

The Sumter
ITEM IMPACT

Local News for Everyone

SERVING SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE OCTOBER 15, 1894

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2024

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Sumter, SC Combat Veterans Group's mission is to serve others **A35**

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Sumter's guide to the 2024 General Election

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ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM
Inside, find candidate Q&As, a voter FAQ, polling precinct addresses and information on absentee voting for the Nov. 5 election.

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Newspapers serve as the heartbeat of a community

Words like flexibility, adaptability and innovation put into action are critical at newspapers like ours and across the country.

We're losing a newspaper a week across the U.S., according to the State of Local News Project from Northwestern University, a path that will mean the country will have lost a third of its newspapers since 2005 by the end of this year. People who live in 204 counties live in a news desert, which means they don't have a paper, local digital site, public radio newsroom or ethnic publication that serves their local community. So, many turn to national news sources.

But it's in the city council and school board meetings, the small business

openings, the interactions between neighbors, where life really flourishes. Social media and national news, 24/7 cable networks, swing toward the negative. In the nooks and crannies of everyday life, we find the full picture of a community. One where people help each other. Where they work hard to bring money home for their family. Where they try to build and grow and love and struggle and sometimes fall down and sometimes go down the wrong path, but we live full, complete lives. That's what local newspapers show.

They show a community as it is, tell the stories no one else is telling.

Newspapers are so important to the people they serve. They are the heartbeat of a community. Thank you for being our pulse.

Kayla Green is executive editor of The Sumter item.



Kayla Green

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**House Speaker
Rep. Murrell Smith**



126 N. Main Street, Sumter, SC 29151
Paid For By Murrell Smith for House

Election 2024

Endorsements come in for Sumter Penny Tax

1/3 of funds would come from non-residents; state poised to give matching funds

BY KAYLA GREEN

kayla@theitem.com

More public officials and community leaders are endorsing and encouraging a yes-vote on a ballot referendum voters will see this November that is poised to collect \$125 million for capital improvement projects across the county.

If approved, a temporary 1% sales tax will be added to goods in Sumter County, though items like groceries, gasoline and prescriptions are exempt, and those “pennies” on each bill will be used to fund 30 projects over the next eight years. Projects — developed as an all-or-nothing list by a committee and approved to be placed on the ballot by Sumter County Council — span roads and infrastructure, public safety, economic development and quality of life.

S.C. House of Representatives Speaker Murrell Smith (R-Sumter) said he is planning to vote yes for the Penny for Progress initiative because of the way such a sales tax is structured. Rather than raising property taxes, which would only impact residents, a penny sales tax collects money from visitors to Sumter as well.

Calculations from the Penny for Progress campaign, which is being led for the first time by SumterEDGE, Sumter’s economic development agency, show a third of the sales tax collected will be from non-residents. Sumter locals already repay the favor when commuting or traveling away from home, as 22 of the state’s 46 counties have a Penny Tax.

The tax would be implemented May 1, 2025. Of the 30 projects, infrastructure would take the largest share of the pot with 14 projects costing \$64

MORE ON THE PENNY TAX

Q&A and ballot question

A5

million. Next would be public safety, for which seven projects would use \$38.5 million; six quality-of-life projects would cost \$16.15 million; and three economic development projects would cost \$6.25 million.

Smith said Sumter is in a prime position, with the experience of the

overall Sumter Legislative Delegation, some of whom are in senior positions in the General Assembly, to leverage matching state funds to bring even more money to some of these projects. He pointed to roads, infrastructure and industri-

al sites as the “main projects that would benefit from the Penny Tax as well as their potential to get additional matching funds.”

“In my opinion, is it historical to have the kind of delegation we have, and it gives our community a unique opportunity to harness this moment for good. ... By working with (the S.C. Department of Transportation), the Infrastructure Bank and other state

and federal agencies, we have been able to also take full advantage of opportunities where we can match funds with non-resident taxed monies,” Smith said.

He said this is the right moment for a Penny Tax that can bring in additional matching funds because “our dele-

gation will not always be so uniquely stationed.”

Ed Bynum, chairman of SumterEDGE’s Penny for Progress 2024, said part of the initiative’s strategy is to “capitalize on having Sumter so well represented at the Statehouse.”

Bynum served as chairman of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce’s board of directors in the early 2000s, when a goal was to “simply get a stronger voice” at the state level. At that time, Smith was a green legislator, being elected first in 2001.

“We knew the importance of the Ways and Means Committee, and we visited our state capital several times just to meet legislators and shake hands and try to improve our position,” he said. “At the time, we just wanted one person from Sumter to be on the Ways and Means Committee.”

After Smith assumed the speaker position in May 2022, state Rep. David Weeks (D-Sumter) was selected to serve on the Ways and Means Committee, which writes the first draft of the state’s budget.

“When you look at matching funds, there’s a few lessons we’ve learned that we’re applying to future endeavors,” Bynum said. “Our state and federal governments like to see we have skin in the game, and when we invest these penny funds in projects to benefit the public by improving our infrastructure, they’re inclined to help.”

In November 2022, after passing the previous two projects lists in 2008 and 2014, the initiative failed to secure majority support by 469 votes out of a total of nearly 27,400 votes cast. More than 100 came from one precinct, a rural area bordering Florence County. More than 2,000 ballots had the referendum question blank.

A historic economic development project has been formalized since, with the eVAC facility now under con-

struction, and that was a win for economic development leaders, but they lost two years of planning sites to pitch to other companies.

In 2008, Thomas McElveen (D-Sumter) was not a state senator yet, but he helped lead community support for the first Penny Tax. He said he thought the “big-ticket item,” being a lawyer, was a new judicial center, but the project with the real, longest-lasting, widest-reaching benefit was bolstering infrastructure at Pocatigo Industrial Park.

“Without that, we’d never have gotten Continental Tire,” McElveen said. “We didn’t realize how big it was.”

The tire-manufacturing plant, which employs approximately 1,300 employees, celebrated its 10th anniversary this summer.

“What’s most impressive about the 2008 penny was that we were more or less still in an economic recession, but voters made a decision to invest in this community. That was in 2007, and we just didn’t have the things we have now,” McElveen said.

McElveen, who has served in the Senate since 2013 but is not seeking reelection this November, said he would “much prefer” a capital sales tax than seeing property taxes increase. Both legislators, who sit on opposite sides of the aisle, and Bynum echo each other’s sentiments that without approval of this referendum, it will be harder to bring state funding to “any project,” Smith said, without the matching funds of the penny that are required for many allocations to be awarded.

“Long term, it eases the burden on property owners because if voters decide not to approve it, then you’re likely to see property tax increases,” Bynum said. “There are crucial items for our first responders, for instance, that are not a choice. We need to improve our communications technology. Obsolescence happens quick in this day and age, and our first responders need new radios and pagers. They need new fire trucks in the city and county. Buying fire trucks is an expensive and time-consuming process, and the longer we wait, the more the price goes up.”



SMITH



McELVEEN



Election 2024

Penny for Progress capital sales tax

All Sumter County voters will see a referendum question on their ballots asking whether they support a Penny for Progress capital sales tax. If approved, a temporary 1% sales tax would fund 30 projects to support a projected \$124.9 million toward public safety, quality of life, infrastructure and economic development. It was first approved in 2008 and renewed in 2014 before being voted down in 2022.

According to *PennyForProgress.com*, one in every three people who pay the tax will be a non-resident, meaning visitors to Sumter will pay just as residents, rather than a property tax.

Where else is there a penny tax in South Carolina?

Of South Carolina's 46 counties, 22 have a Capital Projects Sales Tax.

Why do we need to add another tax to pay for our road improvements? Why can't we use federal funds for these projects?

Federal funds are administered through the S.C. Department of

Transportation. Counties only receive a small portion of the federal funds, as most of the funds will be used by SCDOT for major interstates and other state-maintained infrastructure projects. In short, federal funds primarily prioritize SCDOT interstates and bridges, not county-maintained roads and other infrastructure.

What purchases are exempt from the penny tax?

Purchases that are exempt include but are not limited to: unprepared foods (such as some groceries), gasoline and prescriptions.

How long will the penny tax last?

If passed, the penny tax will begin on May 1, 2025, and last for no more than eight years.

What was the total amount collected from the 2008 and 2014 penny tax?

In total, \$164,785,453 was collected from the penny tax within 16 years from 2008-2022. Of that amount, roughly \$54,379,199 came from non-residents traveling through Sumter.

Where can I learn more?

Go to www.pennyforprogress.com to read more about the specific projects proposed

in 2024 and past projects completed.

THE BALLOT QUESTION

Following is how the Penny for Progress ballot question will look on 2024 ballots:

Capital Projects (Penny) Sales Tax Referendum

Must a special One Percent Sales And Use Tax be imposed in Sumter County (the "County") for not more than eight (8) years, to begin May 1, 2025, to raise the amounts specified for the following purposes and in order to pay the costs (including rights-of-way acquisition and architectural, engineering, legal, administrative costs, and related fees) of the projects described below; pending the receipt of such sales and use tax, must the County also be authorized to issue and sell, either as a single issue or as several separate issues, General Obligation Bonds (the "Bonds") of the County in the aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$40,000,000.00 to be paid from the Sales And Use Tax to be received and to pledge The Sales And Use Tax to be received to the payment of the principal of and interest on the Bonds?

\$13,000,000 — Emergency Radios Pagers. New communications technology infrastructure to meet mandated digital radio and pager services, allowing county-coverage, and will replace obsolete radios and pagers.

\$14,000,000 — County Fire Trucks. Replace dated fire trucks throughout the County. Rural fire stations are Cherryvale, Bethel, Graham, Pinewood, Pleasant

Grove, Mayesville, Dabbs, Byrd's, Wedgefield, Rembert, Beech Creek, Concord, Horatio, Dubose, Oswego, Dalzell and Manning Road.

\$5,000,000 — City Fire Trucks. Purchase fire trucks to service City and local industries.

\$1,500,000 — Stadium Road EMS Station. A new 4,000 sq. ft. satellite facility to include a two-bay truck port. Located on Stadium Road on property behind the Fire Station.

\$1,000,000 — EMS Ambulances. To purchase four (4) new ambulances to replace the aged high mileage fleet for County-wide service area.

\$2,000,000 — Industrial Infrastructure. To construct a "Pad Ready" industrial site approximately 200,000 sq. ft. with options to expand for industrial recruitment.

\$1,750,000 — Intersection Safety Improvements. Improve safety for all pedestrians at crosswalks/intersections near schools and neighborhoods.

\$2,500,000 — Bobby Richardson Park Improvements. To transform the park into a state-of-the-art Baseball Complex to include a practice facility, increased parking capacity, and two new entrances for better accessibility.

\$2,800,000 — Patriot Park Pickleball Courts. Expand Patriot Park to include fifteen (15) new Pickle Ball Courts along with adjacent parking to support this and other park activities.

\$2,750,000 — Downtown Building Improvements & Acquisitions. Downtown building

renovations and purchases to drive economic development initiatives including utility upgrades at the Liberty Center.

\$21,000,000 — County Paving/Resurfacing. New paving road projects on 18.34 miles of dirt roads to ease public travel and emergency vehicle accessibility and to improve maintenance service on other County roads. PAVING ROADS to include: Ambrose Drive, Bainbridge Road, Bunneau Street, Campbell Court, Coastal Dr., Gaymon Road, Heirs Drive, Hugh Ryan Road, Jaguar Run, James Quincy Court, James Quincy Road, Joe Billy, Loblolly Road, Lynx Lane, Mayrant Court, McLean Street, Millhouse Road, Mundy Street, Munn Street, N. Mayrant Cir., Northridge Drive, Old Stone Road, Ott Street, Pasture Road, Pratt Avenue, Rosehill Road, Rufus Drive, Scotts Branch, S. Mayrant Cir., Sparkleberry Rd., Statesburg Hills, Stukes Road, Tate Street, Teakwood Drive, Walters Avenue, and Woods Street.

Resurfacing road projects for 7.07 miles. RESURFACING ROADS to include: Meadowcroft Dr., Ashlynn Way, Caitlynn Dr., Tamarah Way, Kari Drive, Candlelite Court, Falling-water Lane, Sun Valley Dr., Christopher Ct., Malone Drive, Inabinet Drive, Wind Tree Dr., Steeplechase Drive, Soye Dr., Longbranch Drive, Soye Circle, Bend K Drive, Colts Run Ct., and Cliffwood Court.

\$3,000,000 — Stadium Road



Election 2024

PENNY TAX

FROM PAGE A5

Fire Station. Rebuild the Stadium Road Fire Station.

\$1,000,000 — Fire Depart. Training Facility. To purchase and install a "Live Fire" training facility to accomplish general firefighter training.

\$6,000,000 — Federal State Road Construction (Hwy 378). Reconnect the communities and services north and south of the US-378 Bypass at Wesmark and Miller Roads to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians and enhance mobility for all travelers. Funds will be used to leverage State and Federal Transportation project.

\$10,000,000 — State Road Resurfacing Match. This project will be used to draw down additional funds from the State Department of Transportation to prioritize and expedite critical state road projects in Sumter County.

\$3,250,000 — Public Services Building. Renovate and expand Public Services Complex including infrastructure needed to aid in disaster response activities.

\$1,500,000 — Industrial Property Acquisition. Purchase additional property for industrial growth and economic development.

\$2,600,000 — Dillon Park Improvements. New restroom facilities to support athletic events including a restroom to support the 1-mile walking track. Replace six (6) outdated ballfields' lighting systems with a brighter, more energy efficient LED system. Renovate Crystal Lakes Golf Course Driving Range to support youth and senior golf participants.

\$4,000,000 — Community Park Playground Improvements. Enhance public parks with infrastructure that adds safety and security, as well as modern playground equipment accessible for all children to include Swan Lake, Birnie Center, Crosswell, Catchall-Shaw, Shiloh, Rafting Creek, and others.

\$1,000,000 — Central Carolina Facility Upgrade. Renovation of the Health Center building into classroom space for additional Health Sciences programs. Create walkways to connect the Health Center, Health Science building, and the Annex.

\$1,500,000 — Mayesville Main Street Revitalization. The commercial mixed-use development will revitalize the economy in Mayesville, create a gathering place with covered seating, eating areas, co-op grocery store, and an upscale farmers market.

\$1,200,000 — Pinewood Road Paving. New road paving on 1.11 miles of dirt roads to ease public travel and emergency vehicle accessibility and to improve maintenance service on other Sumter County roads. Roads to be

paved in the downtown area: Railroad Ave., Nelson Street, and McBride Street.

\$9,500,000 — Dugan St. and Downtown Parking Facility. Connect parking and access from Dugan to Bartlette (parallel to South Main Street). Also provide additional parking infrastructure (parking deck) to support downtown development including a downtown hotel and convention facility.

\$1,250,000 — Delaine Community Center. Construct a new community center for seniors and youth with approximately 4,000 sq. ft. to replace the current center located near the old Delaine School.

\$3,000,000 — South Sumter Gym. Reconstruction/expansion of the South Sumter Gym.

\$1,500,000 — Harvin Street Redesign and Streetscape. Improve downtown safety and increase on-street parking capacity.

\$300,000 — Pinewood Sidewalks. Expands the community sidewalk network, providing safe walking connections to neighborhoods, schools, parks, and commercial areas.

\$3,500,000 — Community Sidewalks / Activity Paths. Expand Sumter's sidewalks and activity path networks to allow easier access to workplaces, goods, services, and recreation to include Wise Dr., Rast St., Winn St., Mason Rd., South Harvin St., E. Charlotte Ave., Calhoun Dr., Boulevard Rd., S. Sumter St., Miller Rd., Hoyt St., Stadium Rd., N. Lafayette Dr., Fulton St., and connection between Shot Pouch Greenway and Palmetto Park.

\$1,000,000 — Airport Facility Upgrade. Expand portion of terminal, upgrade flooring and other cosmetic improvements. Extend the taxiway on the southwest portion of the tarmac to allow construction of up to four (4) new airplane hangars

\$2,500,000 — Community-wide Acquisition of Distressed Structures. To improve the community by acquiring and removing distressed structures that degrade neighborhoods and major corridors.

[TOTAL COST OF ALL CAPITAL PROJECTS: \$124,900,000.00.]

The maximum amount of net proceeds of the Sales And Use Tax which may be applied to the payment of the principal of and interest on the County's General Obligation Bonds (the "Bonds") must not exceed \$46,000,000.00 (based upon expected Sales And Use Tax collections of \$124,900,000.00 less administrative expenses of collection). The not-to-exceed \$40,000,000.00 principal amount of Bonds to be issued shall be repaid from the net proceeds of the Sales And Use Tax which shall be pledged for the repayment of the Bonds.

YES []

NO []

EARLY VOTING

How and where can I vote early in person?

Visit an early voting center in your county during the early voting period and vote in person like you would at your polling place on Election Day. Remember to bring your photo ID when checking in to vote.

Early voting period for the statewide general election:

- Monday, Oct. 21 – Saturday, Nov. 2 (closed Sunday, Oct. 27).
- 8:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Early voting period for any necessary runoffs:

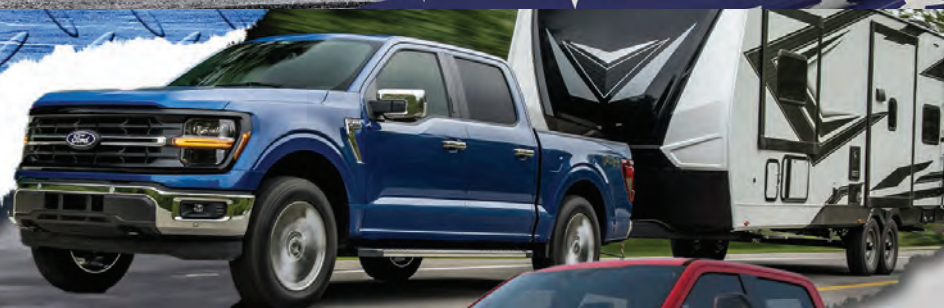
- Wednesday, six days prior to election day, through Friday, four days prior to election day.
- 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Closed on state holidays.

Where to early vote in Sumter County:

- Sumter County Voter Registration Office, 141 N. Main St., Sumter, SC 29150
- FJ DeLaine Elementary School: 5355 Cane Savannah Road, Wedgefield, 29168



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Election 2024



ABSENTEE VOTING

On May 13, 2022, Gov. Henry McMaster signed into law legislation passed by the General Assembly that establishes early voting and makes significant changes to the absentee voting process. Absentee voting allows qualified voters to cast a ballot by mail prior to Election Day. In-person absentee voting is no longer authorized by law, as voters can now participate in early voting.

Who can vote absentee

- People with employment obligations that prevent them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- People attending a sick or physically disabled person which prevents them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- People confined to a jail or pretrial facility pending disposition of arrest or trial that prevents them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- People who will be absent

from their county of residence during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.

- People with physical disabilities.
- People 65 years of age or older.
- Members of the armed forces and Merchant Marines of the United States, their spouses and dependents living with them
- Persons admitted to a hospital as an emergency patient on the day of the election or within a four-day period before the election.

How to vote absentee

Voters must apply for an absentee ballot by completing and returning an absentee application to their county voter registration office by 5 p.m. on Oct. 25.

- Step 1:** Get your application
- You can submit your request for an application as early as Jan. 1 of the election year.
 - Call, visit or send your request by U.S. mail to your county voter registration office.
 - You must provide your name, date of birth and last four digits of your Social Security number.
 - You will be mailed an application.

- Step 2:** Complete, sign and return the application
- Return the application by U.S. mail or personal delivery to your county voter registration office as soon as possible.
 - The deadline to return your application is 5 p.m. on the 11th day prior to the election.

- Step 3:** Receive your absentee ballot in the mail
- Voters who have applied early will be mailed their absentee ballot approximately 30 days before the election.

- Step 4:** Vote and return the

ballot

- Return your ballot to your county voter registration office or an early voting center either by mail or personal delivery.
- Must present photo ID when returning the ballot return envelope.
- Acceptable photo IDs:
 - Driver's license issued by a state within the United States
 - Another form of identification containing a photograph issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles or its equivalent by a state within the United States
 - Passport
 - Military identification containing a photograph issued by the federal government
 - South Carolina voter registration card containing a photograph of the voter.
- Place the ballot in the "ballot here-in" envelope and place the "ballot here-in" envelope in the return envelope.
- Be sure to sign the voter's oath and have your signature witnessed. Anyone age 18 or older can witness your signature. A notary is not necessary.

- Ballots must be received by the county voter registration office by 7 p.m. on Election Day.
- Ballots returned by mail should be mailed no later than one week prior to Election Day to help ensure timely delivery.

Requesting an application for another voter

Immediate family member

- Includes spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law.
- May request the voter's application by calling or visiting your county voter registration office or sending the request via

the U.S. Postal Service to your county voter registration office.

- Must provide the voter's name, date of birth and last four digits of voter's Social Security number.
- Must provide the requestor's name, address, date of birth and relation to the voter.
- Requestors are limited to five requests in addition to their own per election.

Authorized representative

- Must sign an oath that he meets the requirements of being an authorized representative by completing the authorized representative form.
- Must request application in person or by mail (may not request by phone).
- Must be a registered voter.
- Must have permission to act on behalf of a voter who is unable to go to the polls because of illness or disability resulting in his confinement in a hospital, sanatorium, nursing home or place of residence, or is unable because of a physical handicap to go to his polling place or because of a handicap is unable to vote at his polling place due to existing architectural barriers that deny him physical access to the polling place, voting booth, or voting apparatus or machinery.

- A candidate, a member of a candidate's paid campaign staff or a campaign volunteer may not serve as an authorized representative unless the person is a member of the voter's immediate family.

- Requestors are limited to five requests in addition to their own per election.

Returning an application for another voter

Immediate family members and authorized representatives must return the voter's application to the voter's county voter registration office in

person (mailing NOT allowed).

Returning an absentee ballot for another voter

Immediate family members and authorized representative

- Voter and person returning the ballot must complete and sign the authorized returnee form.
- Must return the ballot return envelope in person at the voter's county voter registration office or an early voting center in the voter's county of residence (mailing is NOT allowed).
- Must present the authorized returnee form and photo ID when returning the ballot return envelope.

- Acceptable photo IDs:
 - Driver's license issued by a state within the United States
 - Another form of identification containing a photograph issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles or its equivalent by a state within the United States
 - Passport
 - Military identification containing a photograph issued by the federal government
 - South Carolina voter registration card containing a photograph of the voter.
- Returnees are limited to five returns in addition to their own per election.

- Returning more than five ballots for other voters is now a felony crime punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine or five years in prison, or both.

Voters admitted to hospital as emergency patient

- Voters admitted to the hospital as an emergency patient on the day of the election or within four days of the election can have an immediate family member apply for and deliver a ballot to them.

Sample ballots

To find your sample ballot, visit scvotes.gov, click on Voters, then Get My Sample Ballot. All races you are eligible to vote in will be displayed.

SAMPLE BALLOT

- This is NOT your ballot.** This is a Sample Ballot showing a representation of the offices and candidates that will appear on your official ballot and is provided for informational purposes only.
- While your actual ballot will look different, this sample ballot contains all the offices and questions for which you will be eligible to vote at the time this sample ballot was produced. Sometimes candidates withdraw or are disqualified prior to an election. Also, if you move and update your address, your sample ballot will likely change. Sample ballots are made available approximately 100 days prior to an election. It is best to check your sample ballot close to election day to check for any changes in offices and candidates.
- Your Sample Ballot may differ from other voters' ballots in your precinct.
- Straight Party:** For partisan elections, your actual ballot will provide a straight party selection option. If you make a straight party selection on your ballot, you will be selecting all candidates of that party on your ballot. Any vote cast for an individual candidate will take precedence over any straight party selection. Nonpartisan offices and questions are not included in the straight party vote and must be marked individually. There is no straight party option in primaries and nonpartisan elections.
- Contact your county voter registration office to vote absentee or to early vote, or go to your polling place to vote on election day.
- You may take this Sample Ballot with you when voting in person but do NOT display or distribute it at your polling place or early voting location.

COUNTY: SUMTER
VOTING PRECINCT: Hampton Park
PRECINCT LOCATION: Meeting House at Memorial Park **PRECINCT ADDRESS:** 407 W Hampton Ave Sumter SC 29150
VOTING DISTRICTS:
 US Congressional District: 06 SC Senate District: 36 SC House District: 067
 County Council: 06 School District: 09 City Council District: 54
 Municipality: 645 Magistrate Jury Area: 431
SUMTER COUNTY BOARD OF VOTER REGISTRATION & ELECTIONS
 129 E Liberty St Phone Number: (803)4362313
 Sumter SC 29150 Email: pjfefferson@sumtercountysc.gov

THE FOLLOWING ELECTIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THIS SAMPLE BALLOT

Statewide General Election
 City of Sumter General Election

SAMPLE BALLOT - SUMTER COUNTY

STATEWIDE GENERAL ELECTION

President and Vice President

- You may vote for One.
- Randall A Terry / Stephen E Broden (Constitution)
 - Cornel West / Melina Abdulla (United Citizens)
 - Jill Stein / Rudolph Butch Ware (Green)
 - Donald J Trump / JD Vance (Republican)
 - Chase Oliver / Mike ter Maat (Libertarian)
 - Kamala D Harris / Tim Walz (Democratic)
 - Claudia De La Cruz / Karina Garcia (Workers)

U.S. House of Representatives, District 6

- You may vote for One.
- Gregg Marcel Dixon (United Citizens)
 - Duke Buckner (Republican)
 - Joseph Oddo (Alliance)
 - Michael Simpson (Libertarian)
 - James E Jim Clyburn (Democratic)

State Senate, District 36

- You may vote for One.
- Jeff Zell (Republican)
 - Kevin L Johnson (Democratic)

State House of Representatives, District 67

- You may vote for One.
- Murrell Smith (Republican)

Sheriff

- You may vote for One.
- Anthony Dennis (Democratic)

Clerk of Court

- You may vote for One.
- James C Campbell (Democratic)

Coroner

- You may vote for One.
- Robbie Baker (Democratic)

Auditor

- You may vote for One.
- Lauretha A McCants (Democratic)

County Treasurer

- You may vote for One.
- Carolina B Richardson (Democratic)

Soil and Water District Commission

- You may vote for One.
- Chris Sumpter II (Nonpartisan)

School Board, District 9

- You may vote for One.
- Bonnie Disney (Nonpartisan)
 - Desaray S Ross (Nonpartisan)

Statewide Constitutional Amendments

Must Section 4, Article II of the Constitution of this State, relating to voter qualifications, be amended so as to provide that only a citizen of the United States and of this State of the age of eighteen and upwards who is properly registered is entitled to vote as provided by law?

