

Title: **House panel discusses college maintenance**
Author:
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House panel discusses college maintenance

COLUMBIA (AP) — A House budget panel chairman is proposing borrowing roughly \$200 million to pay for maintenance at South Carolina's public colleges.

Republican Rep. Jim Merrill of Charleston said Wednesday his subcommittee will introduce the proposal when the budget debate moves to the House floor next month.

GOP Gov. Nikki Haley has staunchly opposed issuing a

bond bill for colleges.

Merrill said he, too, opposes funding new construction but contends the state has a responsibility to prevent existing buildings from falling apart. He said if that happens, taxpayers will pay anyway, either through the state budget or higher tuition.

Merrill said colleges included in the package would have to meet certain conditions, such as freezing or lowering tuition. He said the state's debt won't increase because old debt is being paid off.

Title: **S.C. joins cybercrime fight after data breach**

Author:

Size: 19.06 square inch

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S.C. joins cybercrime fight after data breach

COLUMBIA (AP) — The state Revenue Department's massive 2012 data breach gave Gov. Nikki Haley a first-hand lesson on the need for efforts to counter cybercrime, she said Wednesday.

"Today, there is never a day I don't think about cybersecurity," Haley told academics and business, government and military officials who gathered to kick off a new, state-wide program in cooperation with the University of South Carolina.

Hackers stole the Revenue Department's electronically filed tax returns from 3.8 million adults and 700,000 businesses in 2012. The theft included the unencrypted Social Security numbers of the adults and their 1.9 million dependents.

Last week, the state's Medicaid agency announced it had begun implementing safeguards to secure the personal health information of roughly 1 million residents, who were shown to be at risk of cybertheft due to the agency's 4-decade-old computer system and poor safety measures.

"Those that attack are patient and those that attack never stop trying," Haley said,

adding that she hoped the consortium's work will put South Carolina "at the forefront of cybersecurity."

Haley joined University President Harris Pastides to unveil the formation of "SC Cyber," the group drawn from state government, academia, the South Carolina National Guard and the state's leading industries.

Other organizations involved in the effort are the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Clemson University and businesses such as IBM, Boeing and AT&T.

The initiative's goal will be to secure the state's critical cyber infrastructure by training government workers, business people and small business owners about security techniques to counter cybercriminals and prevent the theft of vital information, the officials said.

Pastides said the university will add new courses in computer security for its students, internships to train them and opportunities for research and development work for its faculty.

Pastides said he believed there are thousands of job openings in the state that can be filled through the coursework and training the group will offer in coming years.

Title: **Race and the Confederate battle flag**
 Author:
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Race and the Confederate battle flag

A black and white issue

Tensions and headlines around race in America have spiked in recent years, and South Carolina has been in the middle of the firestorm. Following the horrific, racially motivated slayings of nine churchgoers in Charleston last year, Gov. Nikki Haley led the effort to remove the Confederate Flag from the grounds of the South Carolina Capitol, sending a message across the country.

Amidst unspeakable pain caused by historic divisions, South Carolinians of all political stripes and skin colors joined hands, shed tears, and listened to one another. The goodwill and civility demonstrated around one of South Carolina's darkest hours stands as a model for the nation and world of what it means to listen to and consider another person's views,

to prioritize respect and understanding.

In honor of Black History Month, I asked Listen First Project supporter Alan Jeffries to share his perspective on the Confederate Flag and race in America as a black man. In the spirit of Listen First, Alan sat down with a white friend for a candid discussion on how each of their races and backgrounds consistently colors their view of the world.

Alan told me that his inclination had been to see only the negative perspective on the Confederate Flag. As he prepared to "preach my sermon" to his white friend, a funny thing happened. "I found myself considering a different perspective, a different view and the possibility of what the flag could mean to someone other than a black person. ... I marveled at how a

flag, to me, had one meaning but meant something totally different to someone else."

