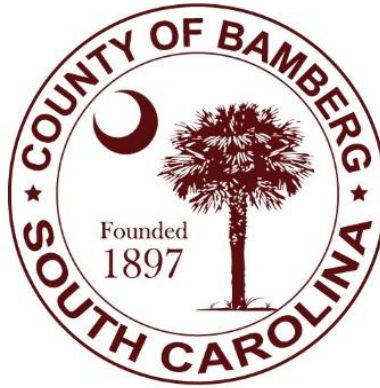


County of Bamberg

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Trent Kinard, *Vice Chairman* – District #1
Sharon Hammond – District #2
Larry Haynes – District #3
Joe Guess, Jr. – District #4
Isaiah Odom – District #5
Evert Comer, Jr. – District #6
Clint Carter, *Chairman* – District #7



Joey R. Preston
Administrator
Rose R. Shepherd
Clerk to Council

Press Release

To: News Media

CC: Bamberg County Administration

From: Bamberg County Public Information Office

Date: June 5, 2018

Re: Bamberg County Council Approves Courthouse Renovation Resolution

Bamberg, South Carolina (June 2018) – On June 4, 2018, Bamberg County Council approved a resolution supporting a plan to finance the renovation of the historic Bamberg County courthouse. Council members and the public viewed a presentation that outlined the renovation and finance plan for the courthouse. The proposed plan was developed over the past five years through a comprehensive analysis and consultation with experts. Council's approval of the resolution allows for Bamberg County to move forward with the much needed repairs and renovations to this building of architectural and historic significance.

The historic Bamberg Courthouse was built in 1897, in the same year that Bamberg County split from Barnwell County to form its own county. The building was designed by Architect LF Goodrich, a well-known architect who also designed the Burke County Courthouse in Georgia and the City Hall for Athens, Georgia. The Bamberg County courthouse was originally located in the center of Bamberg and was moved to its current location on Main Highway in 1950. In addition to the relocation, the courthouse was also renovated and expanded at that time.

The current courthouse remains unchanged from 1950. In the 68 years since the relocation and renovation, there has been no significant restoration or repairs. As such, there are significant structural, electrical, mechanical, and accessibility issues that require immediate attention to ensure the building is suitable for both employees and county residents in order to conduct the county's business. The building has been evaluated by experts in architecture, engineering, plumbing, and fire protection. Bamberg County officials have created a plan after receiving the evaluations and recommendations from experts as to the best way to preserve this architecturally significant building.

The experts identified multiple significant deficiencies in the courthouse that will be addressed and improved with the \$6 million proposed renovation. In 2015, Liberty Mutual Insurance Company ordered the courthouse boiler no longer be used because of the liability associated with use of the old and dangerous boiler, which is considered to be an explosion hazard. As a result of the boiler being off-line,

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the Bamberg County courthouse is the only known courthouse in the state without hot water. Hazardous asbestos has been identified throughout the building in the pipes, floor tiles, walls and ceilings. The foundation assessment concluded that interior and exterior cracks pose a risk for foundation settlement, as well as a risk to the overall structural integrity of the building. Water infiltration was identified in numerous interior and exterior locations. The courthouse is not compliant with the Americans with Disability Act; it has no disability access to restrooms, service counters, or second floor facilities. Additionally, the elevator needs upgrades to be ADA compliant. The lack of accessibility features is an issue for Bamberg County's growing elderly population.

Additional deficiencies identified and to be addressed in the renovation project include:

- Overcrowded office spaces not built for functionality or safe-keeping of important stored files.
- Life safety issues including fire protection
- Courtroom security is a major concern, there is no secure parking for judges
- The roof, exterior and windows need repair/replacement
- Drives and parking areas are crumbling
- Pedestrian access points are inadequate
- The attic area is infested with pigeons and other wildlife

"This project will not be easy, neither financially nor politically. However, the restoration of an important piece of Bamberg's history will be well worth the effort," stated Joey Preston, Bamberg County Administrator. "The building has not been maintained for the last several decades. Bamberg County has a strong and successful relationship with the USDA Department of Rural Development. As interest rates are projected to rise, now is the time to set this important project in motion to preserve and restore this important piece of Bamberg County's history."