- Yes, In Favor of the Question
- No, Opposed to the Question

Local Questions

Capital Projects (Penny) Sales Tax Referendum Must a special One Percent Sales And Use Tax be imposed in Sumter

County (the "County") for not more than eight (8) years, to begin May 1, 2025, to raise the amounts specified for the following purposes and in order to pay the costs (including rights-of-way acquisition and architectural, engineering, legal, administrative costs, and related costs) of the following projects: pending the receipt of such sales and use tax, must the County also be authorized to issue and sell, either as a single issue or as several separate issues, General Obligation Bonds (the "Bonds") of the County in the aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$40,000,000.00 to be paid from the Sales And Use Tax to be received and to pledge the Sales And Use Tax to be received to the payment of the principal of and interest on the Bonds? 1. \$13,000,000 - Emergency Radio's / Pagers. New communications technology infrastructure to meet man-dated digital radio and pager services, allowing county-wide coverage, and will replace obsolete radios and pagers. 2. \$14,000,000 - County Fire Trucks. Replace dated fire trucks throughout the County. Rural fire stations are Cherryvale, Bethel, Graham, Pinewood, Pleasant Grove, Mayeville, Dabbs, Byrd's, Wedgfield, Rimbart, Beech Creek, Concord, Horatio, Dubose, Oswego, Dalzell and Manning Road. 3. \$5,000,000 - City Fire Trucks. Purchase fire trucks to service City and local industries. 4. \$1,500,000 - Stadium Road EMS Station. A new 4,000 sq. ft. satellite facility to include a two-bay truck port. Located on Stadium Road on property behind the Fire Station. 5. \$1,000,000 - EMS Ambulances. To purchase four (4) new ambulances to replace the aged high mileage fleet for County-wide service area. 6. \$2,000,000 - Industrial Infrastructure. To construct a "Pad Ready" industrial site approximately 200,000 sq. ft. with options to expand for industrial recruitment. 7. \$1,750,000 - Intersection Safety Improvements. Improve safety for all pedestrians at crosswalks/ intersections near schools and neighborhoods. 8. \$2,500,000 - Bobby Richardson Park Improve-ments. To transform the park into a state-of-the-art Baseball Complex to include a practice facility, increased parking capacity, and two new entrances for better access- ibility. 9. \$2,800,000 - Patriot Park Pickleball Courts. Expand Patriot Park to include fifteen (15) new Pickle Ball Courts along with adjacent parking to support this and other park activities. 10. \$2,750,000 - Downtown Building Improvements & Acquisitions. Downtown building renovations and purchases to drive economic development initiatives in- cluding utility upgrades at the Liberty Center. 11. \$21,000,000 - County Paving/Resurfacing. New paving road projects on 18.34 miles of dirt road to ease public travel and emergency vehicle accessibility and to improve maintenance service on other County roads. PAVING ROADS to include: Ambrose Drive, Bainbridge Road, Bunneau Street, Campbell Court, Coastal Dr., Gayman Road, Heirs Drive, Hugh Ryan Road, Jaguar Run, James Quincy Court, James Quincy Road, Joe Billy, Lobolly Road, Ulys, Lamy, Mayrant Court, McLean Street, Millhouse Road, Mundy Street, Munn Street, N. Mayrant Cir., Northridge Drive, Old Stone Road, Ott Street, Pasture Road, Pratt Avenue, Rosehill Road, Rufus Drive, Scotts Branch, S. Mayrant Cir., Sparkleberry Rd., Statesburg Hills, Stukes Road, Tate Street, Teakwood Drive, Walters Avenue, and Woods Street. Resurfacing road projects for 7.07 miles. RESURFACING ROADS to include: Meadowcroft Dr., Ashley Way, Calhoun Dr., Talkerish Way, Kerr Drive, Candelle Court, Falling-water Lane, Sun Valley Dr., Christopher Ct., Malone Drive, Inabright Drive, Wind Tree Dr., Steeplechase Drive, Soye Dr., Longbranch Drive, Soye Circle, Bend K Drive, Colts Run Ct., and Cliffwood Court. 12. \$3,000,000 - Stadium Road Fire Station. Rebuild the Stadium Road Fire Station. 13. \$1,000,000 - Fire Deptah, Training Facility. To purchase and install a "Live Fire" training facility to accomplish general firefighter training. 14. \$6,000,000 - Federal State Road Construction (Hwy 378). Reconnect the communities and services north and south of the US-378 Bypass at Wesmark and Miller Roads to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians and enhance mobility for all travelers. Funds will be used to leverage State and Federal Transportation project. 15. \$10,000,000 - State Road Resurfacing Match. This project will be used to draw down additional funds from the State Department of Transportation to prioritize and expedite critical state road projects in Sumter County. 16. \$3,250,000 - Public Services Building. Renovate and expand Public Services Complex including infra-structure needed to aid in disaster response activities. 17. \$1,500,000 - Industrial Property Acquisition. Pur-chase additional property for industrial growth and economic development. 18. \$2,600,000 - Dillon Park Improvements. New rest-room facilities to support athletic events including a restroom to support the 1-mile walking track. Replace six (6) outdated ballfields' lighting systems with a brighter, more energy efficient LED system. Renovate Crystal Lakes Golf Course Driving Range to support youth and senior gol participants. 19. \$4,000,000 - Community Park Playground Improve-ments. Enhance public parks with infrastructure that adds safety and security, as well as modern playground equip-ment accessible for all children to include Swan Lake, Birnie Center, Cross-well, Catchall-Shaw, Shiloh, Rattling Creek, and others. 20. \$1,000,000 - Central Carolina Facility Upgrade. Renovation of the Health Center building into glass-room space for additional Health Sciences programs. Create walkways to connect the Health Center, Health Science building, and the Annex. 21. \$1,500,000 - Mayeville Main Street Revitalization. The commercial mixed-use development will revitalize the economy in Mayeville, create a gathering place with covered seating, eating areas, co-op grocery store, and an upscale farmers market. 22. \$1,200,000 - Pinewood Road Paving. New road paving on 1.11 miles of dirt roads to ease public travel and emergency vehicle accessibility and to improve main-tenance service on other Sumter County roads. Roads to be paved in the downtown area: Railroad Ave., Nelson Street, and McBride Street. 23. \$9,500,000 - Dugan St. and Downtown Parking Facility. Connect parking and access from Dugan to Bartlett (parallel to South Main Street). Also provide additional parking infra-structure (parking deck) to support downtown development including a downtown hotel and convention facility. 24. \$1,250,000 - Delaine Community Center. Con- struct a new community center for seniors and youth with approximately 4,800 sq. ft. to replace the current center located near the old Delaine School. 25. \$3,000,000 - South Sumter Gym. Reconstruc-tion/expansion of the South Sumter Gym. 26. \$1,500,000 - Harvin Street Redesign and Street-scape. Improve downtown safety and increase on-street parking capacity. 27. \$300,000 - Pinewood Sidewalks. Expands the curbside sidewalk net-work, providing safe walking connections to neighbor-hoods schools, parks, and commercial areas. 28. \$3,500,000 -Community Sidewalks / Activity Paths. Expand Sumter's sidewalks and activity path networks to allow easier access to work- places, goods, services, and recreation to include Wise Dr., Rast St., Winn St., Mason Rd., South Harvin St., E. Charlotte Ave., Calhoun Dr., Boulevard Rd., S. Sumter St., Miller Rd., Hoyt St., Stadium Rd., N. Lafayette Dr., Fulton St., and connection between Sho Pouch Greenway and Palmetto Park. 29. \$1,000,000 - Airport Facility Upgrade. Expand portion of terminal, upgrade flooring and other cosmetic improvements. Extend the taxiway on the southwest portion of the tarmac to allow construction of up to four (4) new airplane hangars. 30. \$2,500,000 -Community-wide Acquisi-tion of Dis-tressed Structures. To improve the community by acquiring and removing distressed structures that degrade neighborhoods and major corridors. [TOTAL COST OF ALL CAPITAL PROJECTS: \$124,900,000.00] The maximum amount of net proceeds of the Sales And Use Tax which may be applied to the payment of the principal of and interest on the County's General Obligation Bonds (the "Bonds") must not exceed \$46,000,000.00 (based upon expected Sales And Use Tax collections of \$124,900,000.00 less administrative expenses of collection). The not-to-exceed

\$40,000,000.00 principal amount of Bonds to be issued shall be repaid from the net proceeds of the Sales And Use Tax which shall be pledged for the repayment of the Bonds.

- Yes, In Favor of the Question
- No, Opposed to the Question

CITY OF SUMTER GENERAL ELECTION

Mayor, Sumter

- You may vote for One.
- T Frank Adams II (Nonpartisan)
 - Foxy Rae Campbell (Nonpartisan)
 - Reginald Evans (Nonpartisan)
 - David P Merchant (Nonpartisan)

City Council Ward 4, Sumter City Council Dist 4

- You may vote for One.
- Scott Burkett (Nonpartisan)
 - Jimmy Davis (Nonpartisan)
 - Rebecca Lynn Kennedy (Nonpartisan)
 - Lucy Mahon (Nonpartisan)
 - Gene Weston (Nonpartisan)

Sumter precincts

Barrier Free — Voter Registration Office, 141 N Main St Rm 114, Sumter

Bates — Bates Middle School, 715 Estate St, Sumter

Birnie — Birnie Hope Center, 210 S. Purdy St, Sumter

Burns-Down — Alice Drive Middle School, 40 Miller Road, Sumter

Causeway Branch 1 — Millwood Elem School, 24 Pinewood Rd, Sumter

Causeway Branch 2 — Millwood Elem School, 24 Pinewood Rd, Sumter

Cherryvale — Cherryvale Community Cntr, 4340 Confederate Rd, Sumter

Crosswell — Crosswell Elem. School, 301 Crosswell Dr, Sumter

Dalzell 1 — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Rd, Dalzell

Dalzell 2 — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

Delaine — Delaine Community Center, 5400 Cane Savannah Rd, Wedgefield

Ebenezer 1 — Ebenezer Middle School, 3440 Ebenezer Rd, Sumter

Ebenezer 2 — Ebenezer Middle

School, 3440 Ebenezer Rd, Sumter

Folsom Park — Willow Drive Elementary, 26 Willow Drive, Sumter

Furman — Furman Middle School, 3400 Bethel Church Rd, Sumter

Green Swamp 1 — Sumter School District, 1345 Wilson Hall Rd, Sumter

Green Swamp 2 — Sumter School District, 1345 Wilson Hall Rd, Sumter

Hampton Park — Meeting House at Memorial Park, 407 W Hampton Ave, Sumter

Hillcrest — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Rd, Dalzell

Horatio — Horatio Fire Station, 7720 Sumter Landing Rd, Horatio

Lemira — Lemira Elementary School, 952 Fulton Street, Sumter

Loring — Crosswell Elem. School, 301 Crosswell Dr, Sumter

Magnolia-Harmony — S. Sumter Resource Center, 337 Manning Ave., Sumter

Manchester Forest — Wedgefield Fire Station, 2035 S.C. Highway 261 S, Wedgefield

Mayesville — Mayesville Fire Station, 20 S. Main Street E., Mayesville

Mayewood — RE Davis College Preparatory Academy, 345 Eastern School Rd, Sumter

McCrays Mill 1 — Sumter County Career Cntr, 2612 McCrays Mill Road, Sumter

McCrays Mill 2 — Sumter County Career Cntr, 2612 McCrays Mill Rd, Sumter

Millwood — Millwood Elementary School, 24 Pinewood Rd, Sumter

Morris College — North Hope Center, 904 N. Main Street, Sumter

Mulberry — North Hope Center, 904 N Main St, Sumter

Oakland Plant 1 — Oakland Primary School, 5415 Oakland Dr, Sumter

Oakland Plant 2 — Oakland Primary School, 5415 Oakland Dr, Sumter

Oswego — Crestwood High School, 2000 Oswego Rd, Sumter

Palmetto Park — Central Carolina Tech. College, 660 N Guignard Dr Bldg 700, Sumter

Pinewood — Manchester Elementary School, 200 Clark St,

Pinewood

Pocotaligo 1 — Lakewood High School, 350 Old Manning Rd, Sumter

Pocotaligo 2 — Lakewood High School, 350 Old Manning Rd, Sumter

Privateer — Pocalla Springs Elem Scho, 2060 Bethel Church Rd, Sumter

Rembert — Rembert Fire Station, 7045 Post Office Street, Rembert

Salem — Rural Fire Station, 6090 Myrtle Beach Hwy, Gable

Salterstown — Chestnut Oaks Middle Schl, 1200 Oswego Road, Sumter

Savage-Glover — S.Sumter Resource Center, 337 Manning Ave, Sumter

Second Mill — USC Sumter Arts/Letter Lecture Room, 200 Miller Rd, Sumter

Shaw — Shaw Heights Elem School, 5121 Frierson Rd, Sumter

South Liberty — American Legion Home Bldg, 28 Artillery Dr, Sumter

South Red Bay — South Hope Center, 1125 S. Lafayette Dr, Sumter

Spectrum — Kingsbury Elementary School, 825 Kingsbury Rd, Sumter

St. John — Shiloh Community Center, 475 Puddin Swamp Rd, Lynchburg

St. Paul — Cherryvale Elementary Sch, 1420 Furman Drive, Sumter

Stone Hill — Jehovah Baptist Church, 803 S. Harvin St, Sumter

Sumter High 1 — Sumter High School, 2580 McCrays Mill Rd, Sumter

Sumter High 2 — Sumter High School, 2580 McCrays Mill Rd, Sumter

Sunset — Kingsbury Elem. School, 825 Kingsbury Rd, Sumter

Swan Lake — Willow Dr Elem. School, 26 Willow Dr, Sumter

Thomas Sumter — Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Rd, Dalzell

Turkey Creek — Lemira Elementary School, 952 Fulton St, Sumter

Wilder — Wilder Elem. School, 900 Floral Ave, Sumter

Wilson Hall — Wilson Hall School, 520 Wilson Hall Rd, Sumter

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Sumter mayor



**DAVID
MERCHANT**
NONPARTISAN
INCUMBENT

youth programs, nonprofits and other local initiatives.

How would you describe the responsibilities of Sumter mayor?

I see the mayor's role as "team captain" for Sumter. Advocating for our city and citizens to make Sumter a great place to live, work and raise a family. I work with city council to cast a vision, plan and budget on ideas we feel are important to the lives and long-term success of Sumter then hand it off to staff to implement the plan while providing oversight and guidance.

If reelected, what specific goals do you have for the city over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

The North Main Street and Manning Avenue corridor projects, along with the Manning Avenue Bridge replacements, have been a frustration of mine and our citizens for years. It was the very first meeting I called in February of 2021 after being elected to the mayor's office. I met with some of our legislative delegation, County Council Chairman Jim McCain and SCDOT officials on getting this project moving. After three years of regular meetings, government bureaucracy, design issues and additional right-of-way purchases, the project is moving forward. The construction contract should be awarded in the first quarter of 2025. My goal is to continue to push this project and move it forward through

completion, improving two major corridors through our city.

Work to raise the per-capita income for all of Sumter's citizens. Over the last four years, I have been working with the Sumter Economic Development Board on recruitment, retention and growth of business in Sumter. I will continue to work on creating an environment of opportunity for our citizens through the creation of new high-paying jobs.

Growth of Shaw Air Force Base. Shaw is not only a \$2+ billion economic engine for our area, but it also brings great people to Sumter. Over the last four years, I have had multiple meetings with base, congressional and Senate leaders on the mission of Shaw and how we as a community can help support potential growth. I will continue to work and advocate for protecting and growing Shaw AFB.

What do you consider your most significant achievement as mayor since you assumed the role? How has it benefited the city?

We have had a lot of great things happen over the last four years. But one of the most significant achievements we accomplished in my first term was the stewardship of the American Rescue Plan Act funds (ARPA) that came down from Washington, D.C. In 2021, the federal government gave the City of Sumter right at \$3 million with certain requirements

on how it could be spent. I recognized that this is a very unusual "gift" from Washington and wanted to use it to make a lasting impact for years to come. We wanted to be able to look back 20 years from now and know that the money was thoughtfully spent. Clean water and a properly operating sewer system is a fundamental core function of local government. It affects every citizen equally and is often taken for granted until it doesn't work. I was able to work with council and use the \$3 million in ARPA funding and leverage it as a local match to access the South Carolina Infrastructure Investment Program. Our \$3 million became \$25 million to invest in Sumter's water and sewer infrastructure. This significant investment in upgrading our water and sewer systems allows for future city and industrial growth and to be proactive in replacing very old water and sewer lines all around the city. I was very proud to work with council to make this significant investment for our future.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

Crime – Our city has been deeply affected by recent acts of violence that have taken too many lives. We have young people in our community who are resorting to gun violence to solve disagreements and

conflict. These tragedies are unacceptable and preventable. I am committed to continuing to ensure prosecution of these senseless acts and working with our police department to supply them with the tools they need to make our community safe. I will also continue to work with our community and faith leaders, nonprofits and family groups to work toward solutions to reach the young people before they turn to a life of crime and violence.

Education – While the mayor and city council do not have any authority over our educational system in Sumter, I recognize that our school district is a vital member of "Team Sumter." I have been and will continue to be committed to building bridges and relationships with our superintendent, board members, principals, teachers and coaches. I have made a point to be seen in our schools and offer to help in whatever capacity the mayor's office can provide. We need our educational system to be one of the best in the state to ensure that our existing families, Shaw families and potential economic development prospects are comfortable living and educating their children in Sumter.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

There have been many

SEE **MAYOR**, PAGE A12

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MAYOR FROM PAGE A11

groundbreaking and exciting projects I have been involved with over the last four years. But to answer the question on successes seen in Sumter City Council, it is city council itself. I am very proud and honored to serve with our city council. The men I serve with are very professional and respectful of each other. Even when we differ on a matter, it is handled with civility and respect. I see this as a major success because all too often we see government arguing and fighting, ultimately getting nothing accomplished. As leaders, we must lead by example and be a model of respect and civility that we ask of our community.

I have learned over my 12 years involved in city council and the mayor's office that our city government does not operate like most. We strive to be accessible, professional representatives who genuinely care about and work hard for the citizens in our ward. Ultimately, our constituents know where we live and know how to find us if they are having a problem. I am excited to build on this and keep moving Sumter forward with a great team of leaders.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Yes, the mayor's job keeps me very busy out and about all over our community.

For example, regular meetings with

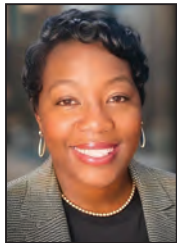
Shaw AFB, economic development prospects, community groups, schools, churches, nonprofits, veterans' groups, etc.

I also have a seventh-grader and a 10th-grader at home and two older kids in college. It seems we are always at a school function or a ball game.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I truly feel that Sumter's best days are ahead of us. We have had some great successes over the last four years. One special success I would like to mention is when we were able to get Chris Singleton to Sumter. Chris tragically lost his mother in the Charleston 9 shooting and brought his message of choosing

love and unity instead of hate after that tragedy. Many of our residents and students were able to hear his message. It is relevant now, and in the future, as we face unknown situations and challenges. In closing, there are so many more opportunities, projects and plans upcoming that I want to help push over the finish line. I am not naive; we have some challenges like every family, business or city does. But if we choose unity as we work to fix those problems, I am sure we will succeed in making Sumter a great place to live, work and raise a family. I will never keep my eye off the long-term goal and city's mission of providing our citizens an environment of opportunity and excellent public services.



FOXY RAE CAMPBELL
NONPARTISAN

I have enhanced my skills in planning, procurement and the execution of ideas. I ran in the 2020 mayoral race, and it was a great experience with having an in-depth look within the community that I market and sell every day.

How would you describe the responsibilities of Sumter mayor?

The responsibility of the mayor is to project the interest of the people and to develop policies that benefit the city. The mayor presides over the council, acts as a ceremonial leader, signs official documents, creates agendas, collaborates on budget proposals and, along with the council, appoints people to commissions and boards, approves budgets and

represents the city.

What do you consider your most significant achievement as mayor since you assumed the role? How has it benefited the city?

The goals I have for next term are the following five items, and they will be done through collaboration and strategic planning:

1. Develop a plan to decrease the response time with emergency first responders.
2. Expand public transportation system and hours.
3. Improve lighting within the city.
4. Work on policies and procedures to decrease crime within the city limits.
5. Develop a system to promote talent retention.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

The policy for felons not being able to obtain a business license: I would develop a second-chance policy that would give felons the ability to become an asset to the community.

Talking time of the citizens at the council meetings: I would ensure each person with concerns or compliments has an ample amount of time to speak.

Funding for free medical clinics and other beneficial programs within the city: I would have a session for small businesses and nonprofits in each industry to present RFP's for their projects.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

The success of city council that I would want to build upon:

- Support for small business expansion and growth.
- Building upgrades.
- Infrastructure repairs.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Yes, I am involved with the community. I help Dream Academy with the youth and supporting other nonprofits, and I SHOP LOCAL!

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I grew up and have lived in Sumter for over 45 years. I would like to see Sumter grow and operate at its true potential. With my leadership, I know we can make it happen.

SEE **MAYOR**, PAGE A14

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I am a Sumter native and currently a broker in charge of the BrownstoneHunt Real Estate Firm. I've lived in my district since 2008. I am an alumna of the University of South Carolina and Western Governors University. My leadership and business development derived from my tenure at Fortune 500, 250 and 100 companies. As a certified project manager,



The following constitutional amendment question will appear on all ballots in the Nov. 5 general election. Read over the question so you will be familiar with it before casting your vote.

Proposed constitutional amendment question:

"Must Section 4, Article II of the Constitution of this State, relating to voter qualifications, be amended so as to provide that only a citizen of the United States and of this State of the age of 18 and upwards who is properly registered is entitled to vote as provided by law?"

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I hope to earn your vote **November 05, 2024**. Early voting begins **October 21, 2024**.

After nearly 30 years in power, James clyburn of south carolina has:

- The SIXTH POOREST district out of 435 total and the 3rd POOREST for children in the nation (F)
- Supports illegal immigration over hardworking, struggling Americans in his district (F)
- Black Americans have the SHORTEST life expectancies (F)
- Black Americans own less homes and property now than they did during the 1960s (F)
- As of 2019, the average white American family had a net worth of \$188,000.00 compared to JUST \$24,000.00 for the average Black American family (F)

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- Fine businesses that hire illegal aliens
- Invest in the American workforce

TRANSPORTATION:

- Car Buyer Assistance
- Rural Public Transportation

SECURITY & PROSPERITY:

- Eliminate some federal taxes
- Protect the unborn
- Gun rights
- Protect and Increase Land Ownership

EDUCATION:

- Equitable Funding
- Increase Pay for Teachers
- Educational Choice
- Mandatory Parental Involvement
- and more...

REPARATIONS:

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- Freedmen's Bureau
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MAYOR

 FROM PAGE A12


REGINALD EVANS
NONPARTISAN

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you have lived in the city of Sumter.

I was born in Sumter in 1963, attended Willow Drive Elementary School, Alice Drive Middle School and graduated from Sumter High School in the class of 1981. I then joined the United States Marine Corps two days after graduating from high school. I then moved over to the Reserve and graduated from Claflin University in 1987 and earned an MBA from Webster University in 2007. My family owned and operated a Shell gasoline station on North Main Street and Dubose Street in 1975. I worked at the station pumping gasoline, starting at the age of 12 and teenager, then worked at the Winn Dixie while in high school as stocker and meat cutter. In 1990, I opened and operated Ben's Meat Market on Broad Street next to the first Walmart and Kroger in Sumter. When Walmart built their Superstore, I went into the consulting business. I was never elected to public office. Over the years, I have worked with a number of community groups and organizations. I was one of the founders of Northside Neighborhood Association and a group called Men N Deed, to name a few.

How would you describe the responsibilities of Sumter mayor?

The mayor of Sumter has a number of great responsibilities, especially today when we are seeing so many problems with violence and other crimes happening in our city. It is the mayor's responsibility to bring the citizens together as a community and make them whole again and to feel safe. Not only does the mayor oversee the financial perspectives

and political aspects, but the mayor also needs to be available for all the people.

The mayor is responsible for taking care of this beautiful city as a whole, making sure those who are in charge of public areas are doing their best to upkeep those areas.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for the city over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

My ultimate goal, as I addressed in the previous paragraph, is getting this city into a better, more wholesome environment where our seniors, disabled and children of all races, financial status and religious beliefs will have the same opportunity to receive the best education possible, not only from the regular scheduled school days, but also to establish mentorship from volunteers who are already eager to help the youth to do better in their schooling.

I would work closely with the education systems, the parents and those who would be involved in supporting the youth programs so there will be a mutual understanding and development between all parties, so there will be a team established between those who oversee the youth, for the youth.

Our youth need a place to learn and grow academically and vocationally, and I will focus on supporting the nonprofit organizations that are working hard to establish this to give the opportunities to these children so they have the chance at a productive future, leading them away from the path of crime.

As far as the current, unequal economic position of Sumter, my plan would be to even the scale. I plan to make the current businesses in Sumter stronger. I would bring in more businesses along with technology industries and support those who want to start new businesses. As mayor, I will strongly provide a set-aside program for minorities and women's small business. I plan to educate anyone who already has a

business or is interested in business so that they understand what they are doing and are prepared for success. My intentions would be to significantly reduce our unemployment rates so our people can live their dream, reduce the needs for government support and are no longer living in poverty the way they are being forced to right now. This will reduce the rate of crime and result in better economic health in Sumter.