Alan and his friend talked about the "inherent bias we both have on race and the obvious perspective divide based on our life's experiences." He counsels that a conversation of race "has to begin with a recognition of everyone's own racial bias, as well as recognition of our limitations in fully understanding what it means to be the race of another." But these hurdles "should not preclude opportunities for people of all walks to stop and listen – to fully engage in this conversation of race."

South Carolina is a state notable for its rich racial diversity, which can be an asset or liability. It's our choice. This month and beyond, may we build on the success of last

year and follow Alan's lead.

We must listen to each other, gain a better understanding of what makes us beautifully different and yet so similar. Judge one another not by the color of skin but by the content of character. Only then will our state and nation fully heal.

(Pearce Godwin is founder and president of the global non-profit Listen First Project (ListenFirstProject.org). He worked in the U.S. Senate and as a national political consultant before returning home to the Carolinas, dividing his time between Raleigh and Georgetown. Pearce now works in marketing while promoting civil discourse by the transformative power of listening. Email him at Pearce@ListenFirstProject.org.)

Listen First



with Pearce Godwin

Title: **Headliners**
 Author: By Max Hrenda mhrenda@southstrandnews.com
 Size: 126.94 square inch
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Headliners

Trump, Rubio visit Pawleys on eve of primary

BY MAX HREND

mhrenda@southstrandnews.com

Before going on to post the two strongest showings in Saturday's Republican presidential preference primary, Donald Trump and Sen. Marco Rubio stopped in Pawleys Island as part of their last-ditch campaign swings through South Carolina.

On Friday, Feb. 19, Trump stopped by Pawleys Plantation, 70 Tanglewood Drive, while Rubio visited Lowcountry Preparatory School, 300 Blue Stem Drive.

Following their visits to Pawleys Island, Trump went on to win the primary after earning 32.5 percent of the total vote, while Rubio finished second with 22.48 percent.

Organizers said about 1,300 people descended on Pawleys Plantation for a chance to see the Republican frontrunner, but only about 700 were allowed inside the building per the fire code.

After he was introduced by Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, Trump perpetuated his campaign theme — that the U.S. is in dire straits.

"We are in such trouble as a country," Trump said. "We owe \$19 trillion. We have wars that we can't win. We can't beat ISIS. Can you imagine Gen. MacArthur saying we can't beat ISIS? He'd have ISIS wiped out in about half a day."

Trump touched on multiple issues

before taking questions at his town hall meeting: the pharmaceutical industry, national security, veteran's affairs and building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

Trump also discussed his opponents during the forum, singling out Texas Sen. Ted Cruz for his campaign communication that Dr. Ben Carson had dropped out of the race prior to the Iowa caucus.

"If the Republican party had any guts, they would have terminated Cruz from that election because, honestly, he cheated like a dog," Trump said. "He holds up the Bible and then

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Trump, Rubio visit Pawleys Island

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he cheats. What he did with Carson was a disgrace.

"These politicians are bad. These are dishonest people."

While he stuck to his major talking points, Trump also used his time in Pawleys Island to make some new ones, as well. It was during that forum that Trump first called on his supporters to boycott tech giant Apple until it gives in to a U.S. Department of Justice demand to create a "back door" into the iPhone of one of the San Bernardino shooters.

"We've got to get to the bottom of it," Trump said, "and you're not going to get to the bottom of it unless you use common sense. So I want to tell you, boycott Apple until

such time as they give that information. I think that's a great idea."

Like many of his previous appearances, Trump's visit to Pawleys Island, and subsequent victory in the primary, were both lauded and criticized. Pawleys Island resident Vicki Davis said she voted for Trump, and added she was glad to see him emerge triumphant in Saturday's primary.

"I think we need a businessman instead of politicians," Davis said. "There have been too many promises broken. I think he deserves a chance."

