

Title: **State failed to examine college projects**  
 Author: AVERY G. WILKS THE STATE  
 Size: 46.81 column inches  
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



# State failed to examine college projects

AVERY G. WILKS  
 THE STATE

COLUMBIA - Over a 14-month span, the S.C. Commission on Higher Education rubber-stamped some \$534 million in college building projects without adequate vetting, its leaders have told state lawmakers.

And, without more state dollars to hire analysts to help evaluate projects and programs, the commission says it will continue to provide sub-par oversight of South Carolina's 33 public colleges and technical schools.

"If your will is to have somebody properly vet, we're not doing the service that ... you expect," commission chairman Tim Hofferth told a panel of House budget writers Tuesday.

The commission wants an added \$1.85 million to beef up its operations. However, that request encountered push back in a contentious, three-hour hearing with House members.

Brian White of Anderson, chairman of the House budget-writing committee, said he "kind of laughed" when he saw the commission's request. Money is tight, the Republican said, and the state has other problems to address, including fixing its underfunded pension system and finding an answer to a 1993 school-equity lawsuit.

## 'No real teeth'

In theory, the commission oversees South Carolina's public colleges and universities. However, historically, the commission has been weak - by legislative design. Now, legislators have grown frustrated at the commission's shortcomings, including its inability to curb rising college costs.

Friction between legislators and the commission rose to the forefront last year, when lawmakers ignored the commission's objections to a stadium expansion at Coastal Carolina University.

On four occasions, the commission rejected the \$32 million project as too expensive - the first time it had rejected a college proposal. Unfazed, Coastal went over the commission's head to lawmakers. They approved the project, exempted Coastal from getting the commission's approval and, then, overrode Gov. Nikki Haley's veto.

"The CHE has been an entity with perceived authority over the state's higher education system, yet it has no real teeth to provide the oversight," Hofferth said.

This week, commission leaders presented lawmakers with three choices: Give us the money we need to do our job, change our job description to remove some responsibilities we have neglected, or do nei-

ther and live with the consequences.

The commission has 47 full- and part-time staffers and operates on a \$361.4 million-a-year budget. However, almost all of that money simply passes through the agency on its way to S.C. colleges, including scholarship money sent to recipients. The commission spends less than \$2.6 million on its staff and other operating expenses.

## Can't make 'heads or tails of it'

Given its budget constraints, the commission currently fails to complete 58 of the 160 tasks it is required to do by state law, its leaders told lawmakers. Hiring enough employees to do all those tasks could take another \$1.85 million a year, they added.

Among the neglected responsibilities: intensive reviews of colleges and their programs to measure the state's return on investment, and data-driven vetting of capital projects, including classroom buildings and stadiums.

The commission also lacks the manpower to analyze tomes of raw financial data and draw conclusions about a college's financial stability, its leaders said.

With that knowledge, the commission could alert legislators of disturbing trends, identify financial crises before they happen and ask tougher questions

of college leaders looking to take on expensive building projects, said Hofferth, a Chapin businessman appointed to the commission by Gov. Haley in 2015.

The commission failed to detect snowballing financial problems at S.C. State University, for example. And Hofferth said the commission does not have the tools to detect potential financial problems at other schools.

Better oversight would help protect against waste and keep colleges from passing on the costs of unnecessary projects to students and taxpayers, Hofferth said.

"Somebody needs to do this, whether you give it to the CHE or whether the Legislature is going to do it," Hofferth said.

"Somebody needs to do it to protect the taxpayers and the families. ... If not, the costs are staggering."

## 'A little out of focus'

This week, lawmakers questioned parts of the commission's budget request, including \$1.3 million to hire 12 analysts.

White wondered aloud why the commission cannot get the information it needs by working closer with school leaders.

"All you've got to do is go have a conversation with folks. It's free," White said. "They've all got a 10-year plan."

Title: **Poll: Pope leads field in scramble to succeed Mulvaney in Congress**  
 Author: BRISTOW MARCHANT THE STATE  
 Size: 35.03 column inches  
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



# Poll: Pope leads field in scramble to succeed Mulvaney in Congress

## State lawmaker not in race but tops 3 potential opponents in 5th District

**BRISTOW MARCHANT**  
THE STATE

The early leader in a probable special election for South Carolina's 5th District congressional seat is a candidate who isn't even in the race, a poll says.

State Rep. Tommy Pope, R-York, has a lead over three potential challengers for the seat now held by Mick Mulvaney, slated to join the Trump Administration as director of the Office of Management and Budget, according to the poll.