My plan would be to oversee the city's budget and fairly allocate the funds appropriately, not to favor any political side, race, gender, particular side of town, economic status, religious belief, educational status, etc. I would intend to use the budget to improve Sumter as a whole, to put us in a better financial position throughout the entire city.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Violence and crime is my greatest concern. I will work with the government officials, police, educators, volunteers in the community, concerned citizens and nonprofit organizations that have been established specifically for these issues to support them in their mission to make the community safe again.

We will do more to clean up the streets, provide safer alternatives for the children who are in unfortunate situations, likely headed toward the wrong path. I will see about raising or denying bail for violent crimes and holding those who are found guilty to a harsher punishment.

2. Education is the key to Sumter's future development. As stated previously, the mayor should be concerned with the education of all children in Sumter. As mayor, I will work with our public, charter and private schools in the city and county. An educated population will reduce crime, attract high-paying jobs and create an environment that we can be proud of as residents of Sumter.

3. As mayor, I will always be

concerned about the health care of each and every resident of Sumter. We should work hard to improve services for the mental wellbeing of our residents. As mayor, it would be hard for me to sleep at night knowing that citizens of Sumter are sleeping outside under a bridge. Sumter health care is our No. 3 employer in the city. The Sumter government should work with health care providers to make sure all Sumter's citizens have access and can afford medical treatment.

What successes have you seen in A Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

Sumter City Council has done a great job developing the west side of Sumter's infrastructure and recreational areas on the west side. As mayor, I will work with both the city and county to provide more inside recreational facilities especially for our seniors and disabled residents in Sumter.

As your next mayor, I will work hard with county officials to develop Sumter's county and city infrastructure. We should work together to ensure that we have safe drinking water. A great wastewater system. We should have a master plan to pave roads and place utility lines underground. We should make Sumter's 2040 Comprehensive Plan a working document that all residents have agreed and accepted as a great plan.

I believe that it is time that Sumter moves away from a city council/city manager form of government. As Sumter grows, we should have a full-time mayor that is accessible to the people and willing to be held responsible and accountable to what is going on in our city.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

I was blessed growing up to have a great family and community support network. I had great mentors who helped me become a good United Methodist man. I was part of a lodge on Broad Street and later became a Shriner. I am a part of the American Legion, the VFW

and the Marine Corps League. I coached little league basketball and baseball. I also help coach Legion baseball.

The past three years, I have been working on establishing an all-boys charter school in Sumter called Grace Young Men Academy. Although we have been faced with opposition, our group feels there is a real need for a school that focuses on the special needs of our young men in Sumter. It is our hope that we can help stop the senseless killing in Sumter over the past years. Our vision for the school is to lead young men away from crime and give the opportunity to become productive citizens, fathers and husbands.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I believe good leaders work to find consensus among the people. I understand that the majority rules in this country, but we should never abuse the minority. As your next mayor, I will also reach out to the people. As mayor, it will be my goal to have a town hall every month.

I truly believe that South Carolina should expand Medicaid. This would save the seniors living in our city and state some \$2,000-\$10,000 every year, money that your parents and seniors in your family can spend on things other than medical expenses. As your mayor, I will work with our state's Speaker of the House, other mayors and community groups to expand Medicaid in South Carolina.

It appears that the current leaders in the city and county have failed to obtain a consensus on the Penny Sales Tax. I watched a number of signs all over the county about projects paid for by the last sales tax. I saw very little to no signs in the poor community. This is why I believe residents in Sumter should vote no and oppose the question. I believe we should redo the project list with more community involvement and place it on the 2026 ballot.

Lastly, I would ask that everyone go out to vote.

MAYOR

 FROM PAGE A14


**TRAVON
FRANK
ADAMS II**
NONPARTISAN

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you have lived in the city of Sumter.

My name is Travon Frank Adams II, and I am 33 years of age, a native of Sumter, a combat veteran and a college graduate of USC Columbia. Regarding my political experience, I have a B.A. in Political Science with a Minor in Philosophy. While in college, I interned for Attorney General Alan Wilson's 2016 reelection campaign, and then over the summer of 2019 I was a policy fellow for Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin of Columbia. After successfully interning at Mayor Benjamin's office at City Hall of Columbia, I was due to graduate in the summer of 2019. Before graduating, I was recruited to join Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign as the college outreach director for South Carolina. After Sanders' campaign, I worked for Councilwoman-At-Large Tameika Isaac Devine for a mayor's race; she is now a senator in Columbia. Soon thereafter, I began to do social work for unions to help them bargain for contract negotiations with the hospital systems of Los Angeles California with SEIU Local 7-2-1. I then worked in the Community with NCYEI (North Columbia Youth Empowerment Initiative) working with at-risk youth, violence and

bridging the gap in resources for the community, while taking part in several campaigns in California. I have lived in and around Sumter much of my life, but I returned home after college in 2022 to help care for my ailing grandfather.

How would you describe the responsibilities of Sumter mayor?

The responsibility of the mayor of Sumter is multifaceted. The responsibility of the mayor is to manage the city economically and socially and to represent every resident of Sumter, no matter race, religion or sex. His responsibility is to be accountable to the public, usher in the will of the people and oversee progress and the public health and safety of the residents of Sumter. A proper mayor, in my opinion, takes matters of the public with the utmost attentiveness and channels the people's desires and wants into something people can feel and touch on a day-to-day basis. I also believe that the mayor's job is to lead the council on a vision that represents all council districts, but it is the mayor's job to guide that vision, especially since we are the first in the country to have a weak mayor (having the same weighted vote as the council). Although that is true, it doesn't prevent a mayor from being strong in character and merit, and this regard, I feel that I am the best candidate to be your next mayor, God willing.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for the city over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

I plan to focus on violent

crime prevention with a proven policing plan modeled after Dallas' Spotlight Program, an effective, long-term solution for violent crime prevention (paid with grant money). I plan to bring relief to renters with an adequate housing policy, bringing down out-of-pocket cost-of-living expenses by adjusting to the taxable rate of apartments and utilizing grants and private partnerships. The plan ensures that we remove violent, repeat offenders from the streets and that we at the same time offer vocational, GED and mental health care to those who want to reform and recidivism. I also plan to attract more manufacturing that is taxed too high to attract business in competition with Columbia, Charlotte, Charleston and Atlanta. I plan to do this by reducing the tax rate that businesses have to pay because they are higher than the national average.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

Housing crisis, violent crime prevention and a stronger economy. I plan to improve these issues by implementing proven policies that have data to back them up. I will partner with community leaders, business owners and academics to provide proven solutions. When it comes to my housing plan, I plan to build housing units that are rent-subsidized, income stratified and prioritize ADA access for seniors. That means rent will be much cheaper than it currently is. I plan to have these

housing units, multi-family homes and duplexes in conveniently located areas. I want an emphasis on higher population density. I want to rebuild the community within the city limits by encouraging residents to move closer. These subsidized units will also prioritize teachers, police officers, firefighters, social workers and city workers to give them a fringe benefit that brings cheaper living costs to them to subsidize their income. If we value these folks, then we need to invest in them for the future of our city. This also has the added benefit of rebuilding the community with members who have resources and training that benefit the community. I also want the housing to replace all the dilapidated, ruined housing around Sumter.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

I have seen progress with the penny tax, and that is something that I would like to improve upon. In general, I will build upon all successful programs, and for those that are ineffective, we will reengineer them to be effective. I will also build on the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the city. My plan ensures that this plan can become a reality and that it impacts the lives of the residents who need relief from rising costs in inflation. People can barely afford to live; violence is out of control. Something needs to be done.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Yes, I work with the

community often to get the vote on the state-wide level, which includes work in Sumter as well. I've worked with both Republicans and Democrats, as stated above in my experience. I am a community organizer by trade and profession. Studying both philosophy and political science, I'm transitioning to become a public representative so that I can deliver benefits to the residents of Sumter, my hometown. The people in it matter to me, and that's why, although at times I've had to leave home, I have always been close by and in Columbia doing social work in and around the state and in Sumter.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I plan to usher in a new age of accountability and transparency for the residents of Sumter, and I promise I will never enrich myself while in the office or undermine the will of the people of Sumter. I love my city and our rich history; my community's wellbeing is my life's goal. So, I plan to make sure that we have a hometown that raises its youth as a community and retains residents with good housing, jobs and social services.

Something I failed to mention is that I plan to target childcare costs, nightlife and safety while supporting our local entrepreneurs and existing local businesses and shops. Let's get ready to have hope for a brighter future. Vote T. Frank Adams II for mayor. My website is travonfadams.com. Go check out the plan, as it's updated periodically.

WHEN IS A RUNOFF NEEDED?

For races with more than two candidates, someone must get more than 50% of the vote to win outright. If no one earns 50% of the vote plus one vote, the top two vote-getters will move on to a runoff. This applies to every race on the ballot, whether they are partisan or nonpartisan.

Election 2024

VOTER FAQ

If you moved to...

- Another residence within your precinct, you can update your address at your polling place and vote a regular ballot.
- A different precinct within your county, you are eligible vote failsafe (see below).
- Another residence in another county within 30 days of the election, you are eligible to vote failsafe (see below).
- Another residence in another county prior to the Oct. 14 registration deadline, you are not eligible to vote. State law requires you to be registered prior to the deadline to be eligible to vote.

• South Carolina after the Oct. 14 registration deadline, you are not eligible to vote. State law requires you to be registered prior to the deadline to be eligible to vote.

Two options for voting failsafe:

1. Vote at the polling place in your previous precinct using a failsafe provisional ballot. A failsafe provisional ballot contains only federal, statewide, countywide and municipality-wide offices.

2. Go to the voter registration office in the county in which you currently reside, change your address, and vote a regular ballot there.

When do I need to register to vote?

The deadline to register to vote in any election in South Carolina is 30 days prior to Election Day, and although this year the deadline was extended by 10 days because of potential disruptions caused by Hurricane Helene, the deadline to register to vote in person, online, by fax or by mail was Friday, Oct. 14.

I've moved since the last time I voted, and I haven't updated my voter registration. Can I still vote?

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Can I take my child with me to vote?

Yes. Minor children (under age 18) of a voter may accompany the voter in the voting booth.

What do I need to take with me to vote?

At your polling place, you will be asked to show one of the following photo IDs:

- Driver's license
- ID card issued by the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles
- Voter registration card with photo
- Federal military ID
- U.S. passport

What if I don't have one of these photo IDs?

If you do not have one of these photo IDs, you can make your voting experience as fast and easy as possible by getting one before Election Day. If you are already registered to vote, you can go to your county voter registration and elections office, provide your date of birth and the last four digits of your

Social Security number and have your photo taken. You can do this even on Election Day. Free ID cards are also available from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

If you cannot get a photo ID, bring your non-photo voter registration card with you to the polling place. You can contact your county voter registration office if you need to replace your non-photo voter registration card. You may vote a provisional ballot after signing an affidavit stating you have a reasonable impediment to obtaining a photo ID. A reasonable impediment is any valid reason, beyond your control, which created an obstacle to obtaining a photo ID. Some examples include: a disability or illness, a conflict with your work schedule, a lack of transportation, a lack of a birth certificate, family responsibilities, a religious objection to being photographed and any other obstacle you find reasonable. This ballot will count unless someone proves to the county board of voter registration and elections that you are lying about your identity or having the listed impediment.

SEE FAQ, PAGE A17

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FAQ FROM PAGE A16

To vote under the reasonable impediment exception:

- Inform the poll managers that you do not have a photo ID and could not get one.
- Present your current, non-photo registration card.
- Sign the affidavit provided by the poll managers stating why you could not obtain a photo ID.
- Cast a provisional ballot that will be counted unless the county board of voter registration and elections has reason to believe your affidavit is false.

What happens if I forget to bring my photo ID when voting in person?

If you forget to bring your photo ID to your polling place, you may vote a provisional ballot that will count only if you show your photo ID to your county board of voter registration and elections office prior to certification of the election. Results are certified on the Friday after the general election (Nov. 8).

What hours will the polls be open

on Election Day?

Polling places are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Anyone in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

Are there any laws about candidates posting their signs along the roadway?

Yes, there are several state laws addressing political signs on roadways, as well as county and municipal ordinances. See S.C. Code of Laws Sections 57-25-10, 57-25-140 and 7-25-210. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entity that maintains the road (state, county or municipality) to enforce applicable sign laws.

Can candidates or their representatives take people to the polls to vote?

Yes. It is permissible for any person, even a candidate, to give a voter a ride as long as it is being done solely to help facilitate voting. However, no one can offer a voter anything of value in exchange for voting.

I saw a candidate/member of candidate's campaign at my polling place talking to voters.

Can they do that?

Yes, but there are restrictions:

Inside the polling place: No campaigning is allowed. Candidates may be inside the polling place and talk to voters as long as they are not campaigning, intimidating voters or interfering with the election process.

Within 500 feet of an entrance to a polling place: Candidates and campaign staff may campaign as long as they are not intimidating voters or interfering with the election process. However, no campaign literature, signs or posters are allowed. Candidates are allowed to wear a badge no larger than 4.25" x 4.25" featuring only the candidate's name and office sought. Candidates must remove their badge upon entering a polling place.

A candidate is definitely campaigning while in the polling place, or there is campaign literature within 500 feet of the entrance. What can I do?

Inform the poll clerk immediately. If the issue is not resolved, contact the county board of voter registration and elections. The county board will address the complaint.

When I left the polls, I was asked to participate in an "exit poll." Is this legal?

Exit polls are legal, and participation is voluntary. They are not conducted by the State Election Commission or the county boards of voter registration and elections. Generally, polls may not be conducted inside the polling place, and we ask that voters not be approached before they have voted. If a voter feels threatened or intimidated by a pollster, it should be reported immediately to the precinct's poll clerk.

Where should I file a complaint about the election?

It's best to report any concerns to a poll manager or notify your county voter registration and elections office as soon as possible. To send a complaint to the SEC, visit the contact page on www.scVOTES.gov. Complaints regarding voting and elections should be addressed to your county board of voter registration and elections.

Source: S.C. Election Commission/SCVotes.gov

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Sumter City Council, Ward 4



GENE WESTON
NONPARTISAN

Susan Brewer Weston in 1996, and we had two daughters, Amelia (1999) and Isabelle (2002).

My first political experience was helping with signs and door knocking for Ramon Schwartz when I was in high school. I did the same for the Bill McCollum campaign in Central Florida. After moving back to Sumter, I ran for city council in 2000 and lost to incumbent Sonny Newman. I began to be active in the Sumter County Republican Party in 2002 but became inactive after a couple of years. I stepped back in helping to run the local campaign for Mick Mulvaney in 2010 and assisting with the Tony Barwick campaign in 2012.

I became active in the GOP again in 2016. In 2020, I was elected as the executive committeeman for the Sumter County Republican Party, a position that I still hold today.

How would you describe the responsibilities of the Ward 4 representative?

Police, fire, EMS, water, sewer, historical preservation, downtown revitalization.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for city council over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

- Focus on community development. Quality of life starts with safety in our community. I want to back our law enforcement to stem the spike in crime in Sumter. I also believe our city can sound the alarm to bring pressure on our solicitor's office to prosecute crimes in Sumter — not just violent crimes, but property and other crimes as well.

Once our citizens feel like they are in a safe community, we can focus on enhancing parks, sidewalks, city services, beautification of corridors and events that bring a community together. Improved community development leads to private investment that leads to economic growth and development.

- Increase access and openness in city departments and management. I believe Sumter can do a better job of responding to the needs and concerns of our citizens, especially in matters of law enforcement and city services like the water department.

- Improve transparency in city government. Many have questioned where and why the city has spent resources on things not available to all citizens, and I believe these issues need a complete and clear explanation to maintain trust in local government.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

- Crime. The citizens of Sumter do not feel safe, often even in their own homes. Violent crime grabs most headlines, but property crimes from burglary to vandalism to auto theft are rampant in our community. The occurrence of crime pushes up insurance costs,

lowers property values, overfills our judicial system and overworks our law enforcement.

One solution is to bring positive pressure from the city on our local solicitor's office to adjudicate the arrests in a timelier fashion. This would encourage law enforcement by positively reinforcing their activity, while likewise reducing the incentive to commit crime as potential criminals observe the consequences of others committing crime.

The city can also work with the police department to identify areas with high, repetitive rates of crime. The police can increase their presence there, encourage neighborhood watch groups and even be a part of initiating such groups in neighborhoods where the crime problem looms large but leadership is weak or non-existent. The city should enforce the policies of the police department and ensure that the chief is meeting

SEE **WARD 4**, PAGE A19





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WARD 4

FROM PAGE A18

or exceeding key performance indicators annually, as lack of action historically has damaged morale in the department.

- Growth management. Sumter has experienced growth in residential neighborhoods, apartment complexes and industrial developments in the past five years. It is likely that the military presence from Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter will grow in the near future as well. Real population growth stresses all systems and services provided by the city.

A near-term solution is to leverage our local spending capacity by approving the upcoming Penny for Progress. In so doing, the city and county can fund up to \$125 million in projects ranging from infrastructure, recreation, first responders and economic development while relying on about 35% of the new tax to be generated by non-Sumter County residents. These funds can be match funded at the state and local level to significantly expand their impact for Sumter.

The city should return its focus to the

best elements of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Sumter Master Plan. Both of these prepare for the prospect of growth while looking at ways to utilize existing properties, especially urban blight, to add usable real estate in areas already served by city utilities and services.

- City services maintenance and growth. The city is responsible for water, sewer, police, fire and EMS in city limits. This point is somewhat redundant with the point above, but I believe thought and consideration should be given to continued investment in these areas. Not only should the city be prepared for growth, but it should also be able to maintain excellent quality in each of these areas to existing Sumterites. If these services are stretched too thin, they begin to experience breakdown, leading to diminished service and/or increased costs to maintain services at a given level.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

One of the largest overall successes I have observed in Sumter City Council is the harmony with which the council works with one another. I would strive to work with my fellow council members to maintain this positive working environment while tackling

the important issues before council.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

I have been active in the Sumter community since returning here in 1994. Some of my involvement includes:

- Derthick Education Foundation Board
- Sumter Habitat for Humanity Board
- Past President Sumter Rotary Club
- Tuomey Foundation Board of Governors
- Acting Chairman, Sumter Cemetery Association
- Sumter Edge Investor Oversight Board
- Past Chairman Sumter Gallery of Art
- Sumter County Clemson Club
- Elder, Deacon – First Presbyterian Church
- Deacon – First Baptist Church
- Shaw Sumter Community Relations Council
- Heart of Sumter Neighborhood Association
- Running an 80-year-old family business for the past 24 years.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I love my city. I want it to be better, and I want to be one who helps make it better.



JIMMY DAVIS
NONPARTISAN

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you have lived in the city of Sumter.

I'm proud to call Sumter my home. My grandparents, parents, uncle and myself spent many valuable years growing up right here in Ward 4. As this area has shaped my life, I proudly returned to Ward 4 in 2020 with my wife and two children. My lifelong connection to Sumter has shaped my commitment to this community. From being raised in Sumter and a proud graduate of Sumter High School, I have devoted over 20 years to building and nurturing a local business, employing over 30 Sumter residents and understanding firsthand the needs and aspirations of our community. In 2023, I was recognized as the Philip L. Edwards Business Person of the Year.

SEE **WARD 4**, PAGE A20

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WARD 4

FROM PAGE A19

In addition to my professional journey, I prioritize my roles as husband and father. These roles are those that inspire my dedication to ensuring a thriving future for our families. My commitment to Sumter extends beyond my business; I have also served as the former chair of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce. This role allowed me to advocate for local businesses, foster economic growth and engage with community leaders to drive positive change.

Running for city council in Ward 4 is a natural extension of my desire to contribute Sumter's growth and prosperity. I am eager to use my experience and deep-rooted connection to this city to work toward practical solutions and advocate for the interests of our community.

How would you describe the responsibilities of the Ward 4

representative?

As a city council representative, the primary responsibilities include being an advocate for the interests and concerns of constituents within their ward while ensuring their needs and preferences are voiced in council discussions and decisions. It is also very important to me to assist residents with issues related to city services, such as public safety, sanitation and infrastructure. With community engagement and collaboration with other council members and city officials, it is my hope to address broader city issues and develop effective solutions.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for the city over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

If elected, during the term I would work toward making Sumter a safer, more vibrant, attractive and business-friendly city while maintaining transparency and engaging effectively with the community.

What challenges/concerns do you

see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

The challenges and concerns that I see in Sumter include litter, infrastructure and economic development and crime. While each of these challenges comes with great concern, they each require a structured approach to understanding and resolving each issue. First we must identify and define each challenge then develop solutions given the city's resources and constraints while working with experts to design actionable plans.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

One of the many great successes supported through our city council has been the Penny for Progress. The Penny for Progress has made many impacts to our city that include public safety, youth engagement, advanced education, increased walkability, improved road maintenance, nature trails like the Shot Pouch Greenway, restoration of property and more. Looking forward, this penny

supports economic development, infrastructure projects, public safety needs and quality-of-life projects for our community. This penny has provided Sumter with great opportunity to enhance the community with needs and beyond for our residents.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

My community involvement for Sumter starts at home as I lead out each day as husband, father, friend. Acquiring the position as chair of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce, I was fortunate to carry an important role in local community development. Through the day-to-day, you can find me leading a business and investing in our employees. I want to see their success and happiness in Sumter. My wife and I are members of Christ Community Church where we attend with our two children, Nada and Abram. I am co-founder of the charitable event Comfort for Christmas, which helps collect blankets and canned goods to donate to Sumter United Ministries

and provides a family with a free heating and air unit. I actively partner with Habitat for Humanity to provide HVAC services for families in need. I am a former Tuomey fellow graduate and recognized as an ambassador for our local hospital.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

My dedication to Sumter goes beyond myself as I look at the future of Sumter and know the best is yet to come. I want to know that my children and yours will value and love Sumter the way that I have and will be proud to call it home for many years. I am infinitely grateful to our military families and the sacrifices they make. It is an honor to have them in our community. My passion for joining city council is to help make a difference where I am able and the how the Lord can use me. I read a quote from Brian Tracy that states, "Success is not just about having ideas; it's about making things happen. Being a doer means turning vision into reality through action and perseverance."



LUCY MAHON
NONPARTISAN

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you have lived in the city of Sumter.

I have lived in Ward 4 since I moved to Sumter in January of 2021. My political experience is limited to the recent experience I just had running for the Senate District 35 race. What I learned from that campaign is that our community needs more people running for office that have a heart for service, enthusiasm for our future and a tireless passion for bringing the changes our community needs to fruition.

How would you describe the responsibilities of the Ward 4 representative?

Be accessible: I am on my porch

the afternoons and evenings (depending on the meeting time) after every city council meeting. I plan to continue to be on my porch after every city council meeting, if elected, and perhaps even if not elected. I hope this communicates very clearly to my future constituents that I am ready, not only to listen to their concerns, but to address them to the fullest extent possible. Most of what I hear from my neighbors is that they feel like existing codes are not being enforced. I pledge to be an advocate for every member of Ward 4 who feels like they are hitting their head against a brick wall when it comes to code enforcement.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for city council over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

Every other person running for this office is involved in the small business arena of Sumter. I am the only health care worker. This automatically sets me apart from my fellow candidates for this reason: People who work in

health care go into this field to serve and help others. My primary goal/reason for running is to serve others. I can genuinely say I have no agenda, and I think that is a good thing. I love Sumter and want to see her grow in all the right ways. My grandfather was the Sumter County civil engineer for many years, which may explain my fascination with codes and zoning, which is a big part of what city council is responsible for.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

I love Sumter, and that is why I am committed to helping solve her three biggest problems. Poverty, crime and schools. All three of these areas require a long-term vision of supporting our most at-risk children and their mothers. To the best of my ability, I will do everything in my power to help improve the lives of those who are born equal but without equal opportunity.

What successes have you seen

in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

Job creation. Sumter has a real opportunity to continue working with her teammates on the county and state level to develop more manufacturing and health care jobs in the Sumter area. Across all local workforce development areas in South Carolina, the Santee-Lynches area (including Sumter) has the highest percentage of its working population employed outside of the region, at 55%. If over half of our population has to leave this area every day to work, children have to wake themselves up to get to school on time, parents can't attend PTO meetings or after-school programs, and families generally suffer from the loss of time together when a parent is commuting outside of the community to work.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

My wife, Christi, and I attend the Episcopal Church of The Good Shepherd on Dingle Street in Sumter and Saint Martin's in

the Fields in Columbia. We both volunteer with the music ministry at Saint Martin's, and we regularly attend Sumter High athletic events to watch Christi's two boys play football. I am a board member of Sumter County Pride and a member of the Heart of Sumter Neighborhood Association. I have volunteered regularly with Harvest Hope and Fostering Foster in Camden. I am a member of the Farm Bureau, the American Physical Therapy Association, The National Deer Association and the Wild Turkey Federation. I have a level 2 Clinical instructor certification with the APTA.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I am the only female hunt club manager in North and South Carolina, according to my lease company. I love the outdoors, fantasy football, mint chocolate chip ice cream, my two dogs and a good glass of champagne.

WARD 4

FROM PAGE A20



LYNN R. KENNEDY
NONPARTISAN

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you have lived in the city of Sumter.

My name is Rebecca Lynn Kennedy, and I am proud to be a lifelong resident of Sumter. Having been born and raised here, I have a deep appreciation for our community and its unique character. My professional journey has been diverse, with roles such as quality control specialist at Cardinal Tire, customer service representative at Peoples Natural Gas and operations manager at Service Master/Ontrack. These experiences have equipped me with strong problem-solving and management skills, which I believe are essential for effective leadership.

I also have a rich history of community involvement, including 17 years as the events manager for the City of Sumter. In this capacity, I planned and executed numerous city events, collaborating with various departments and external organizations to create meaningful experiences for our residents. Additionally, I co-own Danny's Trophy Shop and manage my own business, Carnivore Butcher & Bottle, which emphasizes high-quality service and community engagement.