Litchfield resident Chris Steinmuller took an alternative view to Trump's candidacy. Steinmuller said he doesn't believe Trump on issues of veterans affairs because of comments he made about

Arizona Sen. and noted POW John McCain. During an appearance in Ames, Iowa, on

July 18, Trump said McCain was "not a war hero" because he was captured and, "I like people who weren't captured."

Though Steinmuller was outside during Trump's meeting Friday, he said he heard him discuss veterans affairs over a loudspeaker.

"I did hear him say, we love our vets and we are going to do so much for our vets," Steinmuller said. "Then I wanted to bring up McCain. ... I would have added, who would want to serve with you as commander-in-chief knowing that, when you're captured, you're a loser."

By contrast, Rubio's visit was less controversial, though

it may have come close to not happening at all. Rubio's campaign was scheduled to visit Lowcountry Prep at 11:45 a.m. Friday but, at about 11:30, staffers said the event was canceled because of mechanical difficulties with Rubio's plane. Within the hour, however, the campaign rescheduled the event for that evening and, at about 10 o'clock, Rubio, along with Gov. Nikki Haley and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, met with a crowd of about 725 supporters inside the school's gymnasium.

Rubio began by thanking those in attendance for returning to see him 10 hours after his scheduled time. Rather than focus on other Republican candidates, he took aim at the tenets of the

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Democratic party, saying the party's policies aren't in line with what Americans want.

"It's not that the people on the left don't love America; it's that they're wrong," Rubio said. "The things they believe in will rob us of the things that make America special. It's that the things that they stand for make us more like the rest of the world, and we don't want to be like the rest of the world."

Rubio went on to denounce the policies of Democratic presidential candidates Hill-

ary Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders, but he said he would stop short of attacking his fellow Republican candidates. Despite pointing out those differences, Rubio said that, if elected, he would represent the country as a whole, regardless of political affiliation. "I will work hard for and love all Americans, even the ones who don't love us back," he said.

While many may remember Friday's event as the night they saw a presidential candidate — or, perhaps, the president — for 18-year-old Pawleys Island native Bobby

Walters, it may have foreshadowed a career in politics. Walters, a political science student at University of South Carolina, became involved in the Rubio campaign about a week before joining the candidate at Lowcountry Prep. During that appearance, it was Walters who led the invocation and introduced Scott, Haley and Rubio to the crowd.

"I want to be a politician," Walters said. "... This was my chance to show people this is what I am and I can do this. If people see me up there, a local, going up there and talking

comfortably about Marco Rubio, maybe that will change their view of who he is as a candidate."

Despite Rubio finishing behind Trump Saturday, Walters' father, Alan — former Georgetown County GOP chair and head of Rubio's grassroots campaign in the county — said his son thought "it's no coincidence that Rubio beat Cruz statewide by 1,091 votes and that the margin in Georgetown County was 1,102."