Officially, U.S. Rep. Mulvaney, R-Indian Land, hasn't stepped down from Congress yet. But there already is jockeying to see who will replace him.

A poll, released Friday by the Kansas City-based Remington Research Group, asked likely Republican primary voters in the 5th District for their opinion of four potential GOP candidates in the Republican district.

Only one, state Rep. Ralph Norman, R-York, officially has declared for any special election, expected after Mulvaney is confirmed by the Senate.

Remington found state House Speaker Pro Tempore Pope had the tentative support of 25 percent of likely GOP primary voters in the district. Norman had 9 percent support, tied with former SC GOP chairman Chad Connelly.

Rep. Gary Simrill, R-

York, had the support of 6 percent of voters. Simrill, the state House majority leader, has said he doesn't plan to run.

Pope does not seem inclined to run for Congress. "I'm discussing it further with my family, although I continue to believe that here in South Carolina is where I can best serve," he said Friday.

Pope previously had said he planned to run for governor in 2018. However, those plans could be upset if Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster becomes governor — when Gov. Nikki Haley becomes U.S. ambassador to the United Nations — and runs for a full term as an incumbent.

Remington director Titus Bond said his firm polled the race because it is one of the few upcoming 2017 special elections that will require a primary. The firm picked four potential Republican candidates based on media reports on the district.

Pope would begin the race with a name-recognition advantage. He was the lead prosecutor in the infamous Susan Smith child murder case in 1995.

But most likely GOP voters are far from making up their minds, according to Remington.

Fifty-two percent said they were undecided in the race. Fifty-six percent said they have no opinion of Pope, and 70 percent have no opinion of Norman.

"Half of likely Republican voters are undecided, which gives an opening to another candidate," Bond said. "But a double-digit lead (for Pope) at this point is significant."

The poll was conducted Jan. 7-8 using a mix of 80 percent automated and 20 percent live-to-cell phone calls. It reached 778 likely Republican primary voters, Bond said.

No date has been set for the special election.

**"A double-digit lead (for Pope) at this point is significant."**

POLLSTER TITUS BOND

Title: **Governor decrees it: A day to celebrate Clemson**  
Author:  
Size: 12.09 column inches  
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



# Governor decrees it: A day to celebrate Clemson

Just before the national champions are set to take their victory parade, Gov. Nikki Haley has made Saturday an official celebration.

On Friday, Haley, a Clemson grad, officially proclaimed Saturday as "Clemson Tigers National Football Champions Day" in South Carolina.

The Tigers will hold a victory parade Saturday in Clemson after their 35-31 victory over Alabama in the national championship game, securing their first national football title in 35 years.

In her proclamation, Haley "encourages all South Carolinians to join together in congratulating the Clemson Tigers football team and Head Coach Dabo Swinney for their outstanding performance in the 2017 College Football Playoff."

"Clemson showed their heart and humility throughout the entire season," Haley said, "and in an unforgettable national championship victory, they reminded us that, with faith and hard work, anything is possible."

— BRISTOW MARCHANT



Title: Poll:5th District race open, butthere is aleader
Author: BY BRISTOWMARCHANT bmarchant@thestate.com
Size: 36.89 column inches
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Poll: 5th District race open, but there is a leader

The early leader in a probable special election for S.C.'s 5th District congressional seat is a candidate who isn't even in the race, a poll says.

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT
bmarchant@thestate.com

The early leader in a probable special election for South Carolina's 5th District congressional seat



Mulvaney

is a candidate who isn't even in the race, a poll says. State Rep. Tommy Pope, R-York, has a lead over



Norman

three potential challengers for the seat now held by Mick Mulvaney, slated to join the Trump



Pope

Officially, U.S. Rep. Mulvaney, R-Indian Land, hasn't stepped down from Congress yet. But there already is jockeying to see

Administration as director of the Office of Management and Budget, according to the poll.

who will replace him.

A poll, released Friday by the Kansas City-based Remington Research Group, asked likely Republican primary voters in the 5th District for their opinion of four potential GOP candidates in the Republican district.

Only one, state Rep. Ralph Norman, R-York,

SEE POLL, 8A

FROM PAGE 3A

POLL

officially has declared for any special election, expected after Mulvaney is confirmed by the Senate.

Remington found S.C. House Speaker Pro Tempore Pope had the tentative support of 25 percent of likely GOP primary voters in the district. Norman had 9 percent support, tied with former S.C. GOP chairman Chad Connelly.

Rep. Gary Simrill, R-York, had the support of 6 percent of voters. Simrill, the S.C. House majority leader, has said he doesn't plan to run.