While I may not have formal political experience, my extensive work in community service has allowed me to connect with residents from all walks of life. I have served as president of the Sumter Jaycees, chaired events like the Iris Festival and volunteered with many local organizations. Through these roles, I have developed a keen understanding of the issues facing our community, particularly in Ward 4. I am committed to advocating for our residents and ensuring that their

voices are heard in the decision-making process.

How would you describe the responsibilities of the Ward 4 representative?

As the Ward 4 representative, my responsibilities would encompass serving as a voice for the residents of our community, ensuring their needs and concerns are effectively communicated to the city council. This role involves actively engaging with constituents to understand their challenges and aspirations and advocating for policies that promote the well-being and growth of Ward 4.

Additionally, I would be responsible for overseeing local initiatives and projects, ensuring they align with the interests of our community. This includes collaborating with various stakeholders, such as local organizations, businesses and government agencies, to foster partnerships that can enhance the quality of life in Ward 4.

Moreover, I would focus on addressing critical issues, such as public safety, economic development and community engagement. This means not only advocating for increased resources and support for these areas, but also being accessible to residents, listening to their feedback and keeping them informed about city developments.

Ultimately, my role as a Ward 4 representative would be to champion the needs of our community, promote transparency and accountability in local government and work tirelessly to create a vibrant and prosperous environment for all residents.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for city council over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

If elected as the Ward 4 representative on Sumter City Council, I have set specific goals aimed at enhancing the quality of life for our residents while addressing the pressing issues in our community. My primary objectives include improving public safety, promoting neighborhood revitalization and fostering economic growth.

To enhance public safety, my foremost goal is to advocate for a greater police presence in high-crime areas and support community policing initiatives. I plan to engage with both law enforcement and community members to strengthen relationships and build trust. Additionally, I will encourage the establishment of neighborhood watch programs and promote the installation of security measures, such as surveillance cameras and improved lighting, to deter criminal activities.

Promoting neighborhood revitalization is another essential goal. I aim to collaborate closely with zoning boards to enforce property maintenance codes and tackle issues related to neglected homes and zoning violations. By working with local organizations and community members, I will advocate for beautification projects and initiatives that enhance the aesthetic appeal of our neighborhoods, fostering pride among residents and creating a welcoming environment for all.

Finally, I am committed to fostering economic growth by attracting new businesses and supporting local entrepreneurs. I plan to collaborate with the Development Board to create incentives that encourage businesses to invest in Sumter. Additionally, I will focus on promoting the city's cultural, historical and recreational offerings to enhance our community's appeal to potential investors and visitors.

To achieve these goals, I will prioritize open communication with residents, hold regular forums to discuss progress and actively seek feedback to ensure that my initiatives align with the community's needs. By leveraging my extensive background in community service and collaboration, I am dedicated to making meaningful improvements in Ward 4 and the City of Sumter as a whole.

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

In Sumter, several pressing challenges require immediate attention, particularly public safety,

support for small businesses and economic development.

Public safety is a critical concern, with rising incidents of shootings, thefts and car break-ins. To address this, I will advocate for a stronger police presence and faster response times in high-crime areas. Promoting community policing initiatives will help build trust and encourage residents to report crimes. Additionally, I will support the expansion of neighborhood watch programs and push for enhanced security measures like improved lighting and surveillance cameras to deter criminal activities.

Small businesses are essential to our local economy but often face obstacles to growth. The city can play a significant role in supporting these enterprises by fostering community engagement, which benefits both small businesses and the community as a whole. I will prioritize education, training and development opportunities to empower entrepreneurs. Furthermore, I will advocate for zoning regulations that create a supportive environment for small businesses, ensuring they have the necessary resources to thrive. By boosting profitability through targeted support, we can cultivate a dynamic ecosystem that encourages innovation and sustainability.

Lastly, economic development is crucial for creating opportunities that retain our youth in Sumter. By fostering a vibrant job market and supporting local businesses, we can provide meaningful employment options that motivate young people to stay in our community. Investing in workforce development programs aligned with their skills and interests will help them secure well-paying jobs. By encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives, we can inspire youth to start their own businesses, contributing to the local economy.

By addressing these challenges through targeted initiatives and community collaboration, I am committed to enhancing the quality of life for all residents in Sumter, creating a safer, more vibrant and economically prosperous community.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

Public safety is my top priority, and I have observed positive developments in this area through community policing and crime-prevention programs. If elected, I will support the expansion of these initiatives and seek additional funding to ensure that all neighborhoods feel safe.

Additionally, community engagement has improved through town hall meetings and outreach programs. I plan to build on this success by increasing the frequency of community forums and utilizing social media to gather more feedback and encourage broader participation, creating a stronger platform for residents to discuss local projects and priorities.

Infrastructure improvements have also been a key focus, with significant upgrades to roads, parks and public facilities. I will advocate for ongoing investment in infrastructure to ensure our neighborhoods remain safe and accessible while promoting projects that enhance greenspaces and recreational facilities.

Economic development initiatives have successfully attracted new businesses and supported local entrepreneurs. I aim to strengthen these efforts by partnering with local businesses and educational institutions to create job-training programs that align residents with available opportunities.

Finally, I will advocate for sustainability initiatives, promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development to ensure a prosperous future for our community.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Yes, I am actively involved in the community in many ways. Growing up in Sumter, I built lasting friendships, including connections with many local leaders. My engagement with nonprofit and civic organizations has allowed me to participate deeply in local initiatives.

WARD 4 FROM PAGE A21

One of my greatest joys has been volunteering at the First Church of God, where I helped with children's activities and fundraisers that support vital youth programs. My focus in youth ministry has been on creating engaging opportunities for children to learn and grow.

Over the past 40+ years, I have volunteered with various civic and nonprofit organizations. My work with the Friends of Swan Lake and the Sumter Evening Pilot Club has centered on enhancing local parks and providing support to those in need. As an honorary commander at Shaw Air Force Base, I worked to strengthen the relationship between the base and the community, fostering mutual understanding. I also dedicated time to the Emmanuel Church Soup Kitchen, serving meals to individuals facing food insecurity.

Through my membership in the Rotary Club, I continue to collaborate on projects that benefit Sumter as a whole. These diverse experiences have enriched my life and contributed to a stronger, more supportive community. I often find myself running into someone I know, sharing a chat about family and the

latest happenings, which underscores the connections I've built over the years.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

What sets me apart is my deep-rooted connection to Sumter, having lived here my entire life. This has given me a unique understanding of the community's history, values and needs. Additionally, I have over 17 years of experience working for the city, which has equipped me with the skills necessary to collaborate effectively with city departments, business owners, civic organizations and residents.

My personal love for Sumter drives my dedication to enhancing the quality of life in our community. I am committed to listening to the concerns of my neighbors, representing their voices and working collaboratively to create positive change. I believe that this personal connection, combined with my professional experience, positions me well to advocate for the interests of Ward 4 residents effectively. I'm eager to bring my passion and commitment to city council to serve the residents of Sumter, ensuring that their needs and aspirations are prioritized in our city's future.

"Together for a Safer, Stronger Sumter!"



SCOTT BURKETT
NONPARTISAN

Tell us about yourself, including any political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I have always been passionate about my community and its growth and development.

Despite not having any political experience, I have actively contributed to making a positive impact through initiatives like the litter campaign in Sumter. My deep roots in the historic district and my recent return to Ward 4 in 2020 have given me a unique perspective and understanding of the needs and concerns of the people in these areas. I am excited to use my passion, experience and commitment to serve and make a difference in my community.

How would you describe the responsibilities of the Ward 4

representative?

As a representative for Ward 4, my main responsibility is to serve and advocate for the constituents in my ward. However, I also have a larger goal of improving the overall well-being of the entire Sumter community. While I will prioritize the needs of my specific ward, I am committed to implementing initiatives that benefit all residents of Sumter.

If elected, what specific goals do you have for city council over the next term, and how do you plan to achieve them?

The implementation of a city-wide camera system, paired with improved lighting, will be a key component of my proposed initiative if elected. This system will serve three main purposes: 1) to catch criminals after a crime has been committed, providing valuable evidence for prosecution, 2) to act as a deterrent for criminal activity and 3) to aid authorities in determining fault in car crashes at intersections. This will ultimately improve the safety and security of our city and its citizens.

SEE WARD 4, PAGE A23

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WARD 4

FROM PAGE A22

What challenges/concerns do you see in Sumter (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

It is important to acknowledge that crime exists in all communities, including Sumter. As a mid-sized city, we must prioritize enforcing laws and keeping dangerous individuals off our streets. We must also work to change the perception of Sumter as a crime-ridden city, as it does not truly reflect the hardworking and law-abiding citizens who call this place home. We must come together as a community to address this issue and make Sumter a safer place for all.

What successes have you seen in Sumter City Council that you want to build on?

It is imperative to also recognize the contributions of past leaders and their efforts

in getting the city to where it is today. The new generation brings fresh perspectives, but it is the collective efforts of all leaders that have shaped our city into what it is now. We must continue to work together and build upon each other's ideas to ensure the continued success and growth of our community. Let us also not forget to thank and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our city and county council in addressing issues such as litter, which affects us all. Together, as Team Sumter, we can make our city even stronger for generations to come.

Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

My passion for community service led me to create the Sumter Litter Alliance years ago, which has now become a formal commission between the city and county and has been renamed the Sumter Litter Advisory Board. Currently, I serve as the vice chairman of

this committee, working toward a cleaner and more sustainable environment for our community. In addition to my work with the Sumter Litter Alliance, I have also dedicated my time and efforts to the Sumter Sertoma Club for several years and look forward to joining more clubs in the future to continue making a positive impact in my community.

Is there anything else you want to add about yourself?

I am proud to be a part of the community in my "small" town. I have lived here for most of my life, only leaving to attend college. Over the years, I have witnessed the growth and transformation of Sumter thanks to initiatives like the Penny for Progress campaign, which I fully support. As I see Sumter continue to evolve in the 21st century, I am committed to being actively involved in its progress for the long term. Ward 4 is my home, and I am proud to be a resident here.

U.S. House of Representatives, District 6



JAMES E. (JIM) CLYBURN
DEMOCRAT
INCUMBENT

year battle with diabetes in 2019. We became the parents of three daughters and four grandchildren.

My journey has been shaped by a unique set of personal and professional blessings that inform my service. I entitled my memoirs "Blessed Experiences: Genitively Southern, Proudly Black." In the introduction, I wrote: "All of my experiences have not been pleasant, but I have considered all of them to be blessings."

I have authored, helped pass and secured funds for a plethora of critical legislative initiatives, including Sumter's North Main Street/Morris College and the "Overhead Bridge/Manning Avenue projects," the Wateree Regional Transportation system, the Matthew Perry Jr. United States Courthouse, the Affordable Care Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure

SEE **DISTRICT 6**, PAGE A24

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

The importance of public service was instilled in me from an early age. I was born in Sumter to a fundamentalist minister and a cosmetologist mother and have spent my entire life in the 6th Congressional. I am a graduate of South Carolina State College, where I met and married Emily England, to whom I was married for 58 years before she lost her 30-

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DISTRICT 6

FROM PAGE A23

Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, the Safer Communities Act and the PACT Act for veterans.

I've secured hundreds of millions of dollars in funding for projects throughout the Sixth District that have begun to rebuild our outdated roads and bridges, connect rural communities to health care, bring clean drinking water to homes along the I-95 corridor and so much more.

Thanks to my "Affordable, Accessible Broadband for All" legislation, South Carolina will be able to build out faster, affordable, high-speed broadband for every household in the state.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the U.S. House of Representatives?

I began my professional career as a public school teacher in Charleston. In 1971, I joined the administration of Gov. John C. West, becoming the first minority advisor to a South Carolina governor in our state's history. I subsequently served as South Carolina Human Affairs commissioner under four governors: two Democrats and two Republicans.

I was elected to Congress in 1992 and have served as co-president of my freshman class, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, vice chair and chair of the Democratic Caucus and twice as majority whip and assistant Democratic leader.

My experiences teaching history in segregated schools taught me the importance of students learning about Lewis Latimer as well as Thomas Edison. I staunchly supported the \$35 per month insulin cap included in the Inflation Reduction Act because I saw the outrageous insulin bills of my late wife, a four-shot-a-day diabetic. I fought so hard for broadband funding to be included in the bi-infrastructure bill because I consulted with teachers throughout the district whose students were forced to do their homework in fast food parking lots. As chair of the COVID-19 Select Committee, I learned of the plight of rural residents who couldn't access telehealth because they lacked access to affordable broadband internet. I continue to fight to bring good-paying jobs to the district because I know what it means to work to provide for my family and loved ones.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

1. Closing the Charleston Loophole: Next year will mark 10 years since the

heartbreaking tragedy at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. It's long past time we close the deadly loophole that allowed the white supremacist shooter to buy a gun when he never should have been allowed to do so. I will not give up on my bill to close the loophole.

2. Restoring the Affordable Connectivity Program: In today's connected world, broadband access is essential for work, school, health care and so much more. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) lowered internet costs for eligible households, and at the time of the program's expiration, more than 23 million subscribers – one in six households – were enrolled. If reelected, I'll continue to work in Congress to restore this life-changing benefit to the more than 415,600 households in South Carolina who relied on it.

3. Addressing systemic poverty: I will continue my push to significantly expand my 10-20-30 funding formula that is currently in 19 sections of the federal budget. When we were crafting the 2009 Recovery Act, I created a plan that would direct at least 10% of appropriated funds to projects in counties where at least 20% of the population has lived beneath the federal poverty line for at least 30 years. As of today, it has been applied to 19 federal accounts. It requires no additional spending from the federal government because the plan directs already-promised funding to the communities that need it most.

How do you propose to tackle income inequality and support economic growth in your district?

I will work to make childcare more available by expanding and making permanent the Child Tax Credit. I am an advocate of the affordable housing program that is being proposed by Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris. That program will make first-time homeownership more affordable and certainly more accessible. I will be sponsoring legislation to create such a program even if the vice president is not successful in her presidential bid. I will seek to expand the Rural Energy Savings Program and the 10-20-30 funding formula for persistent poverty communities.

We are only as strong as our weakest link, and we must ensure every community is included in our economic recovery. Enacting my 10-20-30 plan across the board will dismantle poverty at its root and help lift up the communities in SC-06 that are in greatest need. Thanks to investments made by the Biden-Harris Administration, in partnership with a Democratic Congress, we are starting to see some progress. Scout Motors in the Midlands will create 4,000 jobs and invest \$2 billion in South Carolina. This win is directly

connected to the Biden-Harris Inflation Reduction Act.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

Since 2006, and until three months ago, I have been serving in leadership positions and, in keeping with tradition, on leave from the Appropriation Committee. I plan to return to the committee in the next Congress.

In addition to the priorities mentioned above, I will continue my efforts to lower costs, improve communities and make neighborhoods safer. I am supporting expanding the \$35 per month cap on insulin, now limited to seniors, to all insulin dependents. I also wish to expand coverage of the Affordable Care Act.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

My constituents are at the heart of everything I do, and I meet with them and their advocates almost daily and occasionally hold town hall meetings. Their feedback is invaluable and central to my policy-making decisions and efforts. For example: The governor and I recently announced a \$175 million update to the I-95 bridge over Lake Marion in Santee.

When the State Department of Transportation requested my assistance in making the case for a federal grant, I had been made aware that the little town of Summerton had recently experienced a total failure of their water system. I requested that the bridge be designed to accommodate pipes that could carry water from Santee in Orangeburg County to Summerton. That made the project about more than asphalt and steel; it was also about safe drinking water and economic development.

Additionally, I'm proud of the work my office does to resolve constituent issues efficiently and effectively. From securing student loan debt relief to connecting South Carolinians with lifesaving health care to fighting on behalf of our local veterans, my primary focus is, and will always be, on serving my constituents who have entrusted me with this great responsibility.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

I'm a firm believer in finding common ground to move this country forward and view compromise as an essential element. I helped secure the votes for the \$1.2 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Law when I was house majority whip in 2021, personally making calls to lawmakers to negotiate the bill and earn their

support. This was because I knew how the bill could transform the often-overlooked communities like those I represent. I was the lead sponsor of the "Accessible, Affordable Broadband for All" bill, which carried a price tag of \$95 billion.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar was carrying a similar bill in the Senate. The negotiating and compromising began. We ended up with only \$65 billion but, because of language in the "American Rescue Plan," cities and states can use that law to do as we have done in South Carolina to maximize their broadband efforts.

In South Carolina, we needed \$650 million to connect every residence and every business to the internet. We are planning to achieve that by the end of 2025 because we are getting "\$400 million from the Rescue Plan."

In the last three years, more than \$5 billion has been allocated to South Carolina to improve our drinking water, repair our roads and bridges, expand access to broadband and so much more. South Carolina had been trying to replace the Lake Marion bridges for years. Thanks to the Infrastructure Law, we are finally getting it done. That's what bipartisanship, compromise and prioritizing the American people can do.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

After noting what he called a certain magic about America, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that, "The greatness of America lies not in being more enlightened than any other nation, but rather in her ability to repair her faults." America is a great country, in no need of being made great. Our challenge is to work - in unity - to make our greatness accessible and affordable for all our citizens. We can do that by repairing the faults that continue to plague our society. The policies I've advocated for and supported in Congress are contributing to that goal, and if given another term, I promise to continue delivering progress on behalf of the people of SC-06.

There is another quote attributed to de Tocqueville that some historians dispute that he ever said. Irrespective of whether he said it or not, I do believe that "America is great because its people are good, and if the people of America ever cease to be good, America will cease to be great."

I believe that is about where we are today as a nation, losing our basic goodness toward each other. And as a result, under threat of maintaining our greatness as a nation. Hopefully, e pluribus Unum will prevail, and our "pursuit of a more perfect Union" will continue.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 6 FROM PAGE A24



GREGG MARCEL DIXON
UNITED CITIZENS

the impact they have on people that have given me an insight on what needs to be done to cure these ills.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

1.) Justice for groups historically wronged by the federal government - this nation spends trillions caring for illegal immigrants, on corporate bailouts, on the inflated military budget, on foreign aid and more. My plan is to divert those funds to direct cash payments to people of the qualifying status such as Freedmen (the descendants of those emancipated by the American government); the people of East Palestine in Ohio; and more.

2.) Stopping mass immigration is another one of my policy priorities. At a minimum, the federal government spends \$451 billion a year on illegal immigration alone. That number quickly adds up to trillions of dollars throughout the years. While illegal immigrants get trillions of dollars from America, they send a minimum of \$30 billion back to their homelands! Illegal immigrants who accept jobs for lower pay results in the pay of all Americans being lowered. Illegal immigrants who rent or purchase available homes causes the price of the remaining homes to skyrocket. There has been a push by some Democrats to give illegal immigrants the right to vote even though they are not American citizens. Even out-of-control legal immigration poses similar issues. I plan to stop this by hiring more ICE agents to quickly apprehend and deport those in the nation illegally. These agents

will also help with apprehending those who knowingly hire illegal immigrants and to help hold the politicians who incentivize illegal immigration. I will make it a requirement that anyone wanting to rent or own a home must show that they are in the nation legally. I will hire more immigration judges and public defenders so that immigration hearings can be quickly heard, and deportations can take place immediately. Lastly, I will push to withdraw America out of the United Nations Refugee Treaty Act that allows millions of foreigners to show up at America's borders and falsely claim to be seeking asylum. This allows them to enter our nation, and many never show up for their hearing. They simply remain in our nation. I will push to bring an end to this.

How do you propose to tackle income inequality and support economic growth in your district?

The first thing I will do to tackle income inequality is to make vocational education free of charge. While many people pursue four-year degrees, there are many well-paying vocational jobs that go unfulfilled every single year. Helping more people enter those job markets and land those well-paying jobs will greatly help close the income inequality gap. Another approach is to tackle the issue of heirs property. Land owned by Freedmen, Black Americans who are the descendants of those emancipated by the American government, is most likely to be heirs property. This means that the land has no definite owner, and they are not able to gain equity from the land. Home ownership and land ownership are two of the primary ways that Americans began to

acquire wealth. I will help families gain equity from their land.

Lastly, I will move to abolish the wage tax and the Social Security tax. Even though many people find this hard to believe, the truth of the matter is that the federal government does not rely on our tax dollars for spending. They can generate as much money as they need as long as they account for inflation. Money does not have to be printed but can be used as a digital asset. Debt is used to raise money, and it can be, and is, erased at any given moment as we have seen with trillions in the PPP Loans. Hence, Americans will immediately see \$600 to thousands of dollars more, per paycheck, once the federal wage tax and the Social Security tax are canceled. This will immediately bolster the financial standing of many in my district, which has among the highest percentage of minimum wage earners in America. Lastly, I will embark on mass deportations that will also include holding the corporations that hire illegal immigrants accountable and the politicians that incentivize illegal immigration. This will free up a large swath of homes that are currently being rented or otherwise occupied by illegal immigrants. This will increase the number of available homes, and it will bring down the prices of homes due to increased competition. This will force corporations to pay Americans a fair wage.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

I would like to work on the Ways and

SEE DISTRICT 6, PAGE A26



MICHAEL SIMPSON
LIBERTARIAN

Virginia 2011, Japan 2014, Portugal 2016, Germany 2019 and retiring to South Carolina in 2022.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the U.S. House of Representatives?

Does anything really prepare anyone for a role in the U.S. House of Representatives? The only real answer I have is my life has prepared me for it.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

My top three policy priorities are 1.) consumer health, 2.) a declaration of peace, and 3.) fighting against legal plunder. Even if I am not

elected, these are three areas in my life I will still work toward achieving. My plan is to work on abolishing the federal income tax.

How do you propose to tackle income inequality and support economic growth in your district?

From being in the Navy, or even the military in general, income inequality is not something I am familiar with because we had income equality. But I don't know how that would translate outside of the military in civilian pay structures? I would support economic growth by working to get rid of barriers to entry for those wanting to better themselves.

What committees or areas of

policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

Any that I may be entrusted with.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

My desire is to remain transparent with all people. I would work to have regular communications with the counties and cities and townships in S.C. District 6.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

As a father of four, I have to

compromise on a daily basis. What I have learned is that we work best not through control but through agreement. When we have an agreement, there is much less arguing.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

I see the people, waking up to what our country is, and arising to meet its challenges. My policies would make every effort to give back to the people what is already ours: our lives, our liberties and our property.

Duke Buckner (Republican) and Joseph Oddo (Alliance) did not submit responses.

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I was born and raised in rural Illinois, earning a BS in Business and Accounting from Illinois College in 1993. In 1997, I joined the Navy, and moving was my new life: Florida 1997, Virginia 1999, Japan 2000, Virginia 2003, California 2008,

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Means Committee, Education and the Workforce, and Rules.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

I will host a number of town halls in person. However, I do believe there is value in social media and in virtual teleconferencing. Hence, I will host listening sessions on Twitter via Twitter Spaces and host virtual town halls via Zoom and other

platforms. I will also use more traditional methods such as making my office number available and email.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

My original slogan was "Repair Black America To Fix America." I felt it would show that we are all Americans, and if there is even one group of America that is not doing well, then that means none of us were doing well. However, that caused some people to feel that my policies were only for Black Americans (Freedmen).

However, I wanted to show Black Americans (Freedmen), who have long been neglected by the Democrats for over 60 years, that they would be heard by me. It soon became clear, though, that I had to come up with a slogan that would make it clear that my platform would be beneficial for all people. Hence, I changed my platform's slogan to "Justice For All Or Justice For None." This conveyed the same message. If any of us are not being treated fairly, then none of us are being treated fairly. As a result, many, many more people became receptive to my message.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

I see the country headed to one where groups that have historically been denied justice finally get that justice since Americans at large will see how one group being treated unfairly hurts all of us. My policies will help to shape that future since they clearly highlight the neglect that particular groups of Americans have faced, they show how it has hurt us all, and they lay out policies to address the historical neglect.

U.S. House of Representatives, District 5



RALPH NORMAN
REPUBLICAN
INCUMBENT

again from 2008 until being elected to the U.S. Congress in 2017.

With respect to my professional experience, I spent over 40 years running and growing a small real estate business. My private-sector expertise is in residential construction, commercial development, brokerage, infrastructure and finance.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

Let's keep in mind I'm running for federal office, so these are federal priorities. Too many citizens turn to Washington for help that's best provided closer to home. There are a significant number of important issues which are not within the purview of the federal government, but instead are the exclusive responsibility of our state and local lawmakers.

First on the federal level, we must significantly reduce runaway, out-of-control federal spending in order to balance the budget and pay down our crippling federal debt. This is not a problem we can tax our way out of, and it is not hyperbole to say our nation is heading for financial ruin without drastic spending reductions.

Second, but equally important, secure the border. We can start by undoing all of Joe Biden's executive actions on the border which encouraged and facilitated this massive influx of illegal immigrants into our country over the last four years. As a first order of business, for example, we ought to simply restart

new border wall construction which the Biden/Harris administration halted the day they took office.

And third, our foreign policy is now a train wreck. Under this administration, we've witnessed Joe Biden's horribly botched withdrawal from Afghanistan, Russia has invaded Ukraine, and China is now preparing to advance on Taiwan. Our closest and most important ally in the Middle East, Israel, was viciously attacked last year, and now we're hearing Kamala Harris sending mixed signals on what should be our unwavering support. While I'm strongly opposed to being involved in endless wars that don't affect our people, there's no question the world is a more peaceful place when America is strong on the international stage. Sadly, we have fallen off that stage under the Biden/Harris administration.

How do you propose to tackle income inequality and support economic growth in your district?

Let me be clear: It is not the government's job to "rob Peter to pay Paul." Income redistribution is an immoral way to deal with income inequality. Sadly, far too many people on the other side of the aisle don't understand this. That includes my opponent who, on her website, is in favor of things like reparations for slavery and transferring of student loan debt to taxpayers. I believe ideas like this are divisive and intellectually bankrupt.