PHOTOS BY MAX HRENDA/SOUTH STRAND NEWS

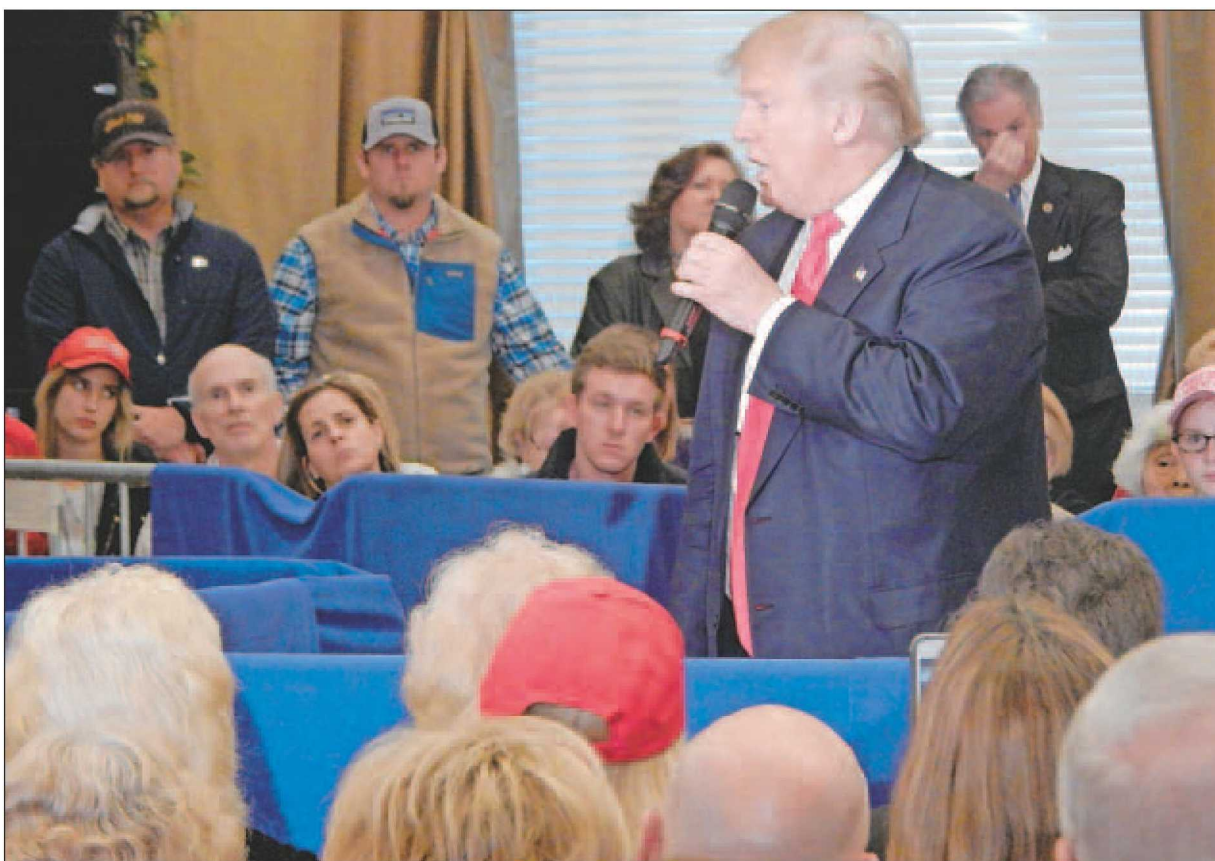
Sen. Marco Rubio addresses a crowd of more than 700 supporters at Lowcountry Preparatory School, about 10 hours after a mechanical failure on his plane caused him to miss a scheduled event there.

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Author: By Max Hrenda mhrenda@southstrandnews.com

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Donald Trump discusses the treatment of law enforcement officers during his town hall meeting at Pawleys Plantation Friday, Feb. 19.

FOLKS ABOUT TOWN

Corey Wise has joined Thomas & Hutton as a designer.

Courtney Fisher has joined Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Columbia as a case manager.

Columbia city manager Teresa Wilson and Chief William "Skip" Holbrook have been selected as members of the 9th Midlands Class of The Riley Institute.

Malinda Rutledge Carlisle has joined Senior Matters Extended Services as director of community relations.

GWA, Inc. was presented an Engineering

Excellence Award at the ACEC-SC annual Engineering Excellence Awards ceremony.

Governor Nikki Haley will be presented the Idealism in Action Award at the Ripples of Hope Gala February 25.

Palmetto Health's Weight Management Center has received a three year Comprehensive Center designation by the Metabolic Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP).

Ben Tribble and Dalton Prickett have received recognition as MBSAQIP verified sur-

geons.

Thomas Schultz has joined Palmetto Heart.

Tony Thomas has been designated a senior life director of the National Association of Home Builders.

Hope Walker has been appointed as executive director of the South Carolina Republican Party by chairman Matt Moore. Walker is the first female executive director in the history of the South Carolina Republican Party.

