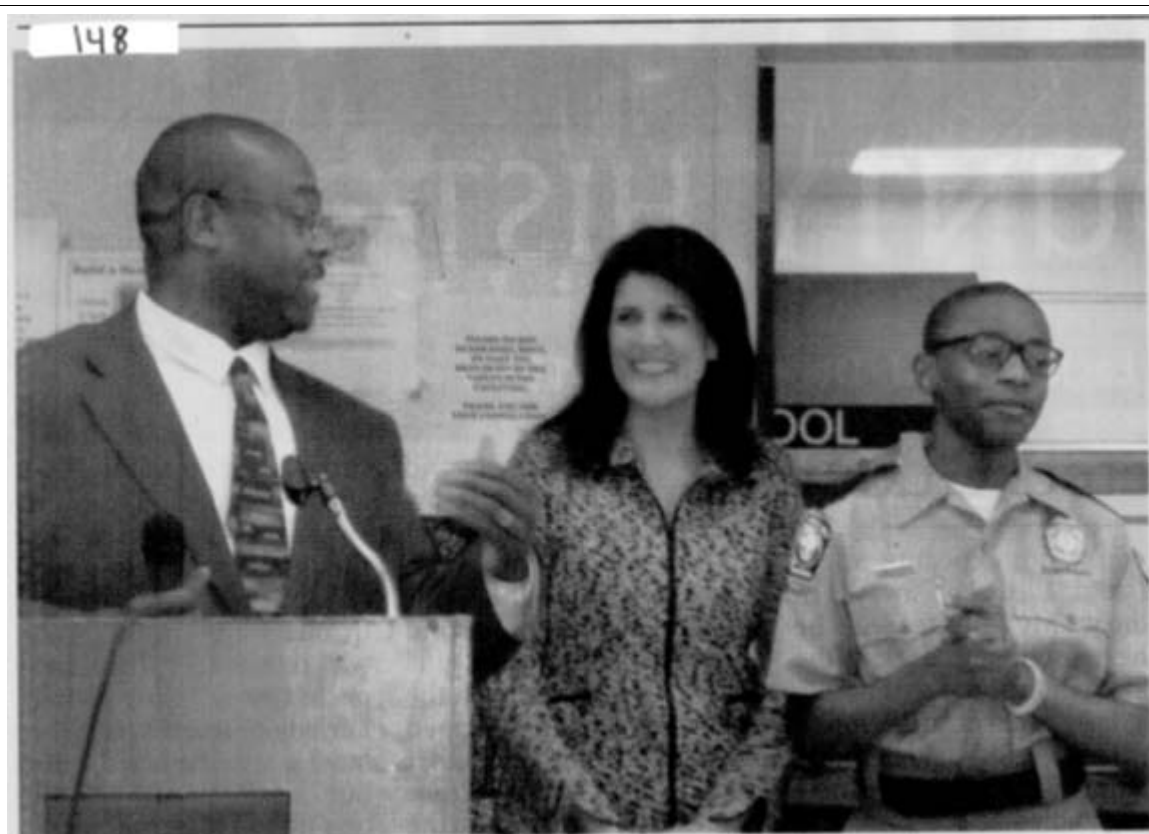


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On Thursday, December 10 Governor Nikki Haley was welcomed to St. George Middle School by Superintendent Dr. Morris Ravenell, Principal Jeffery Thompson and the District 4 School Board. Also on hand were representatives from the SC Highway Patrol, Dorchester County Sheriff's office and the St. George Police Department. The Governor paid a visit to honor eighth grade student De'Shaun Booker, who had earlier this year written a letter to her, urging people taking personal responsibility for their actions, as opposed to blaming law enforcement for their issues. Governor Haley saw the opportunity to bring attention to the need of improving the often strained relations between communities and law enforcement and vowed to roll the lunch program out across the state. *E-R Staff Photos*



Coastal
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^{148 + 59}To repair beach, town faces a flood of paperwork

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The town of Pawleys Island has appealed to Gov. Nikki Haley for help with permits to repair dunes damaged by Hurricane Joaquin in October. Officials say the emergency permit process lacks coordination between state and federal agencies and has delayed work that will protect beach houses from winter storms.

The hurricane that passed offshore in early October combined with a low-pressure system from the Gulf of Mexico to dump record amounts of rain on the state. That was followed three weeks later by a nor'easter that arrived with an unusually high tide to further erode the island's sand dunes. A survey by Coastal Carolina University shows over 100,000 cubic yards of sand were lost, with the most severe damage on the island's narrow south end.

The town has applied to the state Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management for an emergency permit to scrape sand from the beach to rebuild the dune south of Hazard Street. The agency allows scraping in places where the dune or the ocean is within 20 feet of a house. It has told the town 60 of 80 structures qualify, Mayor Bill Otis said.