Instead, the federal government can help income inequality by simply promoting policies that help

businesses and the economy grow; things like lower taxes, eliminating needless regulations, getting our federal spending under control and rolling back Biden-era legislation that has fueled rampant inflation over the last four years. When the economy does well, able-bodied Americans who are willing to work also do well.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

Budget and infrastructure, which are my areas of professional and political expertise.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

I'll use strategies similar to those I've used since first being elected to Congress in 2017. This includes countless face-to-face meetings with constituent groups, individual citizens and businesses across the congressional district. Not to mention a highly active communications and correspondence effort from my congressional office. To look at my calendar is to see wall-to-wall interaction with the local community, and that will not change if I'm reelected.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

Too often in Washington,

D.C., the word "compromise" means giving away the farm with nothing in return, but only if you're a Republican. I reject that wholeheartedly. Compromise is a give and take.

As many will remember, I made national headlines by being only one of a handful of Republicans who initially opposed Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House in 2022 because I was unconvinced he was willing to take the necessary steps to stop dangerous liberal efforts in Congress. I was ultimately willing to compromise and offer McCarthy my vote, but only after gaining firm guarantees from him that conservatives would have strong positions in the House's legislative process.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

This depends entirely on how the American public votes in this election. We have a choice to vote Republican and support law and order, fiscal responsibility, border security and pro-growth policies that can strengthen our nation for generations to come. Or we can choose to follow Kamala Harris, whose party and policies have led to rampant inflation, massive levels of illegal immigration, horrible foreign policy blunders and a host of other problems. The choice ought to be clear this November.

Evangeline Hundley (Democrat) did not submit responses.

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I'm a life-long resident of South Carolina. After graduating from Presbyterian College in 1975, I spent my private-sector career in real estate and construction. Later as a public servant, I spent a total of 11 years in the South Carolina Statehouse before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2017. In both Columbia and Washington, I've earned a reputation as a strong, pro-family conservative who values fiscal responsibility and individual liberty.

I've been happily married to my wife, Elaine, for over 45 years. Together, we have four married adult children and 17 grandchildren.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the U.S. House of Representatives?

I have served South Carolina's 5th congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2017. Before then, I served in the South Carolina House of Representatives for approximately 11 years, from 2004 until 2006 and

S.C. House of Representatives, District 64



**FAWN
PEDALINO**
REPUBLICAN
INCUMBENT

by small businesses to the needs of home buyers and sellers. This insight helps me advocate more effectively for our district. As a mother of two girls, I am deeply motivated by a desire to create a better future for our families and children. Balancing the demands of motherhood with my professional responsibilities has strengthened my ability to manage multiple priorities and remain focused on what truly matters for our community.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

During my first term, I tackled several critical issues, notably securing our school district's financial stability through a comprehensive audit by the Inspector General. This audit exposed issues such as inadequate coach training, financial discrepancies and improper payments by school board members. The findings prompted necessary corrective actions, including financial restitution and enhanced oversight. Additionally, I collaborated with fellow legislators to advance bills aimed at protecting our children from online predators and implementing security measures for inappropriate websites and social media platforms. I also supported teacher and bus driver pay increases as well as law enforcement raises.

For my next term, my priorities include:

Enhancing education and school safety: Building on the progress from my first term, I am dedicated to further improving education and ensuring the safety of our students. Key initiatives will focus on bolstering school safety measures and creating secure, supportive learning environments. I am committed to increasing support for teachers and ensuring that all school staff are well-prepared to provide high-quality education.

Plan to achieve: I will advocate for increased funding for school safety programs and teacher pay, continuing the efforts

from the past two years. I will work with education experts and stakeholders to craft comprehensive policies addressing both safety and educational needs. Moreover, I will ensure that audit findings, like those from the recent Inspector General review, are addressed promptly and that preventative measures are put in place.

Economic development and support for small businesses: As a small business owner, I understand the challenges local businesses face. Supporting economic development and providing resources for small business growth are top priorities.

Plan to achieve: I will pursue legislation offering tax incentives, reducing regulatory burdens and improving access to capital. I will also support programs that provide training and resources to help small businesses overcome challenges and expand their operations.

Lowering taxes and addressing inflation: With inflation affecting many South Carolinians, it's crucial to alleviate financial pressures through tax relief.

Plan to achieve: I will advocate for tax relief measures to ease the burden on individuals and businesses, including reductions in personal income and property taxes. I will work to identify and cut unnecessary government expenditures to ensure that tax reductions are both sustainable and effective, helping to support economic stability across the state.

How would you approach the state's health care challenges, particularly in relation to rural health services?

Optimizing rural health services: Enhancing health care access in rural areas like Clarendon and Sumter counties is essential due to challenges such as limited facilities and provider shortages. Recently, we removed the Certificate of Need (CON) requirement to increase flexibility in establishing and expanding health care services. While healthy competition among providers can

reduce costs and improve quality, it's crucial to ensure that rural areas are adequately served. To address this, we have created a committee dedicated to evaluating the impact on rural communities, monitoring access and ensuring service quality. I will advocate for targeted investments in rural health care infrastructure and support initiatives to attract and retain health care professionals in these areas.

Expanding telehealth and broadband access: Telehealth is a crucial tool for improving health care access, particularly for those in rural areas who have difficulty physically reaching a doctor's office. The effectiveness of telehealth, however, depends on reliable broadband access. This year, we passed legislation to enhance telehealth accessibility, allowing residents to receive treatments, consultations and prescription refills from home. To support this, we have also focused on expanding broadband access in rural communities to ensure connectivity for effective telehealth use. Our goal is to make broadband affordable and widely available, enhancing telehealth services for all residents. I will continue to push for further investments in telehealth technology and broadband infrastructure.

My approach includes optimizing rural health services through policy changes, promoting competition and expanding telehealth and broadband access. By focusing on these areas, we aim to improve health care delivery and accessibility for all South Carolinians, especially those in underserved rural areas.

What is your stance on education funding and reform in South Carolina, and how do you propose to improve the state's education system?

I believe education funding must be efficient, effective and focused on delivering high-quality outcomes for students. It is crucial that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, with educational reforms

fostering accountability, local control and prioritizing the needs of students and families.

Prioritize efficient use of funding:

Ensuring every dollar allocated to education improves student outcomes is essential. We must scrutinize spending and focus on high-return investments.

Plan to achieve: I will advocate for a comprehensive review of education spending to identify areas for increased efficiency. This includes reducing administrative overhead and directing resources toward classroom instruction and student support. I will also support performance-based funding models that reward schools and teachers for achieving measurable improvements in student performance.

Promote school choice and parental involvement:

School choice empowers parents and fosters competition, which can drive quality improvements.

Plan to achieve: I will support policies that expand school choice, such as charter schools, private school vouchers and education savings accounts. By increasing options for parents, we create a competitive educational landscape that encourages innovation. I will also advocate for greater parental involvement, recognizing that parents are crucial to their children's academic success.

Support local control and accountability:

Local control allows communities to tailor education policies to their needs, and accountability is vital for maintaining high standards.

Plan to achieve: I will work to ensure local school boards have decision-making authority while supporting transparency and accountability measures. This includes clear standards for assessing school performance and consequences for underperformance.

Encourage reforms:

Education reform should

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I have lived in District 64 since 2010, deeply rooting myself in our community both personally and professionally. During this first term as District 64's representative, I focused on learning as much as I could from my respected colleagues in the House and listening closely to the needs and desires of my constituents. I made it a priority to address your requests and concerns, ensuring that your voices were heard and reflected in the legislative process. As I move forward, I remain committed to working diligently for our district, drawing on my diverse experiences and deep-rooted connection to our community to advocate for meaningful and effective solutions.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the South Carolina Legislature?

Before entering the Legislature, I worked as an EMT in the 911 system. This role honed my skills in quick decision-making, crisis management and empathetic communication — skills that are invaluable in legislative work. My time as an EMT taught me the importance of serving others and responding effectively under pressure, which I now apply to my role as a representative. In addition to my emergency medical background, I have been actively involved in the local community as a small business owner in Manning and Sumter, as well as a Realtor. These experiences have provided me with a practical understanding of economic and community issues, from the challenges faced

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emphasize traditional academic standards and reduce bureaucracy.

Plan to achieve: I will advocate for reforms that focus on core academic subjects and traditional values, minimizing unnecessary regulations. This includes supporting initiatives that reinforce reading, writing and math and promoting character education.

In summary, my approach to education reform emphasizes efficient use of funds, expanding school choice, supporting local control and upholding traditional academic values to benefit all students in South Carolina.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

As your current representative, I have served on the 3M Committee, focusing on military, municipal and medical issues. It has been a pleasure working on this committee, and I am committed to continuing to advocate for policies that support our military personnel, enhance municipal governance and improve medical services in South Carolina. My time on the 3M Committee has allowed me to tackle critical issues affecting our military, local governments and health care systems. I am dedicated to ensuring that our military members receive the necessary support, municipalities have the resources to effectively address community needs and our medical field remains robust and responsive to evolving challenges. I have also been selected to serve on the Child Death Advisory Committee. My work on that committee has been both challenging and rewarding. Focusing on child safety and preventing child deaths is a critical priority for me. I am committed to continuing this important work to protect and improve the lives of children across South Carolina. I am enthusiastic about leveraging my experience from these committees to advance policies that benefit our military, municipalities, medical field and child safety, while also being open to new opportunities if reelected to serve on different boards in the House.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

I ensure that my contact information is readily available to all constituents. My phone number, email address and website are prominently listed on official communications, my campaign materials and online platforms. This makes it easy for people to reach out to me with their concerns, ideas or feedback. Over my first term as District 64's representative, I regularly engaged with the community through various channels, including newsletters, social media updates, public town halls and the newspaper. This helps keep constituents informed about ongoing legislative activities and provides them with opportunities to voice their opinions. I take pride in following up with constituents who reach out to me. Even if I am unable to address their issue directly through state resources, I ensure they receive a response and am transparent about the limitations. I believe that maintaining open lines of communication and providing updates on their inquiries fosters trust and demonstrates my commitment to their concerns.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

During my first term as a state House representative, one of the significant challenges I encountered was trying to reach a compromise with District 36's senator regarding the school district lines. Despite having different views on the proposed maps, I recognized the importance of finding a solution that would best serve the needs of our community. Understanding that this issue was critical for the future governance of our school districts, I was committed to working collaboratively to achieve a resolution. The successful compromise allowed us to finalize the district lines in time for the upcoming elections. As a result, our community will transition from an appointed to an elected school board, enhancing local representation and accountability in our educational system.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

While I may have limited influence over the broader trajectory of the nation, as I am running for reelection of a Statehouse seat, I am committed to ensuring that South Carolina remains resilient and well-positioned for the future. The direction of our country over the next decade will likely be shaped by complex challenges, including economic fluctuations, shifts in federal policies and evolving social dynamics. My role is to safeguard our state's interests and advocate for policies that will strengthen South Carolina's position.

One key area where I can make an impact is by pushing back against federal overreach that may not align with our state's needs or values. I will work to protect South Carolina from federal policies that could undermine our local priorities or economic stability. This includes advocating for state sovereignty and ensuring that federal regulations do not impose undue burdens on our residents or businesses.

How my policies will help shape our state's future:

Economic development: My focus on supporting local businesses, fostering economic development and advocating for tax relief will help create a thriving business environment. By reducing regulatory burdens and encouraging innovation, we can ensure that South Carolina remains competitive and economically robust, regardless of national trends.

Education and school safety: Investing in education and enhancing school safety are crucial for preparing future generations to thrive. By prioritizing efficient use of education funds, promoting school choice and improving safety measures, we are equipping our students to succeed and ensuring that they are prepared for the challenges ahead.

Health care access: Expanding access to health care, particularly in rural areas, and improving telehealth services will enhance our state's health care system, ensuring that all South Carolinians receive the care they need, irrespective of broader national issues.

In summary, while national trends will shape the future, my policies are designed to fortify South Carolina's economic stability, educational excellence and health care accessibility. By focusing on these areas, I aim to ensure that our state not only adapts to future challenges, but also thrives in an evolving landscape.



QUADRI BELL
DEMOCRAT

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I am the son of two public school educators. I am a product of the Clarendon County school system and a graduate of the University of South Carolina. I decided to work in government because I believe in public service. I have lived in S.C. House District 64 my entire life. My previous political experience includes serving as a Clarendon School District Two school board member from 2021 to 2022.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the South Carolina Legislature?

I have a wealth of experiences, both personal and professional, that will prepare me for the S.C. House. In addition to being a former school board member, I served on the S.C. House Education Reform Advisory Committee from 2016-17. From 2017-2021, I served as a legislative page in the S.C. state Senate. In 2023, I graduated from the CBC Institute Political Leadership Development Program. I also chair a memorial scholarship fund that provides me with the opportunity to help college students achieve the dream of attending college. I have federal, state and local government experience.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

My top three policy priorities are health care access, educational opportunities and jobs. I plan to sponsor or co-sponsor legislation to expand Medicaid in South Carolina. This legislation would make our state healthier and give our economy a boost. South Carolina is one of the few states left that has not approved the expansion. I plan to be a staunch advocate for this if elected. My next policy priority will be education. My education agenda stems from my experience as a S.C. House Education Advisory Committee member back in 2016. This committee was designed to help propose changes to improve the public education system in South Carolina. We found that the educational issues were centered on funding for rural schools, teacher pay, large class sizes and student performance. There is no easy fix to our education system. However, the state Legislature must make tackling the problems plaguing our public education system a top priority. My third policy priority will be jobs. Creating good-paying jobs has to be a top priority for any legislator. In order to attract jobs and development to our rural communities,

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we have to continue to improve our infrastructure and invest in our education system to produce a workforce ready for the jobs of the future. To achieve these goals, I will work with my colleagues to sponsor or co-sponsor legislation in relation to these three areas.

How would you approach the state's health care challenges, particularly in relation to rural health services?

There are several health care challenges facing rural communities. Some of the challenges are as follows: access and affordability, the closure of rural hospitals across our state in the last 10 to 15 years, and too many are still uninsured. Expanding Medicaid is the first step our state can take to begin the process of fixing some of the problems that exist in health care.

What is your stance on education funding and reform in South Carolina, and how do you propose to improve the state's education system?

As a former member of the 2016 Education Reform Advisory Committee, I worked tirelessly with fellow members on the issue of state education funding and ways to improve the state's education system. A quality education can open doors to new opportunities and experiences not previously afforded. Parents should be able to decide where they send their children to school, but public dollars should not go toward funding private institutions, neglecting our public school systems. The most important aspect of creating a better, more equitable and more prosperous South Carolina is the state Legislature properly investing in our public education system, particularly in rural areas like some of the communities in District 64. If elected, I will advocate for more investments in public education and training.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

I would love to serve on the Education Committee. As a product of the Clarendon School system, a former school board member and the son of two educators, education is a lifelong passion of mine.

Every student deserves to be taught by a world-class educator, and every student deserves to receive a quality education. I would love to help improve our education system as a member of the Education Committee.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

Social media is a great way to communicate. I will regularly update my social media accounts with information related to legislative business and provide important updates. In addition, I will hold town halls in the district to answer questions and listen to the thoughts of my constituents. It will be a priority of mine to make myself accessible to the people by regularly attending community-wide events. My phone number will be available to all to call me when I can be of assistance.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

Whether it is at work or as a leader on a board or committee, I have had

to compromise on a regular basis. Compromise is important in leadership. As a former school board member, it took compromise to approve policy and to come to agreements on important personnel matters. If elected, as a member of the minority party, I know compromise will be crucial to advancing the causes I care so deeply about.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

I have an optimistic view of the future of the country over the next decade. I believe our nation will continue to prosper and be the place other nations look to lead the world. America will lead the way in technological innovation, science, manufacturing and health care. The United States will also likely continue to invest in clean energy sources, which will diversify our energy sector and add more economic growth. In addition, artificial intelligence will be on the rise. We must be ready for the changes it presents. The policies I will advocate for from education to health care will help our state and nation prosper for years to come.

S.C. Senate District 35



JEFFREY R. GRAHAM
DEMOCRAT

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

My family has always been deeply involved in our community. Having grown up in Senate District 35, I have spent my entire life in Kershaw, Sumter, Lee and Richland counties, and I recognize that we are a rural area with growing parts, proud people and vibrant small towns. Upon graduating from Camden High school in 2001, I continued my education at Presbyterian College, graduating with a degree in

business administration. Small businesses are the backbone of our communities, which is why I came home to work in our family's small real estate company, Graham Realty Inc. My wife, Sara, and I are the proud parents of a son, Edwards, and daughter, Bailey. We made the decision to raise our children in the same communities that have blessed our family with so much. We are engaged members of Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the South Carolina Legislature?

As mayor and a member of the city council in Camden, my priorities have included economic development, infrastructure, strategic planning, education and tourism. Senate District

35's extensive and varied geography will create opportunities to take the lessons learned and successes created in Camden and implement those ideas on a regional level. I plan to work with the citizens, leaders and the elected officials in all of these counties to ensure the longevity of our diverse communities and to find local and regional solutions to the issues facing rural S.C. My work with the Santee Lynches Regional Council of Governments has given me an insight into this district. The work, the focus and the relationships have shaped who I am and strengthened my belief in our communities and what we can achieve - together.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

As the former mayor of a small town, I recognize that infrastructure and economic development must be priorities for Sumter, Lee, Richland and Kershaw counties. The addition of advanced manufacturing and other industrial jobs that require a skilled workforce keeps our overall tax base low and provides essential opportunities for young adults to return to or stay in our communities and reduces the need to commute long distances. None of it works, however, if our roads, bridges and public utilities are in disrepair. We must quit approaching our problems through a singular lens - infrastructure, quality education, access to water help bring economic opportunities and good-paying jobs to our communities. They are all interconnected. We must make sure that our community remains hospitable to our

military installations.

How would you approach the state's health care challenges, particularly in relation to rural health services?

Ronald Reagan's health care mandate requires hospitals to treat patients in need of emergency care regardless of their ability to pay. Along with the state's aging population, this adds additional stress to rural health care systems. South Carolina's health care system is at an inflection point. We must expand Medicaid to help alleviate and relieve this stress. Protecting the medical freedom of women in South Carolina is fundamental to a healthy state. This includes advocating for comprehensive health care access, enforcing equal pay and supporting policies that prevent gender-based violence and

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discrimination. We must make sure that the S.C. Department of Mental Health and DAODAS provide access to quality services to fight drug abuse and mental illness. Too many times these needs are unchecked in the rural South. We must constantly evaluate the reimbursement ratio, negotiation of drug prices and procedures to make sure that doctors are paid what they deserve without bankrupting families. If everyone sits at the proverbial family table to talk about these issues - we can find a resolution.

What is your stance on education funding and reform in South Carolina, and how do you propose to improve the state's education system?

Improving education in South Carolina is crucial. By enhancing our curriculum to include more career and technical education, fostering partnerships with local businesses for internships and apprenticeships and providing access to advanced technology and resources, we can equip students with skills and knowledge needed for today's job market. Investing in teacher training and support will also ensure that educators can deliver high-quality instruction that meets the demands of modern industries. By prioritizing these improvements, we can create a robust educational system that boosts student achievement and drives economic growth and prosperity across the state. Most important, we can't increase economic opportunities or high-paying jobs without an educated workforce. Our state must constantly review the method by which we fund our education system and once and for all pay teachers what they deserve.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

As a South Carolinian who loves the outdoors and runs a small business, my interests

and areas of policy are many. However, I would be honored to serve on Transportation, State Infrastructure Bank, Natural Resources, Family and Veterans Services, Finance, Environmental and Rural Health just to name a few.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

Too often, elected officials forget about citizens or the people they represent. Today, it is political malpractice to not have a constant stream of communication. My plan is to utilize every tool at my disposal to create an open line of communication with the people of Senate District 35. I would also create a plan to have quarterly district meetings.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

Politics is the art of compromise without sacrificing one's core beliefs or the beliefs of a district's core constituency. Often in my work with Santee Lynches Regional Council of Governments we have to work together for the good of the region. This means that we don't pit one county against another. This is how we survive, make progress and prosper.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

South Carolina is growing at a rapid pace. We must develop comprehensive, long-term plans regarding infrastructure, water, energy, health care and housing to accommodate the constant influx of people moving into our state. To maintain our quality of life and to create a better quality of life, we must do this, and the priorities I have presented will help us achieve these goals.



MIKE JONES
REPUBLICAN

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I was born in Sumter, raised in Kershaw and live in Camden. I'm currently the vice chair of the Kershaw County Sheriff's Citizen Advisory Board, and I serve as treasurer and executive board member of the Mid-Carolina Credit Union. I am also the president-elect of the South Carolina National Guard Association.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the South Carolina Legislature?

I've served in the military for 36 years and made it to the rank of lieutenant colonel as an officer. I served as a battalion commander of a military police battalion that worked with local sheriff's departments throughout the state. Throughout my experience in the military, I learned a great deal about leadership and how to work with people from all walks of life.

What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

- 1) Infrastructure: I want to work to improve roads, bridges and basic infrastructure like sewers and drainage systems.
- 2) Education: I want to make sure parents have a voice in the classroom, our schools have the resources they need to succeed, and we meet children's educational needs.
- 3) Law and order: I want to work to make sure we provide all the resources possible to law enforcement and our solicitors' offices to ensure they can best do their job and have the resources necessary.

How would you approach the state's health care challenges, particularly in relation to rural health services?

We are at a point in our state where we have seen rapid growth, and the health care industry has struggled to meet the needs of the growing population. In our rural communities, we must figure out a better way so folks don't have to drive to a major city to get basic care. As a veteran and

leader in the military, another issue I will emphasize in the Senate is mental health. I think we must have a broader conversation on this issue in our state and our country and come to some real solutions.

What is your stance on education funding and reform in South Carolina, and how do you propose to improve the state's education system?

I am a believer that each student's educational path is different. We need to create tracks and options that best meet the needs of each student with the parents' input. Overall, I believe we as a state are going to face a teacher shortage if we don't take care of our educators better. I'll advocate on day one for a teacher pay raise to make sure those who help educate our students can take care of their own families.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

Family and Veterans' Services I think would make sense based on my background. I also have a real estate license and own an insurance agency and would have interest in the banking and insurance committee as well based on my prior experience.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

I plan on holding morning coffees and monthly listening posts to stay connected. Additionally, I will be reachable by phone and email.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

In the military, as a leader, you often must find ways to reach a solution. In Iraq, we had to work with the local population, who wanted to do one thing and we needed to get something done another way. Ultimately, I had to work to find a solution that met our priorities while working with the local citizens and keeping the enemy at bay. If I can find solutions in Iraq, surely, we can find solutions in the South Carolina State Senate.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

I think education, safety and supply chain needs to be the focus of today, and they will shape our future. America is going to have to make sure we can produce our own food, goods and energy to ensure we are protected from foreign interference.

S.C. Senate District 36



JEFF ZELL
REPUBLICAN

became a Sumter school board trustee, working to improve our public school system. I hope to use this experience to help enhance public school systems across all Senate districts and the state. We've made great strides in key areas in a very short period. That was done by focused efforts and working together across political aisles and differing perspectives to get it done. I'm proud of our work on the Sumter school board.

How would you approach the state's healthcare challenges, particularly about rural health services?

The closure of rural hospitals, unaffordable prescription drugs and the financial burdens caused by medical bills require our immediate attention. To alleviate the financial strain on our citizens, we can focus on supporting rural hospitals and emergency centers, ensuring everyone has access to medical services. We can make a meaningful impact by prioritizing funding for patients and considering the removal of tax burdens on medical expenses.

Promoting patient and doctor relationships through direct primary care, expanding telehealth programs to include preventative health care and behavioral health services and requiring transparency in medical billing can all contribute to better care at a better price. Broadening the scope of practice, easing license requirements and fostering partnerships with local, state, public and private entities will also play crucial roles in finding effective solutions. We should build on partnerships, as we see with Sumter schools and Tandem Health, such as establishing on-site clinics in rural schools and forming alliances to expand quality health care access to those who need it.

Mental health is another critical area that demands attention, particularly because of our high rates of poverty and our military veteran populations, which are some of the highest in the state. We should integrate mental health services into primary health care systems. This is especially

important in our public schools, where prioritizing mental health can significantly impact students' well-being and academic success. As the great American Frederick Douglass stated, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

What is your stance on education funding and reform in South Carolina, and how do you propose to improve the state's education system?

We need a strong and accountable public education system that emphasizes results and produces graduates prepared to thrive in today's society and economy. Unfortunately, the public education systems in the 36th Senate district and state are not achieving this; they are some of the lowest-performing districts in the state. We should revamp traditional K-12 education to focus on trades, skills and industry.

Competition drives innovation, and without it, our public education system, particularly in South Carolina, has become stagnant. We have evidence from various states showing that programs such as Educational Savings Accounts and similar systems work. We should expand policies for intra-district open enrollment and establish a salary band for teachers to prioritize performance and growth while honoring their time in service. Merit-based rewards promote competition and innovation, leading to better educational outcomes.

To strengthen transparency, all school boards should be required to livestream their meetings and limit discussions of executive sessions. We should emphasize competency-based instruction and value student achievement growth, not just end-of-course testing. Finally, we must raise teacher pay to a level commensurate with the criticality of their vital work.

Our focus should be on funding children, not systems. The South Carolina Legislature has set the stage for open and competitive education, and we should build

upon that. However, we must remember that many families depend on public education, and as long as they do, we must make it the best we can. We owe it to them.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

With a strong military background and a deep commitment to supporting veterans, I'd be honored to represent our wonderful veterans on the Family and Veterans Services Committee. My hands-on experience in public education has fueled my passion to make a meaningful contribution to education, so I believe the Education Committee would be a good fit. Finally, my love for the great outdoors and my desire to work in forest and land management motivates me to embrace the opportunity to serve on the Fish, Game and Forestry committee and contribute to preserving our natural resources.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

As a member of the Sumter school board, I have become known for my commitment to transparency, etiquette and discipline in all my endeavors. In continuing this legacy, I aim to organize regular town hall-style meetings where community members can engage with me and share their concerns, ideas and feedback. Additionally, I plan to create and distribute quarterly newsletters to keep everyone informed about the office's activities, decisions and future. These initiatives will help ensure the community remains informed and involved in the vital work and discussions I'll be having as your next senator.