Jenny Cunningham, West Columbia city administrator, will retire effective March 1.

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Corey Wise

Malinda Rutledge
 Carlisle

Governor Nikki Haley

Thomas Schultz

Tony Thomas

Hope Walker



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR
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STATE NEEDS TO STAND UP TO
REPUBLICANS, VOTE FOR TRUMP

The proverb "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" still applies. Nikki Haley, S.C.'s Sikh-Hindu governor, opened a Pandora's Box of cultural genocide last June against all things Southern. Since her Columbia appearance with Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, building, street and highway names have changed, accompanied by flag bans, monument removals and efforts to remove Southern names from military bases and high schools.

Now most of the remaining Republican presidential candidates

are soliciting Haley's endorsement to thwart the "ogre" Donald Trump. Last week, Ted Cruz issued a press report appealing for her support. Cruz is a savvy, Harvard-educated lawyer. Pandering to Nikki Haley, he has ob-

viously decided to throw S.C.'s heritage voters under the bus, hoping they will be too dull to see through his ploy.

We are not a confederacy of dunces. We recognize a vote for Cruz is a vote for Haley. A vote for Trump is a vote against Haley, Graham and the Republican establishment.

Haley and the RNC, aliens to our history and traditions, have dishonored, desecrated and discarded the memories of our noble ancestors as rubbish by the roadside.

The faint of heart, Eliot's "hollow men," who have only a weak-kneed nostalgic attachment to our heritage, can vote for Cruz, Bush or Rubio and make excuses for Haley et al. But this is the time for intelligent Southerners to stand up and shout "enough!" to the Republicans. In no uncertain terms, this means a vote for Trump.

RICHARD T. HINES
Mayesville

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Senators get plenty of choices on spending road money

BY JEFFREY COLLINS
The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — As South Carolina senators prepare to debate how much extra money to give to the state's highways and bridges, the leader of the roads agencies has been careful to give lawmakers plenty of options while not pushing them too hard in any direction.

Department of Transportation Secretary Christy Hall has given senators a host of options, from spending just \$65 million extra a year to get the pavement on the interstates up to good condition while doing no bridge work or expansion to \$800 million in new money that would attack congestion, widen more than 150 miles of major highways and get rid of old bridges.

One PowerPoint slide she likes to show lawmakers has nearly a dozen options on how she could spend whatever extra money lawmakers can find.

The Senate started debate on a roads bill Thursday before adjourning for the weekend.

Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman told his colleagues they could spend most of next week on it too.



LEATHERMAN

The proposal getting the most attention on the Senate floor would raise the gas tax by 12 cents a gallon over three years and increase or add a number of other fees. In five years, an estimated \$723 million extra would be put into roads, nearly reaching Hall's most expensive option.

But the idea only cuts income and other taxes by \$400 million over that period, and Gov. Nikki Haley and other conservative lawmakers want an even swap. Supporters of the amendment say they factored in that a third of the gas tax is paid by out-of-state drivers who need no tax break, but some lawmakers don't think the basis behind that estimate has been proven.

Reforming the DOT's board and the State Infrastructure Bank, which helps borrow money for expensive projects, will also be discussed, with conservatives again fearing the proposal doesn't go far enough to give the governor more control of the agency.

If lawmakers give the DOT more money without reform "we're going to see hundreds of millions of dollars going to rural areas where it is not needed," said Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort.

For her part, Hall promises to use whatever money she gets wisely. But she also is carefully pointing out that the state's roads are reaching a cri-

sis. "The fear I have is that we have waited too long," Hall told lawmakers last week during hours of testimony.

She used what was supposed to be a repaving project on Interstate 85 to make her point. Tests showed the foundation of the road had crumbled from years of neglect, adding about \$10 million to what was supposed to be a \$48 million project. Hall said she fears a similar problem on an upcoming resurfacing of Interstate 26 between Newberry and Columbia.