Pope does not seem

inclined to run for Congress. 'I'm discussing it further with my family, although I continue to believe that here in South Carolina is where I can best serve,' he said Friday.

Pope previously had said he planned to run for governor in 2018. However, those plans could be upset if Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster becomes governor - when Gov. Nikki Haley becomes U.S. ambassador to the United Nations - and runs for a full term as an incumbent.

Remington director Titus Bond said his firm

polled the race because it is one of the few upcoming 2017 special elections that will require a primary. The firm picked four potential Republican candidates based on media reports on the district.

Pope would begin the race with a name-recognition advantage. He was the lead prosecutor in the infamous Susan Smith child murder case in 1995.

But most likely GOP voters are far from making up their minds, according to Remington.

Fifty-two percent said they were undecided in the

race. Fifty-six percent said they have no opinion of Pope, and 70 percent have no opinion of Norman.

'Half of likely Republican voters are undecided, which gives an opening to another candidate,' Bond said. 'But a double-digit lead (for Pope) at this point is significant.'

The poll was conducted Jan. 7-8 using a mix of 80 percent automated and 20 percent live-to-cell phone calls. It reached 778 likely Republican primary voters, Bond said.

No date has been set for the special election.

Title: **Graham backs effort to cut money for United Nations**  
 Author: BRISTOW MARCHANT THE STATE  
 Size: 18.75 column inches  
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



# Graham backs effort to cut money for United Nations

He and Cruz tie defunding to stand on Israel

**BRISTOW MARCHANT**

THE STATE

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-SC, is teaming up with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz to introduce a bill defunding the United Nations until the Security Council repeals a resolution condemning Israeli settlements on the West Bank.

Graham and Cruz introduced the bill in the Senate on Thursday, according to a report in the Washington Examiner. If approved, the bill could cost the UN around \$8 billion annually.

"Twenty-two percent of the money to fund the UN comes

from the American taxpayer," Graham said. "I don't think it's a good investment for the American taxpayer to give money to an organization that condemns the only democracy in the Middle East."

Last month, the UN Security Council approved a resolution condemning Israel's practice of building settlements in the occupied West Bank, land Palestinians claim for their future state. The UN maintains the settlements violate international law.

The outgoing Obama administration could have vetoed the resolution but abstained on

the vote, allowing it to pass 14-0. The move attracted criticism from President-elect Donald Trump and other Republicans, including Graham. The House voted overwhelmingly last week to rebuke the UN for the Security Council vote.

"This was John Kerry and Obama taking a slap at Israel, and we're going to push back," Graham said.

The move comes only a week before Gov. Nikki Haley will appear on Capitol Hill for a confirmation hearing to become the next U.S. ambassador to the UN once Trump becomes president.

Title: **Confederate Relic Room's board not giving up**  
 Author: SEANNA ADCOX ASSOCIATED PRESS  
 Size: 70.68 column inches  
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



# Confederate Relic Room's board not giving up

## Wants taxpayer funding to expand museum

SEANNA ADCOX  
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA - The governing board of South Carolina's Confederate Relic Room isn't giving up on a \$3.6 million proposal to expand the state's military history museum and display the battle flag removed from Statehouse grounds in summer 2015.

The board voted unanimously Thursday to "vigorously advocate" for the proposal legislators shot down early last year, when a House subcommittee chairman emphatically refused to use taxpayers' money to fund any of it.

Commissioners say they believe legislators didn't understand the project's breakdown and will stress as they try again that the rebel flag display represents \$550,000 of the total price tag — a cost that includes electronic screens scrolling the names of 22,000 South Carolina soldiers killed in the Civil War.

The unanimous vote came after the museum's director suggested displaying the flag in existing office space at an estimated cost of \$200,000.

"We're mandated to exhibit it. We need to move forward and not let it sit," Allen Roberson said.

His suggestion involved combining

two offices, raising the ceiling and installing glass doors to separate the space from the main gallery. While the flag furled in July 2015 is historically significant as the last Confederate flag to fly on Statehouse grounds, it is not a military history artifact and therefore should not be displayed next to regimental flags that bear the bullet holes, gunpowder residue and bloodstains of battle, Roberson said.

Commissioner Leland Summers said that display would be a temporary solution.

"I have no qualms about having available to us other contingency plans, but we need to aggressively pursue the plan we already submitted," said Summers, commander of South Carolina's Sons of Confederate Veterans. "We don't need to sell ourselves short."

Legislators approved bringing down the rebel flag following the massacre of nine black parishioners at a historic Charleston church. The gunman sentenced to death earlier this week could be seen in photos with the flag.