I highly favor small group meetings with a wide array of community organizations, as they are more intimate and usually end with much greater and deeper

respect and understanding of the needs, hopes and challenges our neighbors are facing. I am willing to work with anyone to make the whole district and its citizens a better place to live, work and raise a family. The people of the Midlands and the 36th Senate District are some of the best folks you'll meet; it's long past due to make this a place they are proud to call home and extending the opportunity to pursue the American dream to where it hasn't been very accessible in the past.

Upon winning the seat, I will immediately establish a leadership team of trusted and respected individuals from across the community to ensure all voices are heard and accounted for. We must put aside partisanship to get things done.

Can you describe a time when you had to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

When the SSD board considered the revised student code of conduct, there was a disagreement about including Saturday School and after-school detention. Despite my support for these measures, they were not added to the final code. Although the current code has had positive results, I still believe that adding these tools could discourage bad behavior. Still, it's important to recognize and celebrate the success of the current code.

On a separate occasion, I could not compromise the recent prohibition of the district's 50% grading floor. Proponents of the grading floor asserted that it was beneficial for supporting struggling students, a notion I wholeheartedly empathize with. However, the proponents could not furnish any verifiable data or evidence to substantiate the claimed benefits of the rule. Conversely, I firmly believe that granting students unmerited credit can have detrimental long-term ramifications, a position supported by a wealth of empirical data. The

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I am a Christian, father of one, husband and retired master sergeant with 20 years of service in the USAF. My family and I have been based in Sumter since 2017, when we were reassigned to Shaw Air Force Base. I officially retired in 2022.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the South Carolina Legislature?

I grew up in poverty in the Ohio rustbelt, providing me with a deep understanding of its impact on families and government dependency. My siblings and I were in foster care and dealt with neglect, among other hardships still plaguing our communities.

During my service in the Air Force, I dedicated my time and energy to fostering positive change. I strongly believe in the significance of continual personal and professional growth. I was honored with the early promotion of Senior Airman Below the Zone and excelled in Airman Leadership School, where I received the William H. Pitsenbarger Award for Leadership. I also ranked in the top 10% of my class in the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) School for academics and was recognized as the Lt General Leo Marquez Maintenance NCO of the Year in 2014. Additionally, I was named NCO of the Year for my squadron in 2015. Furthermore, I have also completed the level 2 SC School Boards Association Boardmanship Training program and my Bachelor's Degree in Political Science in 2024.

After leaving the Air Force, I

DISTRICT 36

FROM PAGE A31

rule ultimately permitted unprepared students to progress through grade levels, exacerbating the knowledge and proficiency gaps year over year.

We have rescinded the grading rule while urging our educators and administrators to provide meaningful assistance to those students who need additional support; we can't just take things away and expect things to improve. We must support our students and hold them to the standard simultaneously. This initiative is expected to enhance the observed disparities between in-district grades and state MAP (measure of academic progress) test results.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

In the next decade, if we continue our current path, it will result in the tragic loss of hundreds of lives in our community due to violence and condemn yet another generation of children to inadequate education, leaving them unable to compete economically. This will lead to

increased hopelessness, despair and mental illness, plunging us deeper into this tragic situation we've been stuck in.

We need to focus on local issues, where we can help the most people. The 36th Senate District faces high crime rates, underperforming schools and a lack of economic investment. We must take a different approach: elect disciplined, honorable and honest citizens to these high offices and hold them accountable. We cannot have integrity in our institutions if we have no integrity in our elected offices.

My approach, focused on transparency, accountability and serving the community's needs, will improve education, reduce crime, boost economic opportunities and create a safer environment for everyone, not just those lucky enough to be friends with the right politicians and those who benefit from being on the inside of the "good ol' boy" club. If that is what "experienced leadership" means, I'll tell you right now: We need much less of it.

Our citizens and their children deserve safe streets and schools where they can grow and thrive. Our families deserve to be proud of their community. Our new vision, focus and energy will greatly benefit our citizens; I am very confident in this.



KEVIN L. JOHNSON
DEMOCRAT
INCUMBENT

Tell readers about yourself, including your political experience and how long you've lived in your district.

I am a lifelong resident of Senate District 36. While my father was in the military, there was a time when we moved from state to state, but Manning has always been our home.

What personal or professional experiences have best prepared you for a role in the South Carolina Legislature?

I have been a public official practically all of my adult life. My public service began when I was appointed to serve on a number of boards throughout our county, region and state, including the Harvin Clarendon County Library Board, the Clarendon County

Chamber of Commerce Board and as a long-time member and former chairman of the board for Black River Healthcare, which is now HopeHealth. I also served for 12 years as a board member and former chairman of the Clarendon 2 schools. I served on Manning City Council for six years before being elected as mayor of Manning and serving for 11 years, after which I was elected to the S.C. House of Representatives. All of this and other experiences more than adequately prepared me for my role as a South Carolina senator, a position that I was first elected to in 2012.

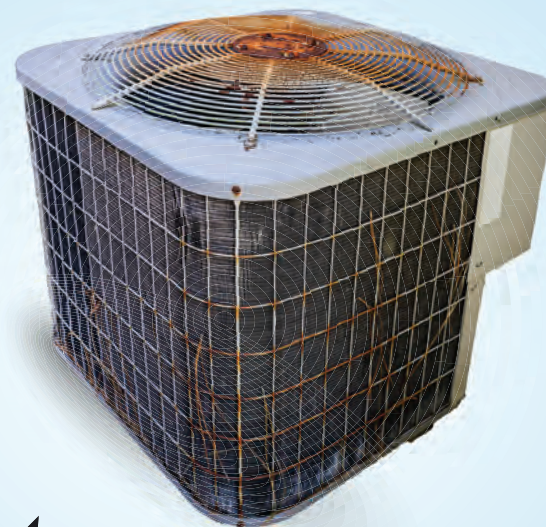
What are your top three policy priorities if elected, and how do you plan to achieve them?

My top three priorities remain a strong and equitable public education system, a high-quality and affordable health care system, which includes expansion of Medicaid, and economic development that includes jobs that pay good wages and offers good benefits to their employees. There are others, but these have consistently been my top three.

SEE **DISTRICT 36**, PAGE A33

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DISTRICT 36

FROM PAGE A32

How would you approach the state's health care challenges, particularly in relation to rural health services?

We have to make sure that broadband accessibility is available throughout all of our communities so that we can take advantage of initiatives such as telehealth and telemedicine. This is particularly vital in rural communities where some do not have transportation to their primary care physicians and some can't afford to pay even if they can somehow make it to their doctors. That is why it is so important that South Carolina does like the vast majority of the other states in our nation and expand Medicaid.

What is your stance on education funding and reform in South Carolina, and how do you propose to improve the state's education system?

Education funding should be more equitable. It makes no sense that in too many cases, the quality of a child's education is in direct correlation to their zip codes. Public education in S.C.

consists of the haves and the have nots. More state resources should go to the have nots, the communities that don't have as much tax base as others. To help improve the education system, we need to value teachers and other school district employees more. There is a teacher shortage across the nation, and we need to do all we can to alleviate that as well as shortages in school nurses, social workers, bus drivers, and the list goes on. Another thing that is very detrimental to our public education system is that too many school officials, elected officials and other leaders of our communities are the biggest critics of our school system, especially when the criticism is not constructive and when they never accentuate the good things that go on within our schools.

What committees or areas of policy would you be particularly interested in working on if elected?

Because of my seniority in the S.C. Senate, I feel that I already serve in the most important standing committees, and serving on these committees put me in a better position to serve the citizens of District 36 and the citizens of the state of S.C. I serve on the following

committees: Finance, Education, Medical Affairs, Labor, Commerce and Industry, and I am the highest-ranking Democrat on the Family and Veterans Services Committee. Again, I am a member of these very important committees because of my seniority in the Senate, where practically everything is based on seniority. Also, because of the respect that the Senate leadership has for me and my abilities, I have been appointed to serve on a number of very important special committees. I have also been a member of the S.C. Education Oversight Committee for many years.

What strategies will you use to stay connected with the local community and gather feedback from your constituents?

I regularly attend several meetings that are held each month throughout Senate District 36 to include the new portion of the district. I have been an invited guest speaker at several events, and when my schedule allows, I attend as many events as I can. I also send out legislative updates.

Can you describe a time when you had

to compromise on an issue to reach a solution? What was the outcome?

As a member of the S.C. Senate, and especially as a member of the minority party (the party that is not in control), the art of compromise is a necessity. We always work hard to find the middle ground and to gain consensus, especially on major issues.

Where do you see the country heading in the next decade, and how would your policies help shape that future?

Hopefully, there will be a major shift in the direction of our country. My hope is that things will be less partisan and that political party affiliation will be less prevalent. Despite all that is going on, we live in the best and the most prosperous country. We need to stop the nonsense of fighting against each other because that only plays into the hands of our real enemies, such as Russia, China, Iran, etc. We need to be more harmonious and learn how to disagree in an agreeable manner. As it was once said, a house divided against itself cannot stand. Therefore, for the good of our country, we need to get our house in order.



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Government

3 government headlines from the past month to know

BY DEIRDRE CURRIN and BRUCE MILLS

deirdre@theitem.com

bruce@theitem.com

18 PENNY FOR PROGRESS MEETINGS HELD THROUGHOUT EACH DISTRICT

When the Capital Projects Sales Tax Referendum, also known as the Penny for Progress or Penny Tax, was on the ballot in 2022, there was confusion surrounding the projects and ballot question itself, community members say.

To combat this reoccurring in the 2024 election, Sumter EDGE (Economic Development Growth Engine) held 18 free, open-to-the-public meetings from Oct. 1 to Oct. 10 at community and HOPE centers in every district.

“My goal is not to tell you how to vote,” Sumter EDGE Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives Erika Williams said during her penny presentation. “My goal here this evening is just to educate you, to tell you your options, and when you decide — because I feel pretty confident you’re here, so you’re planning on voting Nov. 5, and I just want to arm you so that if you decide to vote yay or nay, it is your choice.”

The meetings were meant to be informative and went over the history of the Penny for Progress initiative and what the current penny will offer. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions.

“I just want you to be aware, I just want you to have an understanding so if it is yes, it’s like ‘I feel confident about this, and this is why,’” Williams said. “If you opt to vote against it, then I want you to know why as well.”

If you missed the penny meetings, the PowerPoint presentation is available at www.pennyforprogress.com.

CITY OF SUMTER WANTS RESIDENTS' INPUT ON HOW TO USE ANNUAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT MONEY

Every year, City of Sumter receives community development block grant (CDBG) money and



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

A “Paid for by Penny for Progress” sign stands at the intersection of Wilson Hall Road and Carter Road, among many other places in town.

holds public meetings to get community input on what the money should go toward. That time has come around again, and the city is holding meetings and taking down public comments.

Five meetings have already been held, and one more is to take place Nov. 19 at 6 p.m. at City Hall on the fourth floor in City Council Chambers, 21 N. Main St.

The community meetings provide an opportunity for the community to have a say in how they want to see the CDBG money spent, and every comment made by community members is written down and given to city council, even if it is not something that CDBG money can pay for.

The city does not know how much it will receive from HUD yet, but Community Development Housing Director Clarence Gaines said the

city hopes to have a number at some point in October. Last year the city received \$368,392.

The meeting also went over what was done with last fiscal year's CDBG fund. The projects completed are:

- Sewer improvements for four low- to moderate-income households.

- Façade grant assistance for one downtown business.

- Five owner-occupied houses were rehabilitated for low- to moderate-income occupants.

- Nine owner-occupied houses had minor repairs done for low- to moderate-income occupants.

- Seventy-one students were employed last summer. Thirty-five were from the city's Youth Co-Op Program, a program that hires Sumter youth 16+ and has them work for local businesses, and 36

were from the city's Youth Corps Program, which hires 14- and 15-year-olds to work in various departments of the City of Sumter government offices, according to the city's website.

- Twenty-one low- to moderate-income youth received a variety of services provided by the YMCA.

- One hundred students were able to go on a summer camp field trip to Ripley's Aquarium in Myrtle Beach, and 100 backpacks were purchased for the students' use at school.

For further information or if you are unable to get to any of the meetings to make requests about what you want to see differently in the city, reach out to Clarence Gaines via phone at (803) 774-1649 or via email at cgaines@sumtersc.gov or Carolet Thomas via phone at (803) 774-1652 or via email at cthomas@sumtersc.gov.

Residents can also visit the City of Sumter's Community Development Department in suite four of Liberty Center at 12 W. Liberty St.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AWARDS \$1.2M GRANT FOR SUMTER CLEAN-ENERGY MANUFACTURER

The U.S. Economic Development Administration awarded a \$1.2 million grant to the City of Sumter that will support clean-energy manufacturing and the establishment of a new solar product manufacturer.

Announced Monday, Sept. 30, in a news release, the grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce will be used for water infrastructure improvements needed to boost the region's clean-energy industry and will help establish a new solar wafer manufacturing facility, named SEM Wafertech.

The Economic Development Administration investment will be matched with \$298,400 in local money to ultimately create 300 jobs and generate \$65 million in private investment.

SEM Wafertech is projected to launch operations next year at 1150 Clipper Road in Live Oak Industrial Park.

Get involved

Sumter, SC Combat Veterans Group's mission is to serve others

BY BRUCE MILLS

bruce@theitem.com

If someone is retired military and wants to help other veterans and give back to his or her community, then the Sumter, SC Combat Veterans Group might be a good fit.

The commander of the veterans' group, executive commander and a founding member spoke recently on various service opportunities offered through the organization and how a retired military member can get involved.

Close to 15 years ago, Leroy Peoples and other founding members saw a need to help other veterans and provide community service and organized the Sumter, SC Combat Veterans Group in 2011. Currently, there are 73 members, he said, and the only qualification for membership is one needs to be honorably discharged from any military branch of service.

According to Commander Mary Glass and Peoples, even though "com-

bat" is in the nonprofit group's name, it is not required that one serve in a war or a battlefield to become a member.

"As long as you are a veteran in good standing, you are accepted," Peoples said. "In 2011, when we were formed, the majority of our members were

combat veterans, so that is where that name came from."

Peoples and Executive Commander "Sol" Golden served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, while Glass served in the Army in Iraq.

The group draws its membership from five counties to include Sumter, Clarendon, Lee, Kershaw and Darlington and is organized as a 501c3 public charity.

"That's why when we do things, we are not out there to profit," Peoples said. "We don't want to lose anything. But all our efforts are geared towards us helping veterans and the communities that we serve."

Group activities include helping veterans and their families in need and service to the community to include as-



PHOTOS BY BRUCE MILLS / THE SUMTER ITEM

From left, Sumter, SC Combat Veterans Group Commander Mary Glass, founding member Leroy Peoples and Executive Commander "Sol" Golden discuss the charity's mission and service opportunities recently at the group's headquarters at 529 N. Wise Drive.



At the Sumter, SC Combat Veterans Group's headquarters, an honorary wall displays some of the group's history.

sisting Sumter United Ministries and providing mentoring and donations to children in public schools in the five counties they serve.

"It makes you feel good to help others," Peoples said. "Otherwise, I would no longer be doing this. All of this is

volunteer. It's about camaraderie and service to your fellow man."

The group meets on the third Friday of each month at 10 a.m. at its headquarters, 529 N. Wise Drive.

Anyone interested in membership should contact Golden at (803) 236-7817.



Religion

Traveling helps us learn we're more alike than different

I realize it is a privilege to travel. When I was growing up, my family did not travel very often. We would go to the beach every summer for a week with my grandparents, but apart from that, our trips were from Columbia to Savannah to visit my father's parents. I had a great-aunt who was like a grandmother to me. She never was married and never drove a car, but in her retirement from teaching, she traveled the world.

I would anxiously await her return from her trips because I knew she would bring me something special, something exotic. She would share pictures from her journeys,

and the accounts of her travels would have made anyone want to hit the road. Instead of taking pictures, she would buy slides. I inherited her slide collection, but I don't have a slide projector. I hold them up to the light and see images of the places she found inspiring.



Pastor Stewart Rawson

I traveled abroad for the first time when I was in graduate school. Our group from my seminary went to Central America to experience three different cultures and to learn from the people who called Nicaragua, Guatemala and Costa Rica home. We were warmly received; everyone we encountered was eager to share the things they loved. Nicaragua and Guatemala were coming out of a decade-long civil war that had left their coun-

tries in ruins.

Over the last seven years, I have been fortunate enough to take three pilgrimages to the Holy Land, visiting Jordan and Israel. These tours were religious pilgrimages to the sites we consider holy. We also met families whose lives have been affected by centuries of conflict, we ate dinner in their homes, and we participated in their traditional dances.

When you travel, you are given the opportunity to see how vast our world is. You have the opportunity to see beautiful buildings and explore galleries filled with priceless artwork. You can sample local foods and visit national parks of other countries. But once again, at least for me, the most overwhelming and inspiring part of traveling is learning despite our differences of language or religious practice or cultural traditions, we are more alike than we are different.

We, as human beings, tend to focus and often obsess over our differences, rather than seeing ways to build or rebuild community.

What would the world be like if we could put aside some of our differences and devote our energy and effort to finding out what we have in common? What would our world look like if we didn't make assumptions about other people before we even have the chance to sit and share a cup of coffee or tea? What would our world look like if we spent a little more time and a little more energy loving our neighbors as we love ourselves? I am going to keep traveling for as long as I can, and hopefully the world will continue to shrink and peace will be the rule rather than the exception. We all can hope, can't we?

Stewart Rawson is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Sumter.



Bostic Insurance Agcy, Inc.
Charles Bostic, JR. Agent
704 Bultman Drive

Corner of Bultman and Wise Drive, Sumter

I am a second generation State Farm agent, continuing the legacy started by my father, Bo Bostic. He established his agency in Sumter back in 1965 and ran it until his retirement in 1985.

In 1984, I opened my own agency in Sumter, becoming the third one in the area at that time. It's amazing how quickly 40 years have passed!

My father, who served in the Korean war, eventually settled in Mullins, SC and worked at Martin hospital. It was there that he had his insurance with a State Farm agent named Doc Capps. Doc played a significant role in my father's life and introduced him to the State Farm organization.

The Bostic family has a long-standing reputation of serving Sumter. My daughter, Lauren Locklear, works for Gateway Mortgage in Sumter, and my son, Charles (Chas) III, owns and operates AmeriSpec inspection company, providing home inspections in Sumter and the surrounding counties.

I have truly enjoyed serving Sumter and the surrounding areas for the past 40 years, and I have no plans of slowing down. You can find my office located on the corner of Bultman and Wise Dr, where my team, with over 68 years of combined experience, is ready to assist you with all your insurance needs.

We eagerly look forward to seeing you and providing you with top-notch service.

Charles Bostic, Jr. Agent

803-775-8371

charles@bosticagency.com

Celebrating Our 40th Anniversary

Events

Get out and enjoy the cooler weather at plenty of fall-themed events across tri-county area

SUMTER COUNTY

Trick or Treat in the Backcountry will be held Saturday, Oct. 26, from 5-7 p.m. at the Carolina Backcountry Homestead, located behind the Sumter County Museum, 122 N. Washington St. The event is free and open to the public.

The 20th anniversary of the **Fall Feast** presented by FTC is this year on Thursday, Oct. 24, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. All proceeds go to Sumter Green each year, which beautifies areas across Sumter. Adults only are invited, 18 and up, and there will be live music by HeyBo and special guest Tom Mullikin of the SC7 Expedition. Tickets are \$40 in advance or \$50 at the door. Buy

yours at www.sumteroperahouse.com/the-fall-feast. Enjoy some great food from local chefs for a great cause.

Want to add to your book shelves and help support library programs? The **Friends of the Library 2024 Annual Book Sale** will be held at the Sumter County Library main meeting room, 111 N. Harvin St., at the following times: Thursday, Oct. 24, 5-7 p.m., (Friends Preview Night for those who are Friends members only, but new members can join at the door for access); Friday, Oct. 25, 2-6 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 26, 10 a.m.-noon; and Sunday, Oct. 27, 1-5 p.m. The annual book sale is a special event hosted by the Friends to help support programs and



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A child enjoys the pumpkin patch at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in mid-October. The patch is an annual fundraiser for several charities, and children can visit it through their schools on field trips.

services the library would otherwise be unable to provide to the public. This includes activities and events for children and adults such as the Summer Reading Program and the Christmas Winter Wonderland. For more in-

formation, call (803) 773-7273; visit www.sumtercountylibrary.org.

The **Foothills Paddling Club** will host

SEE **EVENTS**, PAGE A38

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Before



After

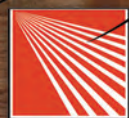


After



Before

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EVENTS FROM PAGE A37

a paddle through Sparkleberry Swamp followed by a Lowcountry boil on Saturday, Nov. 2, and attendees can stay and walk the park trails or hike/bike trails in the nearby Manchester State Forest. Group camping will be available at Poinsett State Park on Friday and Saturday nights. The event will be at 6660 Poinsett Park Road, Wedgefield. The trip is open to non-members of the club. The paddle is free, but sign up for camping and the meal at <https://tinyurl.com/3ehxn2t6>. Other camping options such as cabins and RV sites are available at Poinsett State Park. Visit southcarolinaparks.com to book these sites. Registration closes Oct. 29.

Need a good laugh? Get your tickets for the Saturday, Nov. 9, night of laughter with Texas native **William Lee Martin**, hailed as the "King of Cowtown." Martin's career spans over 27 years in the world of stand-up comedy. His one-of-a-kind humor captivates audiences through heart-warming family centered tales and uplifting spirits, particularly during life's toughest moments. Known for his down-home charm and laugh-out-loud stories, Cowboy Bill delivers humor that resonates with folks who appreciate the simple joys of Southern living. With a style that's as warm and welcoming as our own Sumter hospitality, Martin will take you on a comedic journey, venturing deep into Texan culture and touching upon vibrant themes such as Tejano music and the iconic figure, Selena. Martin has two Amazon Prime comedy specials and over 10+million likes on TikTok. Get your tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/43vjdtun>.

Learn about nature and the vital role of local land conservation at Congaree Land Trust's Conservation Celebration, "**Sunday at Sans Souci Farm**," from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 10, at the farm at 1935 Sans Souci Road, Sumter. This event is being held on historic protected property in Sumter with views that reach 20 miles into the High Hills of Santee, overlooking the Wateree River Basin. It will be open to the public, and attendees are invited to celebrate the local ecosystem and



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

biodiversity through participating in any of the day's planned activities: live music and a barbecue lunch; hayrides featuring the history of Sans Souci Farm; a nature walk with a master naturalist; connect with conservationist Billy Cate during a book signing; watch retriever and falconry demonstrations; learn how to fly cast with Orvis staff instruction; and various children's games and activities. Tickets: adult, 18 and up, \$35; junior, 10-17, \$15; kids, 10 and under, free. Register for tickets by visiting the website, www.congareelt.org/#events.

The Sumter County Museum's **26th Annual Carolina Backcountry Oyster Roast**, presented by Prisma Health, is the perfect chance to have all-you-can-eat oysters, barbecue, chili, collards and more while enjoying time with others. The museum's largest annual fundraiser will be held from 6-9 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 21, at the museum, 122 N. Washington St. A wide selection of beverages including beer, wine and soft drinks will be available. Music will be provided by HeyBo. Cost is \$50 for members and \$75 for non-members. Purchase tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/34jznw97>.

Celebrate the holidays with South Carolina Ballet's annual production of **Nutcracker**, which will be performed this year at Lakewood High School's theater because of renovations at Patriot Hall. This beloved classical play is perfect for anyone, from children to adults. Matinee is on Saturday, Nov. 23, from 3 to 5 p.m., and the evening show is the same day from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Buy tickets at www.tickettailor.com/events/southcarolinaballet.

CLARENDON COUNTY

Clarendon County Fire Rescue's annual **Community Safety Day** will be held from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26, at J.C. Britton Park, 3057 Raccoon Road, Manning. The free event will include "Trunk or Treat," food, candy and lots of other fun activities. Children can even wear their costumes. Fire trucks, ambulances, a medical helicopter, law enforcement vehicles, tractors and more cool stuff will be there.

The 10th-annual **Duckfest** will be held on Saturday, Nov. 2, at Camp Woodie, 8444 Old River Road, Pine-wood. Dozens of events will be held throughout including a cornhole tournament, dog retrieving demonstration, Duckfest Cook-Off, car

show, Clarendon County Fire Rescue demonstration, lots of delicious food and many more games and fun activities. For more information, log onto duckfestfun.com or email duckfestfun@gmail.com.

The Second-annual K&H Resource Center Fundraiser "**Steppin' into the Holidays**" **Adult Sneaker Ball** will be held at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 21, at the Clarendon County Resource Center Gym, 1154 Fourth St. Doors open at 6 p.m., and the event begins at 7 p.m. Advance tickets are \$25 each, and reserved tables seating eight are available for \$200. For more information, contact Kathleen L. Gibson at (803) 225-0832.

LEE COUNTY

Scream Acres Haunted House and Hayride, 1137 Old Camden Road, Bishopville, is sure to scare you with its original haunted house built in the early 1880s. If you are able to make your way through the first house, jump on board one of the custom-made trailers for a bone-chilling two-mile-long hayride through the woods of terror with plenty of stops along the way. Don't get too comfortable because you will be abandoned in the swamp to walk your way to the second haunted house. If you are able to make it through, you will reboard the trailer and finish your tour on the haunted trail. A souvenir shop and food truck will be available. Hours of operation are Oct. 18-19 and Oct. 25-26, 7 p.m.-1 a.m.; Oct. 27, 7 p.m.-10 p.m. (no scare); Oct. 31, 7-10 p.m.; and Nov. 1, 7 p.m.-1 a.m. For additional information, visit www.screamacreshauntedhouse.com or call (803) 428-4149. General admission: \$25; fast pass \$40. Both may be purchased on site. Early purchase fast pass can be made online at <https://tinyurl.com/Arc4dpcf>.

Kreepy Hollow Haunted House is back and scarier than ever. Frights include a two-story haunted house, two-mile hayride journey through the swamps of Lucknow Bottom, Zombie Breakout and an even creepier Kreeper's Bus ride. The event is appropriate for teens and adults. Hours of operation are Oct. 11-13, Oct. 18-20, Oct. 25-27 and Oct. 31-Nov. 2. Ticket prices vary. Visit www.kreepyhollowhauntedattraction.com.