Sen. Ray Cleary, a Republican and Murrells Inlet dentist who has been pushing for more money for roads for years, likened it to a patient who can floss or brush, wait and have a cavity filled, or wait even longer and need a crown or more extensive dental work.

"I can fix it for \$100, \$300 or \$3,000, depending on when you see me," Cleary said.

The one thing all lawmakers agree on is something must be done. With all the attention on interstates, Hall worried the primary roads that carry nearly half the state's traffic are falling apart quickly and about to reach a crisis. Only 20 percent of pavement on them is in good condition.

"It's been neglected, and it's at a point where it's going to take complete reconstruction," Hall said.

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Bills would raise minimum wage, repeal right to work law

Have virtually no chance of passing

COLUMBIA (AP) — Proposals to raise the minimum wage in South Carolina and repeal an anti-union law have virtually no chance of passing in the Republican-dominated Legislature, but Democrats hope to spark a debate as the nation's attention turns to the first-in-the-South primary state.

Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, who sponsored both bills, said it's time to discuss living wages in a state that ranks 46th in child poverty, 48th in per capita income and last in union membership.

"We keep hearing all these glowing numbers about how great things are," she said of jobs touted by GOP Gov. Nikki Haley. "Yet we get reports that show we're ranking in the bottom I don't see why we can't at least start talking about the reality of what it means to work in South Carolina on one hand and still be eligible for assistance on the other."

Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg, held a news conference on the bills last week after a House panel officially adjourned debate on both. A second hearing is not expected.

One bill would set the state's minimum wage at

\$10.10 an hour. South Carolina is among 21 states where employers can pay as low as \$7.25 an hour, the federal minimum since 2009.

Proponents call \$10.10 a start. That's the minimal pay for federal contractors, as per President Obama's 2014 executive order.

"We'll continue to fight for \$15" an hour, said Rachel Nelson of Charleston, who makes \$9 an hour at Hardee's after 10 years as a fast food worker.

The mother of three children, ages 8 to 12, told the House panel she'd like to get off public assistance, but her paychecks make it impossible. "With my last check, I was only able to pay my light bill," Nelson said. "Trying to keep a roof over our heads is a constant stresser in my life."

More than 2,600 state employees make less than \$10.10 an hour, or about 4 percent of the state-paid workforce. Just more than half of those employees are considered temporary, according to the Department of Administration. It noted the numbers could be higher because public colleges aren't required to send the agency data on temporary workers.

Rep. Todd Atwater, who sits on the subcommittee, contends raising the minimum wage is bad for the economy because it increases products' cost and eliminates entry-level

jobs often filled by high school and college students.

"It hurts the workers they're trying to help," said Atwater, R-Lexington.

The answer, he said, is better training, so students graduate from school with skills that enable them to get a higher-paying job.

Cobb-Hunter's other bill would repeal the state's right-to-work law.

About half of states have such laws, which means unions can't force employees across an entire worksite to pay membership dues as a condition of employment.

Haley, who frequently lambasts unions, considers the state's low union membership an economic development tool.

About 41,000 people — or just 2.1 percent of South Carolina's workers — belong to unions, leapfrogging North Carolina in 2015 to rank last nationwide, according to a January report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Seth Holzopfel, with the International Association of Firefighters in Myrtle Beach, said the law should be renamed the "right to work for less" — contending it's made South Carolina a virtual sweatshop — or "right to free-load," as it allows people in a union-covered job to receive benefits without paying dues.