The law specifically sent the flag to the Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, which has artifacts from

every war South Carolinians have fought in. A separate measure directed the museum's director to estimate costs for the flag's "appropriate, permanent, and public display."

But House leaders balked at the \$3.6 million price tag of the board's December 2015 proposal. That included \$1.1 million to expand the museum — which is located at the back of the State Museum building, through a separate door — \$500,000 for a new entrance, \$850,000 to conserve existing flags and supporting artifacts and \$650,000 to exhibit those.

Much of the museum's collections are in storage due to lack of space.

"We're not funding it," then-Rep. Chip Limehouse, R-Charleston, said at a budget hearing last February. "If we have to delay the display of the flag a few years, so be it."

Instead of spending any money on the flag, the Legislature approved studying the possibility of moving the 121-year-old museum to Charleston. That idea was nixed by Gov. Nikki Haley's veto.

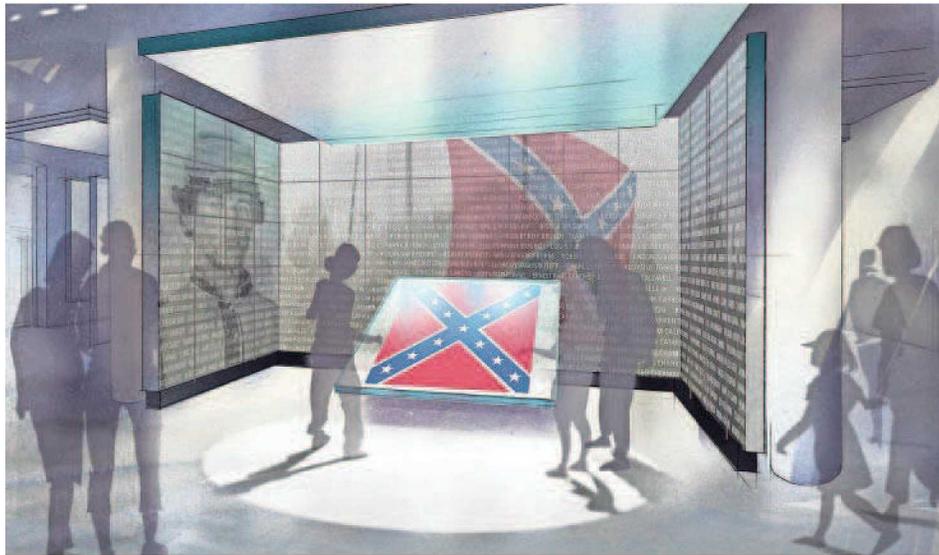
The museum's leaders said Thursday that legislators never formally approved or rejected their plan.

Title: **Confederate Relic Room's board not giving up**  
Author: SEANNA ADCOX ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Size: 70.68 column inches  
Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



MYKAL MCELDOWNEY/STAFF

This is one of the items that was on display inside the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum in 2015.



AP

This design, approved in 2015 by the museum commission, features the flag surrounded by displays that scroll the names of the 22,000 South Carolinians killed in the Civil War.

Title: **ixing bus transportation woes**  
 Author: By GEORGE SALSBERY gsalsberry@lowcountry.com  
 Size: 48.67 column inches  
 Walterboro, SC Circulation: 5673



# Fixing bus transportation woes

By GEORGE SALSBERY  
 gsalsberry@lowcountry.com

Comments out of Columbia and money out of Washington D.C. could translate into Colleton County School District being better able to address its student transportation concerns.

While school board members and the administration have attempted to ease the district's problems with attracting and retaining bus drivers, the condition of the bus fleet has been a state concern.

In South Carolina, ownership and maintenance of the school bus fleet is the responsibility of the South Carolina Department of Education while the individual school districts have the responsibility for providing the bus drivers.

Monday, South Carolina Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman went to the Statehouse grounds with a bright, yellow school bus to announce two legislative initiatives she will be bringing to the new term of the South Carolina legislators.

First, Spearman said she wanted state legislators to come up with the funds to replace 1,000 school buses statewide. She wants every school bus with 20 or more years in service replaced.

It is an initiative for which South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley has voiced support in the past.

The state legislature would be required to spend up to \$105 million to replace the old buses.

Colleton County Assistant Superintendent Cliff Warren said that the assessment of buses to be replaced in the Colleton County's fleet if the state legislature follows through with Spearman's initiative is still under way.

The school district is already in line to have seven school buses replaced by the state this fiscal year. Warren is not sure if those seven are among the 1,000 Spearman wants retired.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently awarded South Carolina a \$1.1 million grant to be used to provide more environmentally-friendly school buses.