Education

Top recent storylines from Sumter School District

BY BRUCE MILLS

bruce@theitem.com

CROSSWELL DRIVE WINS BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE BEACON AWARD

Small-group, high-intensity learning combined with steps taken in establishing core belief systems in teachers and students have allowed Crosswell Drive Elementary School to move up this year to another national award level.

This summer, a national education nonprofit group focused on assessment, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, awarded Crosswell Drive with its Beacon Award for meeting all key markers for school success based on performance metrics. The recognition was a step up from a Points of Light Award granted one year earlier by the group.

The school has now won four national or regional awards for its post-COVID-19 academic recovery and enrichment efforts with children.

WRIGHT ADMITS, APOLOGIZES FOR STATEMENT IN GEORGETOWN

After initially denying that he said he was ready to leave Sumter soon for a superintendent position in Georgetown, William Wright Jr. admitted at the Oct. 7 Sumter School District board meeting that he did actually say it.

In September, Wright was a finalist for the Georgetown County School District superintendent opening, and his comments in question were made at a meet-and-greet there with the four finalist candidates.

After he was not selected for the post, Wright said in a Sept. 25 statement with his attorney present that he always wanted to stay in Sumter. He also added that a reporter from the *Coastal Observer* newspaper misquoted him on wishing to leave Sumter for the Georgetown County district leader position.

However, a Facebook video of the meet-and-greet where all four finalists' comments were recorded surfaced afterward, and it confirmed Wright did say that he wanted to



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Crosswell Drive Elementary was recently awarded the Blue Ribbon Beacon Award. In Tabitha Haskins-Merkel's fourth-grade class, small group, high-intensity learning based on student skill levels is occurring, and students are taking notice. Merkel was recently recognized by the Palmetto State Teachers Association as one of 10 veteran teachers in the state to win the "Star Award" for overall excellence.

leave Sumter for the new job.

In his introduction at the meet-and-greet, Wright specifically told the public in attendance, "I am Dr. William Wright, superintendent of Sumter School District hopefully for a few more days because I want to come here and do this work here."

At Sumter School District's Board of Trustees' meeting on Oct. 7, Wright admitted in a prepared statement that the comments made in Georgetown were true.

"Unfortunately, I did make the statement," Wright said. "I do not remember making the statement at

all. I would imagine many of you are aware and have seen it, and I have always said and practiced that if I did something, I would admit it.

"For that reason, I need to apologize to each of you."

Wright also said at the time that he was still recovering from brain surgery eight days earlier after a brain bleed that occurred after a fall and that he considered not completing the interview process in Georgetown.

DISTRICT PROJECTS BUDGET SURPLUS

Sumter School District is in the middle of its audit process current-

ly, and Chief Financial Officer Shatika Spearman projects the district will have a positive change to its fund balance for fiscal year 2024. At the Oct. 7 board meeting, she estimated the district will have in the range of a \$5.7 million to \$10.2 million contribution to the fund balance for the year. As of June 30, 2023, the district's general fund balance was \$51.4 million.

The official, annual district audit is being conducted by Columbia-based Mauldin & Jenkins and must be completed by December, according to state Department of Education.

Learning and the brain

Bid the geldings be fruitful?

“And all the time — such is the tragicomedy of our situation — we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more ‘drive,’ or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or ‘cre-



Brent Kaneft

ativity.’ In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We

laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.” — C.S. Lewis, *“Men without Chests”* (1943)

We are not called to be perfect, and more than anything, that temptation is what made him fragile. I probably shouldn’t have been surprised when he left a voicemail at 3 a.m., three months after his graduation: Mr. Kaneft, I don’t know what’s happening to me. I’m drunk ... I’m drunk or high every day now. There are people I don’t even know passed out at my parents’ house — I’ve made friends with a local drug dealer. I’m out of control. I need help.

I was listening to a young man without a chest.

His parents, his school and his advisor (me) had done him the very worst of favors — we encouraged his perfect discipline record, his nearly perfect

“When parents seek to control outcomes for their kids, they are trading short-term wins for long-term thriving; and they’re trading the promise of a college bumper sticker for a happy, well-adjusted 35-year-old.”

RUSSELL SHAW

Head of School at Georgetown Day School (DC)

GPA and his neat and tidy disposition. Not a hair was out of place.

When he was not chosen for a leadership position his senior year, his response was to review the basic criteria for consideration. He could have been chosen; he just wasn’t. He believed, sincerely, that leadership was given, not earned. To my knowledge, he never stood up to a bully on behalf of another student, never respectfully challenged authority because of an unjust or inconsistent rule or never risked anything on behalf of another.

But instead of using this moment as an opportunity, his dad made a call to the head of school, and the next day he had his leadership position. No lessons learned. This had been the pattern of his high school career.

Recently, Russell Shaw, head of school at Georgetown Day School (DC), wrote a brilliant article for *The Atlantic*: “Lighthouse Parents Have More Confident Kids.” Shaw reminds us that “[a] young person who grows accustomed to having a parent intervene on his behalf begins to believe that he’s not capable of acting on his own, feeding both anxiety and dependence.”

And though I’ve lost touch over the years with my former student, if I were a betting man, I’d bet that he’s doing fine, but that in the back of his mind, he’s haunted by a childhood deprived of challenge, deprived of the suffering and obstacles all adolescents require for soul development. “When parents seek to control outcomes for their kids, they are trading short-term

wins for long-term thriving,” Shaw argues, and “they’re trading the promise of a college bumper sticker for a happy, well-adjusted 35-year-old.”

Shaw recommends being a “Lighthouse Parent” who “stands as a steady, reliable guide, providing safety and clarity without controlling every aspect of their child’s journey.” They “provide firm boundaries and emotional support while allowing their children the freedom to navigate their own challenges.” But it’s not enough for adults to simply permit failure and challenge; they must believe in the power of failure to help develop their children into competent and confident adults. Into adults with chests, with deep roots.

In my last column, I alluded to why this is important for adolescent development. The stress that accompanies challenges and obstacles helps students build a strong root system that keeps them grounded. Raising well-behaved children, children who check all the boxes, is mostly about appearances — the appearance of perfection and goodness. But as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Your goodness must have an edge to it, else it is none.” Don’t forget, Jesus’ goodness led him to “overturn the tables” and “drive out” the money changers and dove-sellers in the temple. What would our schools have done to Jesus if they’d witnessed that act of goodness?

When my former student was released into the world after graduation, when he had no parents to hold his

hand, no teachers to please, no one to impress and be perfect for, he crumbled. He had been “castrated” in high school, and then we told him to go out and “be fruitful.” We never blessed him with the “gift of failure.”

In Salinger’s “The Catcher in the Rye,” the novel crescendos in Holden Caulfield’s famous diatribe about the transition to adulthood: “I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in the big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody’s around — nobody big, I mean — except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff — I mean if they’re running and they don’t look where they’re going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all.”

And as “crazy” as Caulfield says that sounds, we are seeing more and more of this behavior from parents, including myself. We are too busy denying the reality that our children will become adults through no effort on our part at all — they are heading for that cliff whether we like it or not. And we are terrified by what we see from that precipice — the violence and hatred and misinformation in the world of adults — and our responses are often, like Holden’s, to arrest their development in a futile attempt to keep the world from touching them — we go to such extremes to control the uncontrollable. But that is a fool’s errand. Gradually, appropriately, our children must encounter the world and all that the world brings. Goodness untested is vanity and will crumble under pressure, as I saw with my former student. In the words of the English poet John Milton, we want to develop young adults who can “apprehend and consider vice [evil or sin] with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better.”

Kaneft is the headmaster of Wilson Hall in Sumter.

Arts and entertainment

Sumter Shag Club preserves tradition 1 dance step at a time

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE

alaysha@theitem.com

In South Carolina, where warm Southern charm meets community spirit, a unique dance tradition continues to thrive and bring folks together — the Carolina Shag.

Rooted in the late 1930s, the Carolina Shag is a rhythmic, smooth dance that blossomed along the coastal region of North Myrtle Beach to the tunes of beach music as well as rhythm and blues, or R&B. Originally influenced by the Black community's expressive dance styles, it enamored local youth who blended those moves with swing music to create distinct, cool and captivating moves now known as the shag. What started as a lifeguard and waitresses' pastime on sandy floors of Cherry Grove's pavilions has become an art form that's all about ease, flow and the joy of movement.

A hop, skip and more than 100 miles inland to Sumter, Whit Blanton, president of Sumter Shag Club for six years, and Melissa May agree that this dance has been life changing. Blanton first came to the Sumter Shag Club venturing over from Florence, and though he was new to the area, no one would be the wiser, as he was welcomed instantly.

"We're just one big family," he expressed. "I had to have knee surgery this year. It's every day, somebody from the Shag Club comes to see you and talk to you; just a real tight-knit group."

May, a native of Arkansas, was a relative newcomer to the world of shag and Sumter when she joined the club in 2015.

"When I first started, I knew nothing about it," she said. "They just took me in like I had always been a part of them."

And this closeness comes from years in the making. Founded in 1985, Sumter Shag Club has spent 39 years dedicated to the preservation of the



ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

For 39 years, Sumter Shag Club has preserved the tradition of the Carolina Shag, commonly known as The Shag, one step at a time. Club members range from mid-20s to early 90s.

South Carolina state dance. Goals to promote and preserve the heritage of beach music and shag dancing, educate and teach others the art of shag dancing and provide members and guests with opportunities to socialize and dance have allowed the club's membership to grow from 82 to 228 as of October 2024.

Members range in age — from mid-20s to early 90s — and dance experience. Oftentimes, people show up to free shag lessons with the intention to watch. To see with their own eyes how folks effortlessly glide across the floors, appearing as if they're walking on air.

On Tuesday nights from 7 to 10 p.m., members gather at The Lounge at Sec-

ond Mill, 2390 Broad St., for free shag lessons, music and, of course, dancing. The evening unfolds with a beginner-friendly six-count, eight-step pattern, making it easy and enjoyable for everyone, even those who claim to have "two left feet."

"We try to dance with them individually, separate ourselves to dance with them so that they can feel what it is to dance with somebody that can shag. Get them together, get them on the floor and let them enjoy themselves," Blanton said. "Once they come the first time and learn how to shag, they always come back."

Together, Blanton, May and the shag club board members work to engage the younger generations in the

traditional dance. Their outreach extends to teaching shag at local schools, including a cotillion for middle-schoolers, in hopes of sparking an interest that will keep the shag alive for generations to come. Each July, young shagger teams join the Junior Shag Association at Ocean Drive in North Myrtle Beach, competing and learning new moves from seasoned dancers.

Beyond their weekly gatherings, the Sumter Shag Club also hosts seasonal events and parties, including a gospel shag, themed parties — where members get in for free and can bring a guest for a small fee — and a popular annual golf tournament. They're

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SHAG FROM PAGE A41

known for their charity work, organizing fundraisers and helping families in need. Recently, the smooth-dancing group rallied to collect supplies for North Carolina communities devastated by Hurricane Helene.

Outside of its work in Sumter, the local club meets with shag clubs from cities across North Carolina and South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Virginia and other states three times a year in North Myrtle Beach. Part of the Society of Stranders, which was started in 1980 by Gene "Swink" Laughter, there are several opportunities each year for Association of Carolina Shag Club members to come together in a select number of days to dance together, enjoy the clubs, listen to great beach music, see concerts, participate in or watch parades and see friends from ACSC clubs from across the country.

What binds these clubs together — including Sumter — is not only their love for the dance, but also their friendships.

"The Sumter Shag Club is so welcoming to everybody of every age, every race, and we just want you to come and dance with us; come on!" May encouraged.

The Carolina Shag means more to Sumter Shag Club than just a dance. It's a shared legacy, one they are dedicated to preserving as part of Southern heritage. And as the music echoes through the lounge on any given Tuesday, it's clear this tradition will keep gliding, one step at a time.



For 39 years, Sumter Shag Club has preserved the tradition of the Carolina Shag, commonly known as The Shag, one step at a time. The club meets every Tuesday from 7 to 9 p.m. at The Lounge at Second Mill Restaurant.

PHOTOS BY ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM



From left are Jimmy Shirer, Jerry Laviana, Rosie Peavy, Shag Hall of Famer and Sumter Shag Club Charter Member Franz Johnson, Katie Skidmore, Sumter Shag Club President Whit Blanton and Melissa May.



LEFT: Melissa Michelson and her dad, Sam Hopkins, showcase their smooth moves at Sumter Shag Club's weekly Tuesday gatherings.

Thomas Sumter rejuvenates weightlifting facilities



PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

The Thomas Sumter Academy weight room got a bit of a face lift this month, as the school installed its upgraded equipment. The upgrade was funded by the school's annual golf tournament on July 12.

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

Thomas Sumter breathed new life into its weightlifting facilities, which it revealed during its homecoming festivities on Oct. 4. Celebrating the school's 60th anniversary proved to be a great time to show off the new digs that will benefit all of its students looking to build a healthy lifestyle but especially its student-athletes.

"It's not just athletics, it's for the physical well-being of all the students," TSA Head of School Ben Herod said. "Some people will really be engaged with athletics, but some people just want to take care of their bodies and understand how to do that. Expanding that all the way down to our lower grades as far as we can and have more middle school PE be able to do weightlifting and understand what to do and how to do it properly, that's a very important thing to me because being healthy throughout your life is an important thing."

The Generals were able to improve



'It's not just athletics, it's for the physical well-being of all the students.'

BEN HEROD

Thomas Sumter Academy
Head of School

the facilities because of an extremely successful golf tournament they hosted on July 12 at Beech Creek. The school raised more than \$30,000 to help boost the equipment.

"Everything went really well,"

Herod said. "All of our volunteers, all of our sponsors, everyone was fantastic. We had athletics involved, development was involved, we had board members there helping and volunteering time. Everything went really well for us to meet our goal to be able to purchase this equipment."

Of course, the new equipment will help the Generals build muscle, but Athletic Director Tanner Brunson is focused on the entire health of the athlete.

"One of our biggest goals as an athletic department is to get our kids bigger, faster, stronger and more explosive. I think one thing that people forget about when it comes to weightlifting is the idea of injury management,"

he said. "Getting them bigger and stronger ultimately prevents injury. In a school of this size, it's really tough to lose an athlete here or there. That's true anywhere, but it's emphasized at schools that happen to be a tad smaller."

Brunson hopes this new equipment sparks a new passion for lifting with student-athletes. The old equipment certainly did the job, but the weight room needed a face lift.

"I'm a 2015 grad of TSA, and we were using the old racks and old equipment long before I started to be of age for the weight room in middle school," Brunson said. "Our goal is to

TSA FROM PAGE A45

generate excitement with our weightlifting program because it has benefits, whether it's obvious or not."

Head football coach Stacy Bell was thrilled to get his athletes in the weight room as soon as possible.

"It was very fun. It reminds you quickly that they're young men, but they can turn back into kids real quick. They were just like kids with their toys," he said. "They had to sit on each bench and touch each bar. It was just a real fun experience."

The golf tournament will remain an athletic fundraiser, but the Generals are still trying to figure out their next target area of improvement. A major point of emphasis for Brunson and Herod is making sure that more than one program is able to benefit from upgrades.

"We discuss it with our

booster club relatively routinely, and our booster club and athletic department do a good job of identifying things that may better the entire athletic department, rather than just one team," Brunson said.

Herod added, "There's a lot of years we can have a specific goal like we did this year, and some years it will be the overarching goal of it being the booster club's summer fundraiser. All of that goes to the booster club to benefit our students in that way, whether it be uniform rotation or anything else.

"You want to do your best to have something for everybody," he continued. "Some students love football, some students love archery, sporting clays or bowling. Everything for everybody as much as we can, while also not robbing Peter to pay Paul from one sport to the other."



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Thomas Sumter Academy raised more than \$30,000 through the school's annual golf tournament on July 12 to replace aging weightlifting equipment. The new equipment will benefit the health of all the students.

In a little over a month, Sumter County voters will make a decision that will affect the future of our community.

A third iteration of the Capital (Penny) Sales Tax Referendum is on the Nov. 5th ballot and to secure our future and plan for smart growth, you should vote YES.

Early voting is Oct. 21 to Nov. 2, 2024, and Election Day is Nov. 5, 2024.

In looking at projects from the 2008 and 2014 referendums, we've seen over \$160 million invested in our community. And we addressed key areas: public safety, quality of life, infrastructure and economic development. Four areas that affect everyone in Sumter County.

To see what the future holds, we need to look at the past.

All over Sumter County, roads

were paved. Rural dirt roads. We built a new gym and renovated the old gym. We built a new Judicial Center. Our Police and Fire Departments have new headquarters to better serve our community alongside a new E-911 center in our Public Safety Complex. We have nourished our economic development efforts and have seen new industries take root, bringing jobs.

Our work has not gone unnoticed, as we've gotten millions in matching state and federal funds to expand the scope of these projects.

A question we keep hearing is this: What's in it for me? What direct benefit does this bring to my neighborhood?

The answer to that is simple.

Our efforts are designed to improve life for all the residents of Sumter County, South Carolina. We are investing in ourselves by building new sidewalks to better connect students to their schools. We are investing in ourselves by tearing down dilapidated properties. We are investing in ourselves by improving our parks, busy intersections, and neighborhoods.

We are investing in ourselves because we believe in quality of life issues. We want our community to be healthy and have plenty of recreational opportunities. We want our first responders to know we have their backs and will make sure they're properly equipped to do their jobs as they

serve our community. We want to continue improving our roads and infrastructure.

According to the S.C. Department of Revenue, about a third of the funds collected by Penny 1 and 2 come from people who don't live in Sumter County. In looking at the project list for Penny 3, that means about \$40 million of the total costs will be paid for by people from other counties and states.

The bottom line is this: We believe in Sumter County and voting yes for the Capital (Penny) Sales Tax Referendum is the prudent thing to do.

For more information log on to PennyForProgress.com

Paid for By SumterEDGE.

Former players, coaches reflect on career of late Mickey Moss as the former EC, Lake City coach adds another Hall to his historic resume



PHOTO PROVIDED

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

In many ways, Mickey Moss was the perfect example of a high school football coach.

Mickey's coaching career spanned five decades, starting as an assistant in Willston-Elko before closing his career at his alma mater, Blacksburg. In between, he became a local icon, leading East Clarendon to a state title in 1985. After a stop in Salluda, he came back to the Pee Dee to coach at Lake City for 13 years. Mickey gave several local coaches their start with the Panthers, including his son, Mike, who now serves as the defensive line coach at Sumter High, Manning head coach Reggie Kennedy and a chunk of the current coaching staff at Lake City, including their offensive coordinator, Ed Brogdon, and

their athletic director and head baseball coach, Matt Apicella.

Across his career, Mickey was able to find the balance between the role of strict leader — in part because of his military background after serving in the Vietnam War with the Marine Corps — and loving father figure for every player he coached in both football and baseball.

Away from the gridiron, Mickey was both an athletic director and a critical figure in the South Carolina Athletic Coaches Association, serving as the organization's president in 2001 before joining its Hall of Fame in 2014. Mickey was a mentor to many until he passed away in April at 74.

Mickey was no stranger to Hall of Fames, as he earned the honor at both East Clarendon and Florence County. This fall, it was announced that he would join yet another. The South Carolina Football Coaches Association an-

nounced he would be part of its 2024 class.

SUCCESS IN TURBEVILLE

Brogdon played quarterback for Mickey at East Clarendon, helping the program go undefeated in 1985 on their way to a state championship. Brogdon felt the way many Wolverines did during the '80s. Mickey made them feel loved, even if there was a tinge of fear of the Purple Heart-earning coach.

"He always had your back. It was a safe place," Brogdon said. "Even though we weren't aware of it then, he had a place for us. We had fun, even though we worked hard. He got everything out of us because we wanted to make sure that we did not disappoint him. He made that environment for you to just excel."

Kennedy, who was also a member of

SEE MOSS, PAGE A48

JIMMY DAVIS

FOR CITY COUNCIL WARD 4

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MOSS FROM PAGE A47

that state championship squad before playing linebacker at South Carolina State, said the hours Mickey spent with his team on and off the field left a lasting imprint.

“During the offseason, we spent so much time together down in the locker room doing stuff after school with him, and I just think the man he was away from the field just made us accept the discipline he gave us with no problem,” Kennedy said. “We knew he had our best interests at heart, and we knew he’d give us a tough love.”

Mickey carried a certain energy into the program. He was always willing to do the dirty work, and he expected his assistant coaches and players to do the same.

“You’re going to be successful; you have no choice but to be successful,” Brogdon said. “It was encouragement. He would go the extra mile for you. I can remember being sick and him coming out to my house to check on me and make sure everything was OK. He was just that kind of guy.”

One of the reasons East Clarendon was able to take the next step in 1985 was an expanded passing game. The Wolverines ran the ball like no one else in ’84, so much so that Jimmy Fleming set a national record for touchdowns with 48. But Mickey thought his team needed another dimension, so he sent Brogdon to a quarterback camp that offseason.

Suddenly, EC could do it all, and the Wolverines ran into little resistance on their way to a state title. The defense, led by Kennedy, pitched five shutouts in the regular season and allowed just 12 points in the entire postseason. The offense, meanwhile, was unstoppable. They weren’t held under 30 points in the regular season, though some rainy conditions in the playoffs kept things interesting. Their closest games were actually the three games before the state championship, a 10-0 win over Lewisville, a 12-6 win over Calhoun Falls and a 13-6 win over Great Falls.

The win over Calhoun Falls is a lasting memory for Kennedy and his teammates. The field was waterlogged, so they were forced to postpone the game a day, meaning kids from a small town like Turbeville were able to get some new experiences.

“We remember riding the charter bus going down to Calhoun Falls,” Kennedy said. “We got the opportunity



Mickey Moss coached at Lake City for 13 seasons, accumulating a record of 86-63 on the gridiron. He's the winningest coach in LCHS history and also served as both the athletic director and head baseball coach.

PHOTO PROVIDED

to stay in a hotel in Greenwood. That's something that, I'm coming from Gable and the guys from Turbeville and New Zion, we didn't know how it felt to stay in a nice hotel and take a charter bus.”

But the core memory from that championship run came in the locker room before kickoff, when Mickey fired up his team ahead of a 33-6 rout of Timmonsville.

“I still remember the pregame speech for the state championship game,” Kennedy said. “We talked about kamikaze pilots, and one of his best friends came in the locker room with him, and he body slammed his best friend on the concrete floor during his speech getting ready for the state championship.”

All of the theatrics aside, Mickey had something that every great coach needs.

“He earned the trust of the parents. Whatever Coach Moss said was gold,” Kennedy said. “He learned that over the years, years of showing that he cared about us away from the field. He'd bring us home, and if he had to come in and talk to your parents, he'd do that also. He just earned the trust of the community.”

LIFTING YOUNG COACHES

Those relationships Mickey built with his players bore fruit throughout the intervening decades. He was able to help jump start the careers of so many coaches. When Kennedy graduated from S.C. State, his first job was for Mickey at Lake City.

“I think just the love and affection he showed us and how we learn how to love other people by playing under

him, I think that kind of led us to the profession,” Kennedy said.

Brogdon followed in Mickey's footsteps in more ways than one. Just like his head coach, Brogdon joined the Marines before following him into the coaching ranks. He was far from the only one.

“From the Cook boys (Scott and Jason) to Seneca Baron, Reggie Kennedy, all of those guys, we just see him as that guy that kind of showed us the way of how to be successful, how to do things the right way, how to lead people, how to be a leader and not be a follower,” Brogdon said. “That's what I get through most of the guys that came up through him and under him.”

Kennedy thought Mickey was the perfect coach to introduce newcomers to the profession.

“I wish every young assistant coach could work under him. He brings in a military style of coaching. You wouldn't be late for one of his meetings,” Kennedy said with a laugh. “He brought structure and he brought discipline to the coaches and players. That was real big for me as an assistant coach. I just wondered why are we doing this and why we had to be here at this time. Once I became a head coach, I see why now. He's just been a blessing to me. He helped my career so much when I became a head coach, and then I went back and tried to do things he did with players and coaches.”

But Mickey didn't just elevate his former players through the ranks. Matt Apicella came to Lake City right after graduating from Ohio State thanks to an education job fair. One day, Mickey pulled Apicella into his of-

fice and started his coaching journey.

“I sat down in his office, and he said, 'I'm just going to tell you right now, I don't care what you know or what you think you know because I'm going to teach you everything that you need to know. But if you're ever disloyal to me, this school or these kids, I'll fire your blankity-blank on the spot,’” Apicella said. “And I said 'yes sir,' and that was it.”

Apicella's coaching journey didn't start the way he expected. Mickey didn't put him right on his coaching staff for football or baseball; Apicella had to earn that.

“He told me if I wanted to coach football that I had to start somewhere,” he recalled. “He told me, 'You're gonna be the girls assistant soccer coach.' And I said, 'Coach, I've never played soccer in my life; I don't know anything about it.' He said, 'Well, you're going to learn how to deal with kids before you work with me.'”

Mickey was Apicella's “Dad in the South,” and he taught the future Lake City AD and head baseball coach so many important lessons.

“No. 1 is loyalty. Loyalty to the kids, the programs and the other coaches. He always said when you have to make a decision, if you always do right by the kids, you'll be fine,” Apicella said. “You were never going to outwork the old man, no matter how hard you tried. If you showed up an hour early, he was already there. He used to tell us, 'By the time I tell you what needs to be done, if you're not doing it already, it's too late.' So, we learned to look forward.”

“Just to listen to the former players talk about Coach Moss, everybody was scared of him, coaches, kids, everybody. But it was kind of like a father's discipline. Not an actual fear but a fear of respect. You never wanted to let him down. That's what resonates through all the old stories.”

Eventually, Mickey left Lake City to coach at Wren and tried to bring Apicella along with him. While Apicella declined, their bond only grew after Mickey left the Panthers.