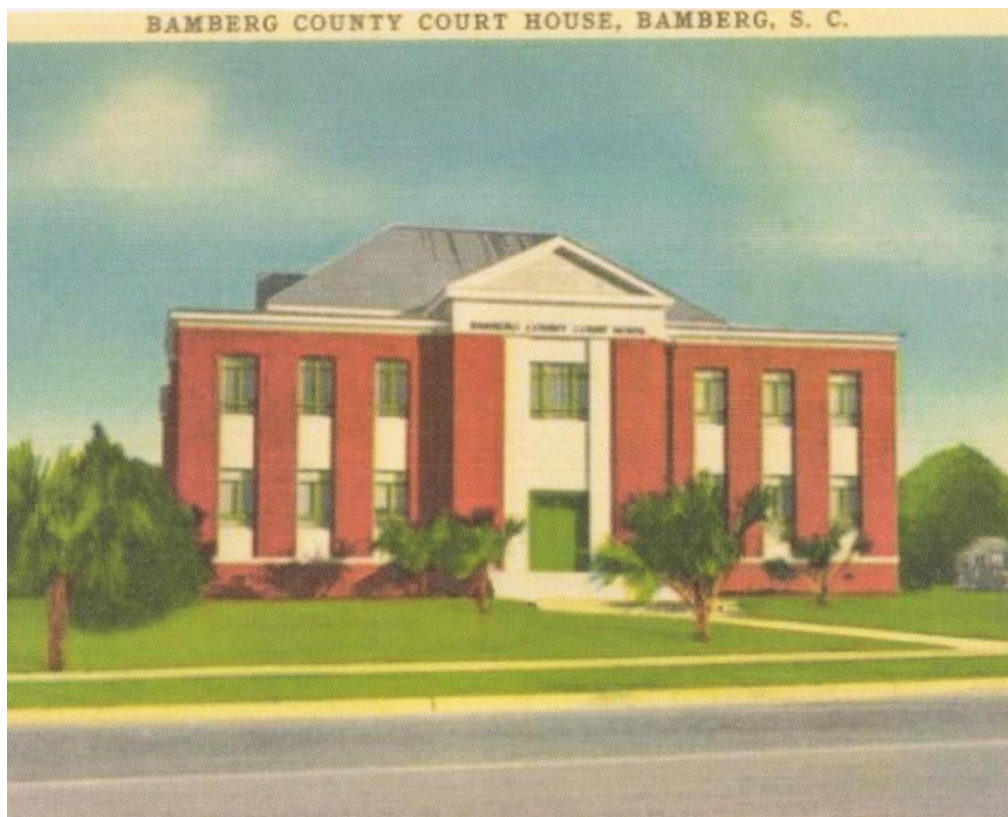
On May 16, 2018, Bamberg Facilities Corporation approved a resolution for the proposed restoration and renovation of the historic Bamberg County Courthouse. The approval by the Bamberg Facilities Corporation allowed the resolution to be presented to Bamberg County Council.

After discussion among the County Council members, Evert Comer, Jr., made a motion to vote on the resolution to proceed with the courthouse renovation project. "We are at a crossroads with the historic Bamberg County Courthouse," he said. "Council needs to make the difficult, but necessary, decision to move forward with this project to preserve this important building. If we continue to do nothing, our only option will be to demolish the existing structure and build a new courthouse. With that option, we not only lose our historic courthouse, but we also incur the additional cost of new construction. The renovation of the historic courthouse is the best course of action." Upon approval of the resolution by Bamberg County Council, Bamberg County staff will proceed to secure project financing in the form of low interest loans and grants.

Council Vice Chairman Trent Kinard stated, "As we move forward in restoring the Bamberg County Courthouse to her former glory, we need to remember that this is not JUST about a building, it is about preserving our history by taking care of the treasures left behind by the men and women who built this community."



Bamberg County Courthouse in 1897



Bamberg County Courthouse in 1950

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Bamberg County Courthouse in 2018



Proposed exterior for renovated Bamberg County Courthouse

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