Colleton County School District is one of 11 South Carolina school districts that will share in that \$1.1 million U.S. EPA grant.

The grant will assist the South Carolina Department of Education in replacing 57 school buses with new cleaner-running models across the state.

According to the state plan, \$140,000 of the U.S. EPA grant will be used by the state department of education to purchase seven new school buses for Colleton County. The Charleston and Greenville County School Districts received the largest portion of the grants: \$200,000 to replace 10 buses. Colleton County's grant was the third highest allocation.

"We are pleased to have been awarded this funding which will go to replacing our state's aging fleet with lower emissions and more efficient buses," Spearman said when the grant was announced.

"The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control played an integral role in the application process and we appreciate their support as these funds will truly benefit the health and safety of students and communities in our state," concluded Spearman.

The new and retrofitted buses will reduce pollutants that are linked to health problems such as asthma and lung damage.

A second initiative Spearman announced Monday, could have an affect on the Colleton County School District's efforts to attract bus drivers and keep them on the job.

Like teacher salaries, the state sets minimum salary levels and provides some funds for bus drivers.

Warren points out that Colleton County School District, like most of the school districts in the area, pays its bus drivers a base wage higher than the state mandate, a move necessary to attract new bus drivers and then retain them.

Even with a base wage that is higher than the state's mandate, Colleton County School District is continually on the hunt for new bus drivers.

Often, once the bus drivers hired by the school district receive their necessary training and licenses, the bus drivers move on to other neighboring school districts that have a higher basic wage.

Spearman said that she recognizes the problems school districts face with attracting new bus drivers and keeping them.

She wants the state legislature to seek to address that problem by allocating an additional \$19.2 million to the funds coming out of Columbia for bus driver salaries. She also wants the state legislature to provide an additional \$2.7 million to increase the base pay for the bus mechanics.

Title: **HONORING POPS**  
 Author:  
 Size: 294.19 column inches  
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 36854



## HONORING POPS

### COLUMBIA JAZZ VETERAN SKIPP PEARSON EARNS TOP STATE AWARD

By Jordan Lawrence | Photos by Thomas Hammond

Saxophonist Skipp Pearson plays at Main Street Public House.

**T**aking the stage at Columbia's Main Street Public House in late September, a little more than a month before his 79th birthday, Skipp Pearson appeared as vital as ever.

Backed by a group of polished younger players key to the current live jazz scene here in the Midlands — bassist Reggie Sullivan, keyboardist Nick Brewer, trumpeter Mark Rapp, drummer Chris Church — the renowned Columbia saxophonist blew with colorful determination, displaying energy and dexterity that belied both his age and visible frailty, beaming out at the audience

after each tune.

"Skipp kinda brings out the best in everybody," Rapp says. "I get around him and I just get so inspired. I get centered. All the crazy thoughts in my head disappear, and I find myself truly in the moment. When you listen to Skipp play, he plays so melodically and soulfully. You stop trying to be this com-

plicated, technical, heady intellectual jazzier and you just find yourself in a place where all you're trying to do is play beautiful, soulful melodies."

With his signature black fedora planted on his head, Pearson chortled and chatted in the break between sets, greeting familiar friends and fresh faces, putting a gracious face on the music he loves. He's been at this

Title: HONORING POPS

Author:

Size: 294.19 column inches

Columbia, SC Circulation: 36854

for a long time, and on this particular night, his experience showed through with potency, an artist and ambassador in firm command of his talents.

"I like to share. I have to share. I get to share," offers Pearson, affectionately known as Pops, during an hour-long sit down in October at Le Cafe Jazz, the club at the top of Finlay Park that he's presided over since 2011, playing there most weeks. "This has been my thing. And I'm still at it. And I love it when the young guys come and play. Some young wizards coming up."

His efforts haven't gone unnoticed. He's played with such greats as Otis Redding, Wynton Marsalis and Sam Cooke across his five-decade career, and the South Carolina Senate appointed him as the state's official ambassador of jazz.

His style is largely grounded in traditional strains of jazz, but his creative, lyrical touch with melody and warming tone push beyond

any narrow niche, stretching himself by playing with non-jazz musicians — Columbia blues great, Drink Small, for instance.

The Thursday jazz workshop he started at Hunter-Gatherer, which ended a 17-year run at the downtown Columbia brewpub back in 2014, helped rear more than a few players now prominent on the local jazz scene.

