



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: News Media

From: Bamberg County Administration

Date: July 28, 2026

Re: No More Eyesore, Compromised Roof, Attic Pigeons, or Asbestos! Bamberg County Historic Courthouse Renovation Officially Underway!

Bamberg, South Carolina (July 2026) –On Friday, July 24 at 11 a.m., the Bamberg County Council celebrated the much-anticipated Bamberg County Historic Courthouse Renovation with a groundbreaking ceremony. Bamberg County leaders welcomed an array of distinguished speakers from across the state, including:

- Bamberg Historic Society President Nancy Foster
- Craig Gaulden Davis, PBK Architect John Hansen
- Mashburn Construction Company Executive Vice President Richard Kinard
- Attorney Aaron Ness, son of Bamberg County Attorney Richard Ness and grandson of Late South Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justices Julius B. “Bubba” Ness
- Former Bamberg County School District 1 Superintendent Phyllis Schwarting, daughter of Late Bamberg County Family Court Judge Robert Watson “Bob” Kemp, Jr.
- Retired South Carolina Second Judicial Circuit Court Judge Doyet A. “Jack” Early, III
- South Carolina House of Representatives-District 90 Representative Justin Bamberg
- Bamberg County Council Chairwoman Michelle Martin
- Bamberg County Council Vice Chairman Larry Haynes
- Bamberg County Councilman Evert Comer, Jr.
- Bamberg County Councilman Dr. Jonathan Goodman, III
- Bamberg County Administrator Joey Preston
- Bamberg Mayor Corey Ramsey

Approximately 150 community leaders and citizens were in attendance, including the following special guests:

- Bamberg County Resident Family Court Judge Angela W. Abstance
- Bamberg County Probate Court Judge Donna Brown
- Bamberg County Circuit Court Judge Martha M. Rivers
- Bamberg County Circuit Court Judge Courtney Clyburn Pope

- SC 6th Congressional District Regional (Midlands) Director Dalton Tresvant
- Longest-serving Retired Bamberg County Councilman Reverend Isaiah Odom
- Denmark Technical College President Eric Brown
- SC State University
- Associate Vice President for Public Service and Agriculture
- Dr. Lamin E. Drammeh

Residents and community leaders have been anxiously awaiting this day for over five years since the courthouse closed its doors because it was deemed structurally unsafe and uninhabitable. Since the closing, all court proceedings have occurred in the former National Guard Armory, which is now called the Bamberg County Civic Center. The facility lacks central heating and air as well as adequate space to efficiently and effectively conduct business. The courthouse renovation project will be funded by Bamberg County and the South Carolina Rural County Courthouse Stabilization Fund (SCRCCSF), of which Bamberg County is the first applicant and recipient.

A project description was provided by Craig Gaulden Davis, PBK Architect John Hansen, who described the plan to restore the building to its original Romanesque architectural style, which he said “mirrors characteristics of Bamberg County and its citizens, such as resilience, strong economic and educational values, and perseverance.”

Mashburn Construction Company Executive Vice President Richard Kinard explained how his team, who has five offices across South Carolina and has recently restored Laurens and Clarendon County Courthouses as well as the Newberry Opera House, is “committed to being good stewards of the dollars spent on this project” and that his firm is not just a “builder of better buildings but also a builder of better people.”

Next, former Bamberg Mayor and Bamberg Historic Society President Nancy Foster shared the Bamberg County Historical Courthouse’s journey and transformation, which began when it was built in 1897, the same year Bamberg County split from Barnwell County. The building was designed by Architect LF Goodrich, a well-known architect who also designed the Burke County, Georgia Courthouse and the Athens, Georgia City Hall. The courthouse was originally located in the center of Bamberg and was moved to its current location on Main Highway in 1950, making it “the largest public structure ever moved in SC,” according to Foster.

In addition to the relocation, the courthouse was renovated and expanded in 1950; however, the current building remains unchanged since, with no significant restoration or repairs for 76 years, leading to countless hazardous structural conditions. As a result, in efforts to provide the safest possible environment for the Bamberg County community, there was no alternative but to shutter the windows and doors of the building. For five years, courthouse staffers have worked in modular units, and court proceedings have occurred in a makeshift community center/warehouse. While these conditions have not been ideal, these public servants have effectively conducted the people’s business with grace and perseverance.

Understandably, Friday marked a pivotal moment for Bamberg County and its citizens; the crowd was buzzing with pride, hope, and relief to finally break ground on a courthouse that will serve as a beacon of justice, progress, resilience, and community.

Attorney Aaron Ness, son of Bamberg County Attorney Richard Ness and grandson of Retired South Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Julius B. “Bubba” Ness, exclaimed, “Gone are the days of this building being an eyesore! No more compromised roof, no more pigeons in the attic, no more asbestos!”

Reflecting on his days in the Bamberg County Historic Courthouse, retired South Carolina Second Judicial Circuit Court Judge Doyet A. “Jack” Early, III said it is time for the courthouse to have “a new set of clothes...a new face.” He, too, remembered the infamous pigeons in the attic and recalled a day when the air conditioning unit in one of the courthouse bathrooms started “snowing pigeon feathers.” He also noted the historical significance of the structure as being one of the last places Alex Murdaugh practiced law before his downfall. Judge Early ended his comments by reprimanding the naysayers who have been critical of the Bamberg County Administration’s efforts to renovate the courthouse, stating the critics should “rethink their position.”

Following Judge Early’s remarks, Representative Justin Bamberg emphasized the historical and symbolic importance of a courthouse in which community members often experience some of life’s most joyous milestones, such as adoptions and marriages, and sadly, some of their most difficult, such as divorces, estate litigation, and criminal court proceedings involving their loved ones. He stated, “The rural courthouse is more than a building; it is a place that represents all facets of justice, and this revitalization project will allow it to once more be a place for all of Bamberg County citizens to seek justice, see it, and hopefully, believe in it again.”

Representative Bamberg also thanked everyone involved in securing the funding to move forward with the project, including Senator Brad Hutto and South Carolina Chief Justice John Kittredge, who visited the Bamberg County Civic Center/Courthouse last year and was instrumental in the creation of the state’s rural courthouse fund. Because of these partnerships across many local and state entities, Friday’s program culminated with the ceremonial golden shovel groundbreaking, which was more than a symbolic gesture but rather one that represents progress and a brighter future for all of Bamberg County residents...a future that will include a beautifully re-envisioned community epicenter as a fitting home for the ever-turning wheels of justice.

As lovely as they are, pigeons will no longer be allowed to wreak havoc in the Bamberg County Historic Courthouse’s attic. This historic milestone has been “a long time coming,” stated County Administrator Joey Preston. “Over the last five years, here in Bamberg County, we have weathered many storms, both literally and figuratively. However, we have never stopped dreaming of uncharted possibilities for this community, and we have never once stopped working to make those dreams a reality for our citizens. The wheels of progress don’t often turn

as quickly as we hope or in the directions we imagined, but make no mistake, today's courthouse groundbreaking is indeed an example of progress that would not have been possible without the collaboration of our local and state leaders, the South Carolina Supreme Court, Craig Gaulden Davis, PBK Architect John Hansen, Mashburn Construction Company, and the citizens of Bamberg County. We thank everyone involved, especially for their patience, and celebrate this occasion as one of many steps toward a brighter future for Bamberg County."

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For more information on this press release, email info@bambergcounty.sc.gov.