But the state permit requires that the town get a letter of approval from each property owner before work can be done. "It's not in the law, but they're the regulators," Otis said.

The town has struggled for over a year to get easements from property owners to move electric and cable TV lines underground. The process has delayed the utility project, and Otis fears the same thing will happen with beach scraping, even

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Pawleys | Town seeks Haley's aid with permits

FROM FRONT PAGE

though the approval from property owners doesn't need to be as formal as the utility easements.

"You can't exactly call it an emergency permit if you have to wait on every property owner," Otis said.

But that's only part of the problem.

The Army Corps of Engineers also requires a permit if the town wants to scrape sand from the beach. "What is recoverable is below mean low water," Otis said.

The town planned to file that permit application Wednesday. "I'll believe it when I see it that they are going to act expeditiously," Council Member Mike Adams said.

Otis wrote Haley last week asking that Coastal Resources "alter its permitting procedures and establish supportive working relations" with the Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency "to address this significant beach and dune system damage."

He asked that Haley have Coastal Resources issue a temporary permit to allow work to start before winter storms can cause further damage.

Haley's office did not return a call seeking comment on the request.

The town will apply to FEMA for funds to repair the beachfront under the federal disaster declaration issued in October. Agency representatives initially told the town it wasn't eligible for funding for beach work, Town Administrator Ryan Fabbri said. "Since the storm, the attitude of FEMA has improved," he added.

An estimate prepared by FEMA after the hurricane put the town's sand

loss at 96,000 cubic yards and used a cost of \$30 a cubic yard to replace it, a total of \$2.9 million.

The town has a former FEMA employee helping with its application, which it hoped to submit this week. Otis said he expects the request will be denied, but it can be appealed.

"Our decisions won't be dictated by what they do," Fabbri said.

The town is also working with Coastal Science and Engineering to prepare the data needed to apply for state and federal permits to repair the dunes north of Hazard Street. That area wouldn't qualify under the emergency permit regulations.

If the emergency scraping is approved for the island's south end, Otis said the town will pay for that and seek reimbursement later. He estimated the cost of that work around \$50,000, down from an initiate estimate of \$200,000, basing that figure on work that was done on the beach at DeBordieu.

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Recent terror attacks here and abroad have prompted South Carolina lawmakers to file a slew of legislation aimed at regulating, and in some cases, outlawing refugee resettlement in the Palmetto State. President Barack Obama, strongly supports welcoming refugees and scolded state governments opposed to it. Among the governors opposed is S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley. Should South Carolina accept refugees as President Obama advocates?

What do you think?

Choices are:

1. Yes, South Carolina should accept Syrian refugees.
2. No, South Carolina should not accept Syrian refugees.

Send your comments on this subject to:
steve.robertson@myhorrynews.com
Poll results will be reported in next week's edition of the *Horry Independent*.
_ To vote, log on to www.myhorrynews.com



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148 ONGOING
ONGOING-Governor
Nikki Haley's request for a 30-day extension of the registration period for Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) Individual Assistance has been granted.

South Carolinians affected by October's heavy rains and historic flooding now have until Jan. 4, 2016, to apply for disaster assistance with FEMA and the Small Business Administration.

Horry and Georgetown residents who sustained flood losses can apply for assistance by registering online at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362). Disaster assistance applicants who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disability and use a TTY may call 800-462-7585. Those who use 711 or Video Relay Service may call 800-621-FEMA (3362). The toll-free telephone numbers will operate 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week until further notice.

Assistance can include money for temporary rental assistance and essential home repairs for primary homes, low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help survivors recover from the effects of the disaster.



¹⁴⁸ Fleming awarded The Order of the Palmetto

(Editor's Note: Fleming formerly lived in Bennettsville and served as president/CEO of Marlboro Electric Cooperative until his retirement.)

William L. "Bill" Fleming, Sr., was presented The Order of the Palmetto by Ambassador David H. Wilkins on behalf of Governor Nikki Haley at a luncheon of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina's Winter Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Greenville.

"I am truly honored and humbled to receive this prestigious award and I thank Governor Haley and her entire staff for this recognition," Fleming said. "I am proud of the opportunities that the cooperatives have provided for the people and the communities in South Carolina, and I look forward to seeing the continued growth and success for many years to come."

The Order of the Palmetto is the state's highest civilian honor awarded to citizens of South Carolina for extraordinary lifetime service and achievements of national or statewide significance. The Order of the Palmetto is a once in a lifetime achievement.