And this week, he'll get one honor more: On Saturday, Gov. Nikki Haley will present Pearson with the Order of the Palmetto, the highest civilian honor this state can bestow.

"It's just wonderful that they could think of me in this way," Pearson says of the award. "I've gotten some other honors, but this is the top of the mountain. I thank God for pointing me in the right direction. Maybe I'm getting done what I set out to do, maybe I'm accomplishing it."

"It's not about me. It's about the music," he continues. "And if in receiving that, if it puts me in the position where I can do more,

then I will do more. I will do all I can to keep jazz music alive and to make sure that South Carolina gets the recognition it should get. There are many musicians ... that came

out of here that became top innovators of the music. People don't know who they are. And that's one of the things I would like to see done, all these names put on a wall or something somewhere."

## MUSICAL COMMUNITY

A dozen years ago, the saxophonist and his dedicated right hand, Shirley Martin, started the Skipp Pearson Jazz Foundation, a nonprofit charged with exposing jazz to new ears and supporting upcoming musicians. During the same time, Pearson has waged a near constant battle with cancer, which started in his prostate before moving to his bones five years ago. But through it all he's remained steadfastly dedicated to his music.

Pearson's full of pointed opinions, and during our conversation, he veers occasionally into touchy political territory — last fall's hotly contested presidential election, the riots against police brutality that swept the nation in 2016 — following each revelation with a plea that those thoughts not be printed. He'd much rather let his playing do the talking, leading less through words than by example.

His urgency stems from more than just passion. In early January, Martin, the executive director of Pearson's foundation, confirmed that as far as his health is concerned, he's on the "other side of the mountain," the downhill side. He continues to receive various treatments and surgeries, and two

more operations are on the horizon after this week's festivities. Pearson's ability to pick up his horn and blow is waning, with live appearances becoming less frequent — he had to skip a recent New Year's gig at Le Cafe Jazz. The club was closed last weekend in anticipation of the events and concerts surrounding his acceptance of this week's award, allowing Pops time to rest and ready himself.

"He's so excited," Martin says of Pearson's continued enthusiasm for the Order of the Palmetto. "He's like a kid in a candy store

waiting for this. He sees this as a way for him to be able to talk to the public and tell them how important this art form is, now more than ever before.

"The man is doing well considering he knows what's happening to his body," she continues. "He plays as often as he can. One

of the things that I did early on this winter is I made people aware that Pops' schedule would change. There might be days where we had scheduled him to play and he wasn't able to do that. Which is why every time he is able to play is an event."

But Pearson continues to play as much as he can, something those close to him say will never change.

"If there's one thing you can't stop Skipp from doing, it's playing his horn," bassist Reggie Sullivan, leader of his own namesake band and a frequent backer of Pearson, a couple days after playing with him at Main Street Public House. "He's always going to give just 100 percent effort. We played a gig last year for the Philharmonic's Tasting Notes gala, and he just said he wanted to come play with us, so he sat in, and he just made us all happy. He made us all feel good. And he just played so well."

"You could tell he gets tired a lot faster these days, but man, what he gives you is all real. And he enjoys it. Still, you'll find him some nights at the Speakeasy just pop in and play horn just to play. And just to see people and just to touch the people and let you know that Skipp's here for all the jazz that happens in town."

## JAZZ UPBRINGING

Each question put to Pearson last fall brings a different segment of his life in music. He revels in reminiscence, his eyes sparkling as he recalls memories like buying his first saxophone — he got it off a friend growing up in Orangeburg, rushing over with his loot after getting off his paper route and paying

**"HE'S SO EXCITED. HE'S LIKE A KID IN A CANDY STORE WAITING FOR THIS. HE SEES THIS AS A WAY FOR HIM TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO THE PUBLIC AND TELL THEM HOW IMPORTANT THIS ART FORM IS, NOW MORE THAN EVER BEFORE."**

— SHIRLEY MARTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SKIPP PEARSON JAZZ FOUNDATION

Title: HONORING POPS  
 Author:  
 Size: 294.19 column inches  
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 36854

\$10 for the instrument; the same friend sold Pearson his second horn for \$50.

But Pops is also remarkably alert and grounded in the present, keenly inquisitive about his interviewer — he grills me near the end of our chat about whether I play music, unsatisfied by my reply that I played in the orchestra in high school (“Why you not playing a lot of viola, and playing jazz on it?”)

Skipp’s immersion in musical community started at a young age. Growing up in Orangeburg, his mother taught elementary school and eventually became a high school choir director. His grandfather taught himself to play guitar and sat with his grandson listening to the radio, taking in bluegrass and also big-band jazz from the likes of Duke Ellington emanating from hotel ballrooms to the north.