“I still have dozens of voicemails that I transferred from phone to phone just because I don't want to get rid of them,” Apicella said. “Hilarious voicemails talking about if the Buckeyes lost or he talked about Urban Meyer and Jim Tressel or he'd call and give me motivation, congratulate me on big

MOSS FROM PAGE A48

wins in baseball. He always touched base, and I always called him for advice. The relationship got stronger once he left and as I grew in the profession.”

Scott Earley was another young coach who got his start at Lake City. Before moving to South Carolina, Earley was in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. The principal at his high school, John Goforth, was a Blacksburg native, just like Mickey. So when Earley was interested in moving to S.C., Goforth made the connection. The pair met one day in Blacksburg, and Mickey offered him a job as an assistant for football and baseball.

“It was in Lake City, South Carolina, so I wasn’t quite sure that needed to be the stop,” Earley admitted, as his sights were more firmly set on Myrtle Beach.

“That was on a Saturday, and on Monday, we get up and there’s two contracts in the mailbox, one for her (his wife),

one for me to come to Lake City. We felt like he was either a Vietnam directive or a sign from God, so we headed to Lake City.”

“He said, ‘If you come to Lake City and help me straighten out the baseball program and coach football for me on the defense side of the ball, if you want to go to Horry County, if you do what you’re supposed to do for me, I’ll put you in Horry County.’ And the rest is history, man.”

That history is an equally impressive coaching career for Earley. After his stint in Lake City, he made his way to Myrtle Beach, winning a state title in 2008. He then went to a pair of Lexington County schools before his final coaching stop, a great run at Westside that began in 2014. He stepped away from coaching in 2022 to take over as the executive director of the South Carolina Athletic Coaches Association. He gives Mickey credit for involving him in the program.

‘He had the unique ability to encourage and share wisdom and knowledge and discipline but at the same time love you and pat you on the back and see the potential in you.’

SCOTT EARLEY

Started at Lake City as a coach under Mickey Moss

“He’s my mentor, he’s a great husband, a great father, a Vietnam veteran and an even better person. He basically steered and shifted my entire career even to the point of becoming the executive director of the South Carolina Athletic Coaches Association,” he said. “I became the youngest president in SCACA history just because when I came to him at that young age, he insisted that I go to the meetings, go to clinic, run for a district office seat, run for a board seat, and he did that with all of his guys. He created a lot of diversity and leadership in this state by just not taking no for answer.”

Earley saw firsthand the way Mickey connected with his players, while also pushing them to become the best version of themselves. The same could be said for the coaches he worked with.

“He had the unique ability to encourage and share wisdom and knowledge and discipline, but at the same time love you and pat you on the back and see the potential in you,” Earley said. “We used to call it taking in stray dogs, and his (coaching) tree is so extensive. I think all of us off his tree had that same pride in not only helping student-athletes, but helping young coaches become coordinators and head coaches and principals and ADs and have families and children. He and (his wife) Cathy were always a great example of that. Their home was always open, no matter if you were in trouble or you just wanted to say hello.”

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Of course, the coach Mickey influenced the most was his own flesh and blood.

Mike Moss grew up inundated with high school athletics. He was a middle-schooler when East Clarendon was dominating SCHSL 1A.

“Dad and I, we were always together,” Mike said. “I’ve often thought that

SEE MOSS, PAGE A52



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Entertainment

'Transformers One' is exciting adventure

"Transformers One" is an animated film focusing on the origins of the alien robots before their never-ending battle on their home planet Cybertron. Prequel stories centered on iconic characters are always a haphazard approach in my eyes. I have always believed leaving certain details intentionally ambiguous adds more of a unique perspective to the story itself.

Explaining the reason a certain character is a villain or a hero simply eliminates the nature of wonderment, particularly when it comes to the antagonist. My immediate reaction upon watching the trailer



A REVIEW BY
ISAIAH RIDLEY

for "Transformers One" was complete apathy. I felt the feature from my point of view appeared to focus too much on the humor element, its animation gave off a childish visual style, and the overall designs paled in comparison to the 1986 animated feature film. There was a strong internal debate as to whether it was worth the viewing considering "Transformers: The Movie" (1986) is categorically the best Transformers adaptation from my childhood.

Overall, my expectations for "Transformers One" were at a low level to the point of being prepared to accept that it would not impress me in the slightest. The story begins with Orion Pax/Optimus Prime and D-16/Megatron working as miners on Cybertron. Both aspire to reach a



Chris Hemsworth poses at the European premiere of "Transformers One" held Sept. 19 at Cineworld Leicester Square in London, England, UK.

PHOTO BY: ZZ/JAMES WARREN/FAMOUS/STAR MAX/IPX

purpose in their existence instead of living daily with the constant reminders of becoming stagnant. Both Optimus and Megatron find a message offering answers about their Cybertronian heritage, placing them on an unexpected, dangerous and traumatic adventure which changes the landscape of Cybertron forever.

Two significant changes involve Chris Hemsworth voicing Optimus Prime and Brian Tyree Henry portraying Megatron. What I appreciated about their performance is how neither of them went out of their way attempting to outshine Peter Cullen or Frank Welker. The original voices of Prime and Megatron are simply irreplaceable. No one and nothing will replicate the resonating emotional, authentic and realistic

magic both legendary voice actors brought to these iconic characters.

Hemsworth added his own flavor with his natural comedic timing and perfect ability of blending naivety as Prime gradually grows into the leader we remember from the animated series. Henry's representation of Megatron beautifully captures the essence of what will eventually mold him into becoming leader of the Decepticons. Listening to Hemsworth and Henry bounce their respective dialogues off one another with passion and believability was an oratory treat.

A serious complaint I had about previous "Transformers" live-action adaptations was the primary focus being on the human characters. Being able to watch a film where the alien robots are

front and center was a massive breath of fresh air, especially knowing there are no human characters slowing down the development as the story progresses on Cybertron. I understand why a full-scale animated approach for these stories is better and more realistic. What is impossible to render live-action wise is more possible with an animated approach.

What makes this presentation special is the gradual shift in what eventually separates Prime and Megatron into their respective roles. The audience from the beginning is bonding with them and understanding both sides of their argument. Being able to find reason and emotionally relate to the antagonist is confirmation of experiencing fantastic writing.

Admittedly there is a huge part of me holding a soft spot for the guilty pleasure of Michael Bay's "Transformers" films. He managed to successfully bring to life what was impossible at that time despite polarizing reviews ranging from mixed to negative. However, what was amazing was for the first time knowing which Autobot and Decepticon was which. Bay's adaptation offered a rendering of a complete metallic mess during the action sequences. I found myself becoming dizzy attempting to decipher what was happening on screen.

"Transformers One" offers the absolute perfect element of amazing and innovative action sequences with the battles. Words cannot accurately describe how refreshing, beautiful and majestic the feeling was watching the Autobots and Decepticons battle without the moment falling into a messy visual

fest. The only way to provide an honest analysis for the action is how it had me reliving my childhood from the '80s.

As of recent years, blockbuster action-adventure stories have had difficulties balancing the concepts of humor and serious emotional developments. For example, past films exhibited powerful and impactful scenes intended for authentic emotions from the audience. Instead, that specific scene loses the intended impact with the added humor thrown into the mix. Director Josh Cooley found the perfect balance with combining elements of humor and allowing the serious, emotional, dark moments to captivate the audience. The last series that successfully captured that balance was the original "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

I can say without any strict hesitation that this is quite possibly my favorite "Transformers" film of all time. This exceeded my severely low expectations, and I am glad I gave it a chance, rather than writing it off completely.

Parents who grew up watching the animated series will find absolute enjoyment, and it is great for children, too. I can see this film having strong legs in the box office with its continued positive word of mouth. An exciting and inspirational adventure from beginning to end. My verdict is a 10/10 and two-thumbs-up reaction. Highly recommended. There is an important scene after the credits worth waiting for as well.

To watch Isaiah Ridley's movie reviews online, find him @Izzy's Cinematic Escape on YouTube.

Recollections of Sumter's historic homes

Relections revisits the growth and development of fledgling Sumter and several of its historic homes. Many of these treasures remain and add to the beauty and culture of our commu-



Sammy Way
REFLECTIONS

nity. The data and pictures used to prepare this piece were obtained from *The Sumter Item* archives and the writings of Dr. Anne King Gregorie were also consulted.

Dr. Gregorie noted that "... By the year 1824, the tiny village of Sumterville consisted of only a dozen houses; however, during the 1840s several dwellings were constructed."

The houses pictured once graced the landscape of the Sumter but have been torn down. In the next *Sumter Item Impact*, historic homes that remain in Sumter will be featured.



Three Cedars tourism home, Broad Street



Old McLaurin House, Church Street



Elks Club 1949, Thomas Wilson house, Broad Street



Tuomey house



Oldie house belonging to Martha Graham, Liberty Street



Roach house



Bossard home, Harvin Street

Before his legendary coaching career, Mickey Moss served in the Vietnam War in the Marine Corps, where he earned a Purple Heart.

PHOTO PROVIDED



MOSS FROM PAGE A49

there's not too many football fields or basketball gyms or baseball fields in the state of South Carolina that I haven't been to.

"It was a very formative time of my life where I was being exposed to a lot of different things and being around a lot of great guys. Those teams at East Clarendon, he had some of the best young men, some of the hardest-working young men that kinda shaped me and molded me."

As Mike was inching toward high school, Mickey took a job at Sallada. Once he got there, Mike became a standout player on both his football and baseball teams.

"At the time, I didn't think it was a lot of fun," Mike said of playing for his father. "He was very tough on me. He felt like I had to be the example. He didn't let me by with anything. There were several days where I had extra duty after practice because of a screwup at practice. I've been benched several times for making the wrong decisions on the field. I didn't particularly appreciate it at the time, but as I've grown, I realized that was the best thing that he could have done for me."

Mike still remembers getting benched by his dad after striking out with the bases loaded.

"He meets me before I get back into the dugout, and he said, 'Good job. You think you can do that again?' And I was kind of a smart mouth, being that young. I said, 'Yeah, I probably could,'" Mike recalled. "And he said, 'Well, you're not gonna get the opportunity. Go have a seat for a bit.'"

"It took me a while to figure that one out, but I did. I wouldn't trade it for anything, having that experience. That shaped me."

Mickey set the mold for the type of coach Mike wanted to be one day. He now coaches both football and softball at Sumter High and is known for relating with his players. It was one of the most important lessons he took

from his dad.

"He was sharp as a tack with X's and O's, but he realized that it was more than that," Mike said. "If a kid knows that you'll go to the end of the world for him, they'll lay it on the line for you on the field. That's who he was. Talking to a lot of guys who played for him, playing for him myself, he was always there, always visible, always the voice, so to speak. In my coaching career, I've tried to pattern myself after that, just building those relationships and caring about kids."

Mickey also taught his son the importance of hard work. He had a humble upbringing as the son of a mechanic and a mill worker. Mickey certainly couldn't shy away from hard work in the Marine Corps. As a coach, Mickey and his assistants got their hands dirty, quite literally.

"He taught me how to work," Mike said. "I

started out lining fields, cutting fields, cleaning locker rooms, just duties that nobody as a starter wants to do anymore. He always insisted that his assistants, himself included, take care of all the menial work. That's kind of what molded me, cleaning urinals, cleaning bathrooms, doing those things that are almost unthought of nowadays, but that's how he started every one of us as coaches."

When Mickey passed, Mike felt an outpouring of love from across South Carolina. When they held his memorial services at Blacksburg, Mike got a reminder of just how integral his father was in the lives of so many.

"It's only in times like that you really think about what he meant to so many different people," Mike said. "He was from a different breed of coaches. Those coaches, they were men, and they all had a tight bond. And it was great to see them all during that time when he passed. As a son, it was very important to me, at his services, to make sure that he was recognized in the right way. It was certainly nice to see everybody at that time."

'Talking to a lot of guys who played for him, playing for him myself, he was always there, always visible, always the voice, so to speak.'

MIKE MOSS

Son of Mickey Moss

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The Kelly house in Paxville is thought to have a ghost of a drifter

BY DEIRDRE CURRIN

deirdre@theitem.com

Diana Roof, site manager for Temple Sinai Jewish History Center, is a wealth of knowledge of lore about Sumter and surrounding areas.

Every year, Roof holds a Graveside Chronicles event where she shares local folklore while guiding tours through a Sumter graveyard, and this year she was kind enough to lend one of her stories to *The Sumter Item*.

The Kelly house is a real place that stands right outside of Paxville in Clarendon County. John B. Kelly lived in the home with his two oldest sisters up until 1850, when he decided to sell his share of the ancestral Kelly house to his sisters to pay for his medical schooling.

A year after their brother left, on a hot summer day, a drifter stopped by the Kelly house and asked the sisters if there was any work he could do. The sisters wanted to drain the bottom lands on the back of their property and hired the man to dig the ditches. However, due to the extreme heat of the day, the drifter died of heat stroke.

The sisters, unsure of who the man was, who his family was or where he was from, could think of no way to return his body to his family and buried the stranger beneath a dogwood tree near the road. Roof wrote that the sisters “both agreed this was a lovely spot for the grave.”

When John eventually came home for a visit, his sisters told him about the stranger buried by the road, sparking an idea in John — the medical student wanted to expand his studies with a human skeleton rather than his textbooks. Naturally, he dug up the man’s body and took it back to medical school.

After graduating, John returned home to practice medicine and brought the skeleton with him. Soon, John began experiencing strange



A ghost of a drifter is believed to stomp up stairs and rattle the bones of his skeleton in a home called the Kelly house in Paxville. The home above is not that home.

things such as hearing hoofbeats from an invisible horse when he rode past the grave, hearing phantom footsteps behind him from an invisible being, feeling something rush by him and stomp up the stairs when he would reach for the door. John would also have scary experiences with the skeleton — he would hear the bones of the skeleton rattling, and he would sometimes hear what sounded like the skeleton’s skull hitting the floor.

As the weeks passed, John decided that the ghostly happenings were too much for him, so he moved to Florida, leaving the ghost to haunt his sister, Mary.

Mary was not as scared of the ghost as John was, and the ghost even helped her get out of a tricky situation involving an overzealous suitor that she was not interested in. One evening as Mary’s suitor brought her home with his horse and carriage, the couple heard phantom hoofbeats. Mary told her suitor that it was only the family ghost. He never did call on Mary again after that night.

Roof ended her story with, “I guess that’s one way to get rid of an unwanted suitor!”

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Social Security Matters

Veteran asks about special credits for military service

BY RUSSELL GLOOR

National Social Security advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

DEAR RUSTY: I just learned that if I served in the military during an active-duty period, I could get extra earnings for Social Security and that these benefits would be automatically added to my record, but I was never



GLOOR

asked by the SS employee who calculated my benefits if I was in the military. I took benefits at age 62 (2013) due to health reasons. Should I ask for a recalculation or is it too late?

PROUD VETERAN

DEAR PROUD VETERAN: Thank you for your service to our country, for which you have every right to be proud. You likely heard about “Special Extra Credits for military service,” which applies to those who served in the military during certain periods earlier than the year 2001. This rule can add up to \$1,200 per year to your Social Security earnings record for the years you served and, since your SS benefit is based on your lifetime earnings record, your military earnings may have been included when calculating your Social Security benefit. But the rules for getting that “extra earnings credit” are a bit complex, and how much extra earnings credit you receive depends entirely on which years you served. Here’s a quick summary:

- SS taxes have been withheld from military pay since 1957, so your actual military earnings are already included as part of your lifetime SS earnings record.

- If you served between 1957 and 1977, an extra \$300 for each quarter of active-duty service would be added to your military pay, up to \$1,200 per year maximum.

- If you served between 1978 and 2001, an extra \$100 would be added to your military pay for each \$300 of active-duty pay received, up to a maximum of \$1,200 per year. FYI, no addi-

tional earnings are added to your military pay for service years after 2001.

- Those who served on active duty before 1967 should inform SS when applying for benefits about their military service (e.g., provide a copy of DD-214). For those who served after 1967, the “special extra credits” were automatically added to their military earnings record when they applied for SS benefits.

It’s important to note that the “extra credits” are additional earnings added to your military pay record — not an additional benefit amount added to your Social Security payment because of your military service. If, however, your military pay was included in the 35 years used to compute your Social Security benefit when you claimed, then your military pay affected your SS payment amount.

In any case, if you served in the military after 1967, the special extra earnings credits were automatically included in your military pay record and, thus, were automatically included when calculating your Social Security benefit when you applied. If your non-military working career consisted of over 35 years during which you earned more than you did while serving, your years in the military wouldn’t be included when computing your Social Security benefit anyway (only your highest-earning 35 years of earnings are included when calculating your SS benefit).

Although it’s never “too late” to request a recalculation, if you served after 1967 your military pay during your service years was automatically increased by SS to account for your military service. If you served before 1967, you could contact Social Security to ensure that the extra credits were included when calculating your SS benefit. FYI, here’s a copy of the Social Security rules on this topic: www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10017.pdf.

DEAR RUSTY: Both my wife and I are 67 1/2, i.e., past our full retirement age of 66 years and 6 months. Neither of us has yet filed for SS retirement benefits. My wife is entitled to about

\$1,000/month based on her work history, and I plan to wait until age 70 to file. I was entitled to \$3,700 at my full retirement age date and am eligible to receive \$4,800 at age 70. Thus, my wife’s spousal benefit, which she can get when I start taking my SS, is another \$850 (a total of \$1,850), which is 50% of my full retirement age amount. We just recently became aware that my wife should have claimed her own smaller benefit earlier and taken her higher spousal benefit later when I claim. But has she lost Social Security benefits because she waited until now to claim?

TRYING HARD TO UNDERSTAND

DEAR TRYING: Yes, I am afraid your wife has lost some of her SS retirement benefit by waiting too long to claim. In your specific circumstances (where your wife is eligible for a higher monthly amount as your spouse) it is important to know that her spousal benefit amount reached maximum when she attained her full retirement age (FRA) of age 66 and 6 months. Even though she cannot collect as your spouse until you later claim, her eventual spousal amount does not increase because she is now past her FRA. Thus, waiting the extra year after her FRA did not enhance her spousal benefit amount, meaning she could have been collecting her own smaller SS retirement benefit starting at her FRA. The good news, however, is not all those past benefits are lost.

Once someone has passed their full retirement age, it is possible to claim up to six months of retroactive benefits. Full retirement age is the cutoff point because your wife cannot get retroactive benefits before her FRA but, since she is about a year past, she can claim her full six months of retroactive benefits. Thus, she will lose only about six months of her SS retirement benefit by claiming her benefits to start at age 67 (vs. now at 67 1/2), which at least mitigates the loss. And instead of her FRA amount of \$1,000, her initial SS retirement benefit will be about 3% higher because she is claiming past her FRA. But, nevertheless, your wife’s eventual

spousal amount (when you claim) will still be limited to 50% of your full retirement age entitlement.

The important thing to keep in mind is that retroactive benefits can only be claimed after someone has reached their full retirement age, and only up to six months of retroactive benefits can normally be claimed. So, in your wife’s case, her eventual spousal benefit from you will still be limited to 50% of your FRA amount even though she waited for a year past her own FRA to claim. But she can claim six months of retroactive SS retirement benefits now to soften the financial blow.

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ABOUT AMAC

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation’s capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AmacFoundation.org) is the Association’s non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America’s Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members’ behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac.

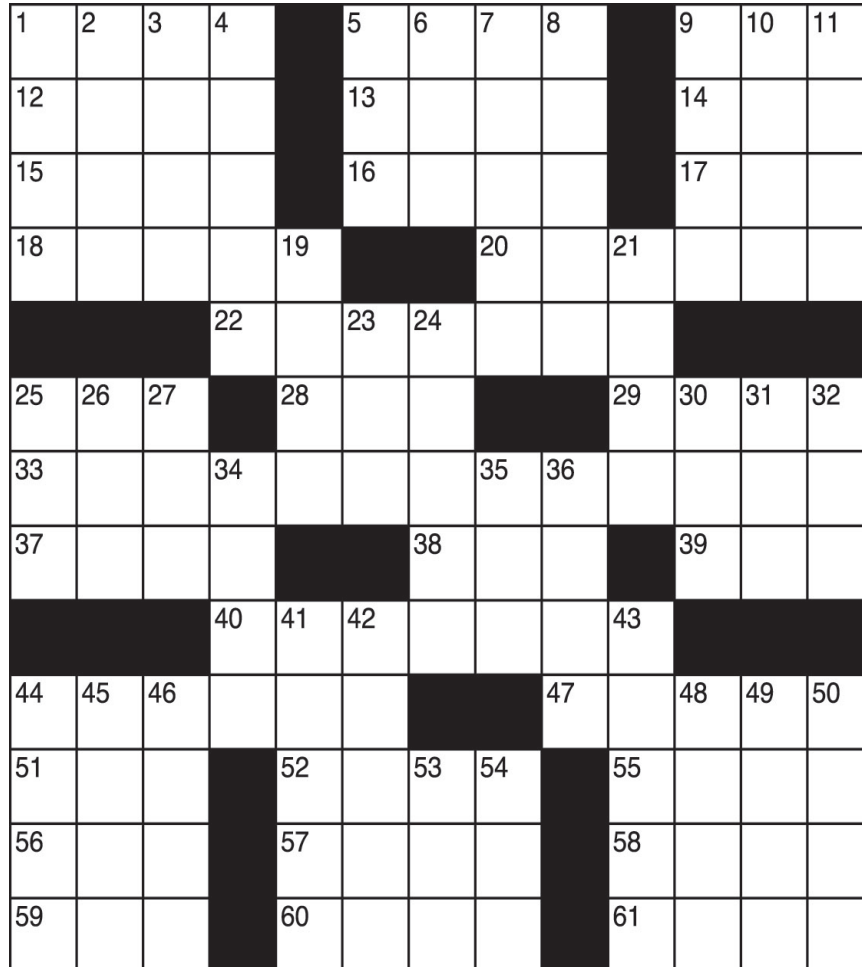
CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Punching tools
5. Doctor's portion
9. Plump
12. Boutique
13. Show boredom
14. Point-scoring serve
15. Shoddy
16. _____ out (barely makes)
17. Feminine pronoun
18. Gown fabric
20. Cleaned, in a way
22. Refined
25. Cloth scrap
28. Romance
29. Open
33. Plug-in choo-choo: 2 wds.
37. President's no
38. Near the bottom
39. Honey insect
40. Severe
44. Teetertotter
47. Frosty
51. Yes, to Popeye
52. Cloth belt
55. Fish story
56. Styling aid
57. Spear point
58. Balanced
59. Station-break airings
60. Recipe direction
61. Briny expanses

DOWN

1. Poisonous snakes
2. Horse command
3. Booty
4. Parsley portion
5. Tint
6. Majestic tree
7. Native of Stockholm
8. Develop
9. Quick
10. Feel pain
11. Mounted on a golf peg
19. Politician Gingrich
21. Slanderous remark
23. Neither's companion
24. Labors
25. Vroom the engine
26. Brewery order
27. TV's "_____ Smart"
30. Grab
31. "_____ Hard" (Willis film)
32. Single unit
34. Atlantic fishes
35. Canvas bed
36. Double
41. Grate
42. Look forward to
43. Quotes
44. History
45. Observed
46. Slithery swimmers
48. Tar
49. Urgent request
50. Yearnings
53. Go down the slope
54. "_____ Alibi"

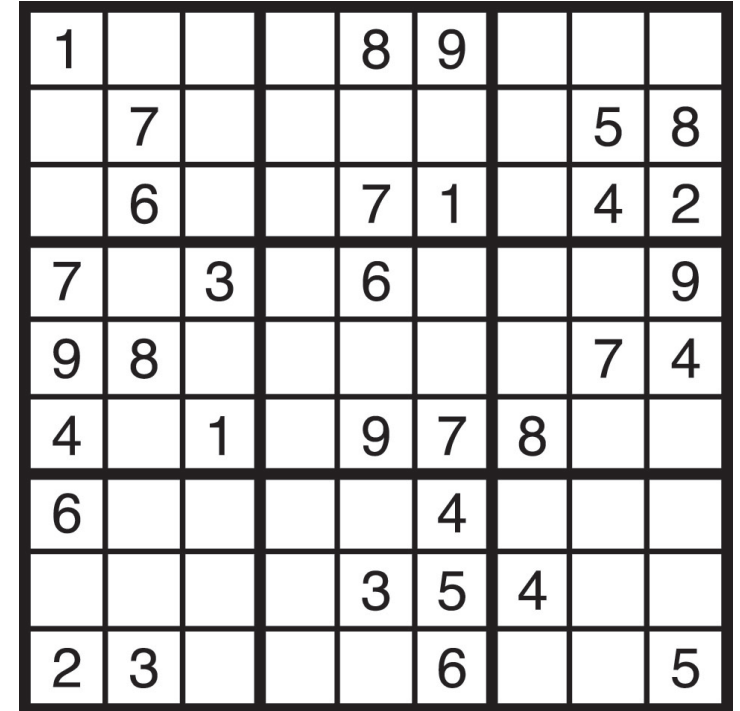


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SOLUTION



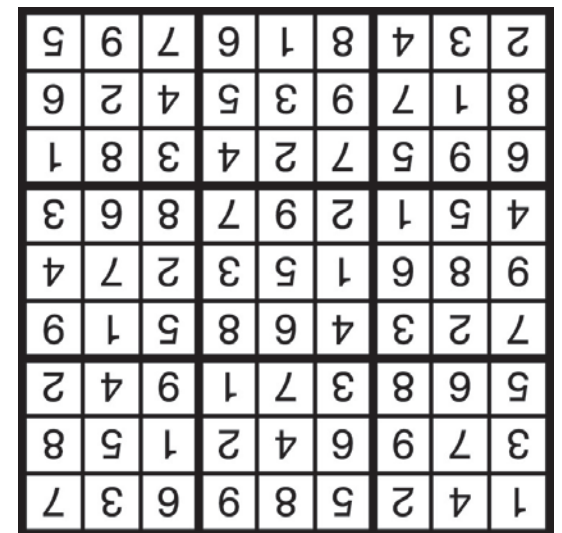
SUDOKU



HOW TO PLAY:

Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once. Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: you must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column or 3x3 box.

SOLUTION



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