting now and we need to work fast with our projects because they are talking about closing. Council accepted this report as information.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council passed a resolution to recognize the Bamberg-Ehrhardt Girls Track & Field Team as Class A State Champions and appoint them as ambassadors of Bamberg County.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council approved a resolution to request the General Assembly and SCDOT to place signs at all county entrance ways announcing the Bamberg-Ehrhardt Girls Track & Field Team as Class A State Champions.

On motion by Councilman Comer, seconded by Councilman Goodman, council approved second reading of an ordinance authorizing (1) 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 Knox, acting for itself, one or more affiliates, and/or other project sponsors collectively; 2) the benefits of a multi-county industrial or business park to be made available to the company and the project; 3) certain special source revenue credits for the company and the project; and 4) other matters relating thereto.

On motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council gave second reading approval, in title only, to adopt the operating and capital budgets of Bamberg County for the fiscal year

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beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026, and to make appropriations for such Bamberg County budgets for county ordinary purposes and for other county purposes for which the county may levy a tax; to provide for the levy of taxes on all taxable personal and real estate properties in Bamberg County for such county ordinary purposes, including sufficient tax to pay the principal and interest on outstanding indebtedness of Bamberg County maturing during said fiscal year; and to provide for other matters relating to Bamberg County and Bamberg County budgetary matters, including, without limitation, certain capital expenditures and related lease-purchase financings and general obligation bonds of the county. Bamberg County Controller Gina Smith addressed council by saying as of now the budget calls for a general fund of \$13 million, and special revenue, \$5.2million; enterprise, \$1.8 million; debt service, \$452,985, capital projects, \$5.8 million. A proposed 24-hour advanced life support quick response vehicle, or QRV, which would be stationed in Ehrhardt would require a 14.5-mill property tax increase. That would equate to an annual cost of \$467,076 and that would be approximately a third of the entire general fund proposed increase. If your home was valued at \$125,000 the tax impact would be an additional \$72.64 and a \$100,000 homeowner would see an increase of \$58.12 and a \$50,000 homeowner would see a \$29.06 increase in their tax bill. Additional information was given on what would make a difference in the budget. Those voting in favor of passing second reading: Councilman Haynes, Councilman Donaldson, Dr. Goodman, Councilman Comer and Chairwoman Hammond. Voting not in favor of the budget: Councilman Ahlin. Councilwoman Martin abstained from the vote. Council agreed to schedule third reading of the budget for Monday, June 23rd at 6:00 p.m.

On motion by Councilman Haynes, seconded by Councilman Donaldson, council approved the calendar of events after adding two additional events (tour of Black Steel and breakfast at DTC).

Bamberg County resident Sharon Carter addressed council by saying there is a need for budget transparency. Ms. Carter went on to say that as a taxpayer, she would like to see a line-item budget and asked if council would view the line-item budget prior voting on it. Administrator Preston explained that the line-item budgets are on line.

Chairwoman Hammond asked for comments from council. Council thanked the public for coming out, congratulations to all graduates, congratulations to the Bamberg-Ehrhardt Girls Track Team, thanks to the Detention Center and the Sheriff Department. Special thanks was given to the employees and Happy Father's Day was extended to the fathers. Councilman Comer announced the passing of his brother – Larry Comer and his wife's brother - Lt. Ray Brown. Condolences were shared with the Comer's.

There being no further business for discussion, on motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Councilman Haynes, council voted to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose R. Shepherd, CCC