Pearson took his first saxophone lessons on a horn he borrowed from a friend, and he picked up his early chops by hanging around the older kids learning music at Claflin University, where he later attended after finishing a four-year stint in the Air Force, forming a band in every place he was stationed during his service and becoming a school teacher after graduation.

He smiles when looking back on some of the more interesting moments from his career — incorporating a Hammond B3 organ into the house band he led at the old Five Points club VIP Lounge, flecking his jazz with funky verve at a time when such fusion was rare; connecting with Wynton Marsalis when he played the hotel where Skipp had a regular gig, convincing Marsalis to stop by and jam after his own performance, bringing everybody who wanted an autograph along with him.

## LOOKING FORWARD

But while he clearly loves talking through his accomplishments, Pearson never drifts far from expressing his profound love for jazz in South Carolina and how invested he is in its future.

“I try to encourage young players all the time,” Pops replies, verifying stories that he will occasionally give horns to aspiring young players. In years past, he’s honored a few players by giving them one of his own. More recently, he’s bought new instruments for kids who couldn’t afford them. “I run across kids once in a while that just don’t have means, you know? And yeah, I’ve been known to do that. My reason is that I like to encourage them to have some of the experience, because they can’t have the experience

musically that I’ve had.”

Perhaps nothing that Pearson has done is more fondly remembered locally than those Thursday workshops at Hunter-Gatherer, where up-and-coming players were given a chance to play with nationally and internationally known talent drawn to town by the music programs at the Midlands’ various universities and by Pops’ own lofty reputation.

“I always say that Skipp has done more to preserve jazz in South Carolina than anyone I know,” offers Luther Battiste — the lawyer

and host of *Jazz From the Garden City* on Orangeburg’s WCOS 93.7 who stepped in to run the Hunter-Gatherer workshops when Pearson was unable. “He really is and has been South Carolina’s jazz ambassador. But one of his greatest gifts has been giving young talent a place to develop their skills, and he did that through his jazz workshop.”

Reggie Sullivan was one player that got his start at Pearson’s workshops, grabbing his first regular gig as the event’s primary bassist.

“For me, it developed a lot of relationships that I would probably never get to have contact with,” Sullivan says. “I even got to work with cats all over the world just from playing that gig and meeting other people. And if nothing else, you can always go back to the moment when you played with, like, Chris Potter, who is maybe one of the best jazz saxophonists, Russell Malone, just unbelievable people who came through there.”

“The holiday shows were always just incredible times because everybody would be in town,” the bassist continues. “That’s when Chris Potter would usually be in town visiting his family. It was just packed. There’d probably be 50 people outside just waiting to get inside but still out there, just waiting for the door to open so they could hear what was going on inside. And inside would be packed. There’d probably be 30 musicians waiting to sit in, some of the baddest from all over the world.”

But while the Hunter-Gatherer workshops were canceled by the venue a couple years

ago — a sore subject for Pearson that he refuses to discuss at length — Skipp’s efforts there and the shows put on by his foundation at Le Cafe Jazz have definitely inspired others. From Speakeasy to Pearlz in the Vista, the city now boasts a solid handful of reliable weekly jazz offerings, a schedule that has filled out significantly in the last couple years. Rapp and his cohorts are trying to further bolster this progress through the new initiative ColaJazz, which combines a website

featuring local artist profiles and a calendar of jazz concerts in the area with compilations of new material from these players and weekly Wednesday showcases at Main Street Public House, like the one Pearson played last fall.

Rapp singles out the work done by Pops and his foundation as a key inspiration for ColaJazz.

“Skipp is the foundation, man,” the trumpeter posits. “Without him there would be no scene, so to speak, there would be no scene up on which to build upon. He’s held it down. He’s solidified it. He’s set a very high bar as a musician, very high standards for dealing with the music, for playing [chord] changes, for presenting melodies, for presenting yourself on the stage, his professionalism. He’s set standards for every aspect of the music, how you deal with the public, how you speak with people, how you visit with people between sets.”

Rapp and many of his fellow local players are doing their part to support Skipp as he pushes on despite his current impediments.

Pops is frequently backed by a crack crew of younger talent when he plays these days. Rapp and Paul Bodamer at the Columbia studio Jangly Records, where ColaJazz cuts its compilations, kicked off their endeavor in 2015 by donating a free day of recording to Skipp Pearson, Rapp joining the band that backs him on the bright and lively result, *Conversations in Jazz*.