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¹⁴⁸ Council Approves Purchase of Motor Grader

After months of debate, Edgefield County Council finally approved the purchase of a new motor grader for the County at their regularly scheduled monthly meeting, Tuesday night, Feb. 2. The topic took center stage early in the meeting with representatives from two of the three bidding companies addressing Council during the meeting's first public comments section. Reiterating the specifications of their bid and highlighting points of their product, Zack Holly with Border Equipment told Council, "We would like your business." CAT representative Dale Ackerson reminded Council that his company's bid was the lowest and said, "We're here to support you just like we have for the past 14 years." Art Diggs also addressed Council on the

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Purchase

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matter and reminded that the difference between the bids that Council has thus far been debating was \$6,000. He told Council that he thought they should be "very careful" in taking the high bid especially when all recommendations made to Council from staff had been for the lower bid. In their subsequent discussion of the matter, Councilman Albert Talbert told Council that he had previously voted to accept the higher bid, the John Deere motor grader, but after talking with the County's road maintenance supervisor and factoring in the low maintenance cost associated with the current CAT equipment used by the County and its recommendation by staff, he was now lending his support to the lower bid; the CAT motor grader. After yet again much discussion, Council voted 3-2 to accept the lowest bid from Blanchard Machinery for \$222,017. Councilwomen Betty Butler and Genia Blackwell voted against the measure.

Council did hold two public hearings; one on an ordinance allowing for the purchase of a general obligation bond not to exceed \$2 million for Edgefield County Hospital and one allowing for the sale of property on Railroad Ave. to Beth Padgett. There were no public comments, however, and the hospital ordinance passed its third hearing unanimously. During the subsequent second reading regarding the property sale, Council was informed that Padgett would also like to purchase an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ acre at the rear of her property to even up her "jagged" property line. This property was described as swampy and not able to be built upon. Council was told local real estate agent John Pettigrew had been asked to give an estimated value of the property and based on information he provided, it was recommended that Council ask \$2,000 for all the property Padgett wished to purchase. Council was also informed Padgett would be in charge of covering survey costs associated with the sale. Interim Ad-

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Administrator Roger LeDuc recommended that Council approve the second reading of the ordinance as it was initially presented, however, saying that the additional property and the terms associated therein could be added to the ordinance for its third reading. In the end, Council accepted this recommendation and passed the measure unanimously.

Council approved a proclamation recognizing Mar. 26, 2016 as End Racism Day. The move comes in response from a request of the SC Human Affairs Commission and will be presented to Gov. Nikki Haley on Mar. 21.

The day is expected to become an annual observation. Council also issued a resolution honoring the Edgefield County Amateur Radio Club. (See our related article and

picture.)

President and CEO of the Economic Development Partnership, Will Williams, spoke to Council as a guest speaker and praised them for keeping millage rates the same. "Y'all have been good stewards," he said, and called their fiscal conservativeness "one of the strong suits" in attracting industry. He went on to say that the existing industries in the county "appear to be doing well" and that some are planning to expand. Williams told Council that Dec. 2014 saw unemployment at 6.5% in the county. However, the rate had dropped to 6.2% for Dec. 2015, and this was in spite of the closing of Urban Outfitters. He said that that meant 200 more people were working and 13 less people were unemployed. "We have a

very good work force in this county," Williams said. He went on to tell Council that while no industry has yet committed to coming to the vacant Urban Outfitters facility, the building has been getting "a lot of activity." Calling this a "silver lining", Williams said, "The more traffic you get, the more opportunity you have to relocate there." Williams told Council that he will be continuing to position the county for new growth by working with the Economic Development Committee. He informed that the committee will be coming back to Council with recommendations.

In the final public speaking

portion of the meeting, Council was again addressed by Scott Cooper regarding refugee resettlement. He said that his stance on the issue had nothing to do with being uncompassionate or inhospitable but was about understanding the financial burdens. He asked Council to pay close attention to the "six figure salaries" of the heads of the charities involved in this issue and urged them to find a way to partner with other counties to "push back" against resettlement. He said that an "all hands on deck effort" was needed to stop it. Max Shanks also spoke to Council and updated them on the Edgefield Preservation Association's cleanup efforts at the old chain gang site. Shanks told, "There are a lot of people buried out there," but said that of the 95 burials that have occurred since 1972, only 30 graves could be located. He appealed to the public for help in locating the other graves at the site.