“Skipp is the real deal,” Rapp recalls. “There’s a few tunes that we may have done two takes or three takes, but the first two takes are really just us rehearsing and deciding on the form. But he’s really like a one-take wonder. He lays it down, man, and is perfect. He was just killing. He lives and breathes this music just like we’re speaking English and trying to say coherent sentences back and forth and concepts, he does that with jazz improvisation, and he has it right the first time.”

For Pearson, the recording experience was a reminder of what he craves from jazz, a visceral form of communication that pushes past words.

“The music is fun,” Pops explains. “Now there’s serious moments of the music, too. Because you want the music to gel. You want cats to be listening to each other and responding to the energy that the music is building. This is something that you can’t tell the musicians to do. It has to be inspired by how you’re presenting the music.” 

Let us know what you think: Email [editor@free-times.com](mailto:editor@free-times.com).

Title: **HONORING POPS**

Author:

Size: 294.19 column inches

Columbia, SC Circulation: 36854



**"Skipp is the foundation. Without him there would be no jazz scene, so to speak." — trumpeter Mark Rapp (left)**

Title: **HONORING POPS**  
 Author:  
 Size: 294.19 column inches  
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 36854

# SKIPP PEARSON ORDER OF THE PALMETTO WEEK

## **Thursday 12 – A Day of Jazz in Charleston (Order of the Palmetto Opening Evening)**

6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., free; Barsa  
 Tapas Grill (Charleston)

Featured Artist: Loretta Holloway

## **Friday 13 – Honoring the US Military and Retirees of the 246 Army Band**

7 p.m., \$20; Le Cafe Jazz

## **Saturday 14 – Official Award Ceremony**

7 p.m., free; Darla Moore School of  
 Business (black tie attire; reservations  
 required)

## **Sunday 15 – An Evening of Live Jazz**

5 p.m., \$10; Darla Moore  
 School of Business

Featured Artist: Carl Payne Big Band

Contact: 803-400-1879;  
 pearsonfoundation@ymail.com

Title: **HONORING POPS**

Author:

Size: 294.19 column inches

Columbia, SC Circulation: 36854



**"If there's one thing you can't keep Skipp from doing, it's playing his horn." — bassist Reggie Sullivan (back right)**

Title: Chamber breakfast is Friday morning

Author:

Size: 44.48 column inches

N. Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 7250



# Chamber breakfast is Friday morning



**Gerri McDaniel**

The North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) welcomes Gerri McDaniel as its First Friday Business Builder keynote speaker on Friday, Jan. 6.

McDaniel, who played a pivotal role in President-elect Donald J. Trump's

presidential campaign success in South Carolina, will present "How South Carolina Helped Elect Donald Trump" at the chamber's networking event.

Active in local and national politics, McDaniel served as campaign field director during President-elect Trump's sweeping 2016 campaign victory in South Carolina's primary for the seventh congressional district. After this success, she became the S.C. State Director for "Donald J. Trump for President," helping to lead President-elect Trump to a victory with 71 percent of the vote.

McDaniel also served as a campaign field director for the 7th Congressional District of South Carolina under former Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Newt Gingrich when he sought the Republican Party nomination for president for the 2012 election.

McDaniel has been an

active supporter in the Horry County Republican Party and has been involved in campaigns of several successful city and county political candidates, including Gov. Nikki Haley's 2010 election.

"The chamber is pleased to welcome Gerri to North Myrtle Beach for the First Friday event," said Marc Jordan, president and CEO of the North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, CVB. "While we expect a great turnout, we do encourage individuals to respect any opposing political views of their own and ask that attendees come out to support a powerful advocate for the state."

Tickets are \$15 for members and \$25 for non-members and can be purchased on the chamber's website.

To register for the First Friday Business Builder, find more information or purchase tickets visit the chamber's website or call 843-281-2662.

Title: **Templeton postponing decision on governor's race**  
 Author:  
 Size: 9.45 column inches  
 Sumter, SC Circulation: 19018



## Templeton postponing decision on governor's race

COLUMBIA — One of the top Republicans expected to enter South Carolina's governor's race is postponing her decision.

Catherine Templeton told The Associated Press Wednesday that encouragement from those urging her to run "has been overwhelming." Templeton says she'll wait until spring to make a final decision however, adding that "running for governor is not something to be taken lightly."

Templeton said she spoke out after an AP story on next year's race. The expected early departure of Nikki Haley to serve as U.N. ambassador means current Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster will likely be running as an incumbent in 2018.

The anti-union attorney has run South Carolina's labor and public health departments.

Templeton says, "right now, I just want to listen to the people of South Carolina."