In his comments, Interim Administrator Roger LeDuc told Council that Roger Ingle was been hired to fill the new position of Business Development Manager. He also gave Council a layout

of what the Kneece Building will look like after renovations. He said that after his upcoming meeting with architects, the County should be able to get a cost for the project at which point they can decide if they can move forward with the project. "I don't want Council to move forward unless

you can afford it," LeDuc said. If funds are determined to be available, the project would go to bid in June. LeDuc reminded Council of the budget workshop on Mar. 22. "How much money are we going to get from the state," is what LeDuc told Council is the biggest unknown regarding the budget. Local governments have been told that the Local Government Fund will be fully funded for the first time since 1999.

In his closing comments, Chairman Campbell reminded Council that this was LeDuc's last meeting as Interim Administrator. "Virtually everybody in Edgefield County knows Roger LeDuc... and they know him for all the good reasons," Campbell said. He went on to thank LeDuc for "guiding the ship with expertise and innovation" and reminded that LeDuc will stay on with the County for a few months to help with the transition. Campbell said that LeDuc was "more than just an interim administrator" saying that he "takes the reins" and "always finds a way to save money." He called LeDuc "an answer to our prayers" and said, "Once again, he did not let us down." Council members then took turns thanking LeDuc, describing him as "accessible" and a "great asset".

With no further business to discuss, Council adjourned.

Tiffani Ireland



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¹⁴⁸ Suspended county coroner Nisbet resigns

BY JENNA-LEY HARRISON
jharrison@journalscene.com

Suspended Dorchester County Coroner Christopher Nisbet has resigned from office, according to the county's human resources director Leonitta Turner.

Turner said he resigned on Tuesday.

Nisbet declined to comment on Wednesday.

Gov. Nikki Haley suspended Nisbet Oct. 1, the same day a grand jury indicted him on a misconduct in office charge.

The charge stemmed from allegations he pulled a gun on his unarmed neighbor Leroy Fulton in August, then used racial slurs while police tried to sort out the situation.

Nisbet told police at the time Fulton had pulled a gun on a repo man, an allegation Fulton denied.



Nisbet

According to police reports, John Mauldin, went to Fulton's home to legally repossess a vehicle. Mauldin told police Fulton threatened to kill him if he didn't get off his property.

Nisbet said he witnessed the incident from his home and used his county vehicle to chase Fulton to an area near Doty Park, reports said.

Nisbet didn't comply with initial police commands to drop his weapon, investigators said, and police noted the smell of alcohol on Nisbet's breath, but police didn't charge him that night.

Nisbet wasn't charged in the case until after a SLED investigation.

A few days before the suspension, officials with the South Carolina Chapter of National Action Network held a press conference requesting Haley remove Nisbet from office.

In the weeks after his suspension, he told the Journal Scene he still planned to run for re-

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Nisbet

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election in November.

"I have no intentions of resigning because I did what I believe was the right thing to do. ...I was not acting as the coroner; I was doing what any citizen should do if they witnessed what I did," he said then.

He even took to Facebook to defend his actions, stating in

a post prior to his indictment that he took action against Fulton "in order to not have to work as coroner that night" and attend to another possible homicide scene, during a year when the county witnessed record-breaking homicide figures.

After his arrest, Nisbet was released on a \$5,000 bond because officials said they felt he wasn't a flight risk or danger to the community.

He faces up to 10 years in prison on the charge, but a

trial date has yet to be determined. Nisbet served in the coroner's office since 1991, when he worked under then-coroner Jeff Rogers. Nisbet was elected to office in 1996 and said he handled more than 11,000 deaths over the years.

Chief Magistrate Court Judge Katrina Patton has been serving as interim coroner since October. She'll fill the position until the election. At least four community members have announced plans to run for the county seat this year.