Fleming began working in the electric industry in 1970 with Carolina Power and Light Company. In October of 1971, he began working with Pee Dee Electric Cooperative in

Darlington, S.C., and served there for 24 years as Vice President of Office and Customer Service and Government Relations.

In January of 1996, he became President and CEO of Marlboro Electric Cooperative in Bennettsville, until his retirement on August 1, 2014. During his tenure at Marlboro Electric, revenues for the cooperative more than tripled, and he played a crucial role in bringing over 1,800 jobs and \$636,185,000 in capital investment to Marlboro and Dillon counties.

Also during his time as President and CEO, Fleming was instrumental in the implementation of the Marlboro County Economic Development Partnership Board, where he served as chairman from 1997-1999 and 2003-2005. He also served as a member of the Dillon County Economic Development Public-Private Partnership, the Carolinas I-95 Mega Site Board, the Palmetto Economic Development Corporation Board, the Cooperative Electric Energy Utility Supply Board, the Central Electric Power Cooperative Executive Board, and the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina Board, where he was the secretary/treasurer in 2013-2014. He was instrumental in the development of Marlboro Development Team, a subsidiary of

Marlboro Electric which has as its main goal to provide economic growth for South Carolina, especially in the Marlboro and Dillon County areas.

In his community, Fleming served as a member of the Darlington County School District Board of Education for 10 years, as chairman for many years, and played a vital role in founding the Mayo Magnet School for Science and Math. He has also been a member of the Board of Directors for First Citizens Bank of Darlington, Darlington County Chamber of Commerce, Marlboro County Chamber of Commerce, and the Kiwanis Club of Darlington, Rotary Club of Bennettsville, and the Darlington County Airport Commission where he now serves as Chairman. In 2000, he was also named the South Carolina Ambassador for Economic Development by Governor Jim Hodges.

He has been active in churches in Darlington and Bennettsville as a Sunday school teacher, Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, Deacon and Elder. He is currently a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Darlington. He and his wife, Jenny, have three children and four grandchildren.



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HIGHEST HONOR - Bill Fleming (left) is presented with The Order of the Palmetto by Ambassador David H. Wilkins.
(Photo submitted)



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Governor Haley should support farmers

**By Representative
Patricia Henegan**

Farmers from across South Carolina met at the South Carolina Statehouse on Monday to beg and plead with our Governor to ask Congress for money to offset their estimated \$376,000,000.00 losses from the 1000 year flood that took place in early October.

However, Governor Haley refuses to request funds. She believes that farmers should have federally subsidized crop insurance, and under-insured farmers shouldn't be bailed out.

It appears that she fails to understand that if every farmer had picked the best crop insurance available, it still would not be enough to cover the damage farmers face. She also fails to understand that small farms

in our Pee Dee area will close and many jobs will be lost without federal support.

The devastation farmers are facing is unimaginable. However, we all need to understand that this devastation will have an impact on all of us. It filters down from the farmers to their suppliers and to your table (seeds, fertilizer, equipment dealers, truckers, processing plants, jobs-unemployment, and your grocery bill). The Governor fails to understand that the safety net that applies to many businesses does not apply to farmers. The crop insurance will not save them.

Therefore, I urge all of you to contact Governor Haley and tell her that our farmers need help, and they need it now. I have spoken with several farmers in our

communities, they are our friends, our neighbors, and they are hard workers. Farmers are not looking for a hand out...they are looking for a hand. Agriculture is the number one industry

in South Carolina. Our question for Governor Haley should be..... "Why would you not support SC Farmers, when they are the core group of people who feed, clothe, and support families across our state on a daily basis?" South Carolina needs our farmers. Our farmers need South Carolina and Governor Haley's support NOW!

-Patricia Henegan represents District 54 (Marlboro County, Chesterfield and Darlington) in the South Carolina House of Representatives.



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OUR VIEW

Flood Costs?

BY RON AIKEN

A consulting firm run by former Fort Jackson commander and failed Dept. of Employment and Workforce Director Abraham Turner billed Richland County nearly \$24,000 for seven days of work – including \$7,140 for Turner himself – performed immediately after the October flooding, *The Nerve* has learned.

The invoice, obtained by *The Nerve*, shows a submission date of Oct. 23 and is addressed directly to county administrator Tony McDonald. It itemizes the fees owed to Turner's firm, AT Consulting Group LLC, "for the services provided starting 15 October to 21 October."

Included among the fees totaling \$23,909.25 are \$928 for "Travel, Billeting, Supplies," \$4,200 for a deputy director, \$4,320 for three "operations officers," \$2,000 for "Warehouse Staff (Logistics)(2)," and \$5,321.25 for 26 "Administrative Specialists Staff."

The bottom of the bill reads "Check can be made out to AT Consulting Group LLC or if you desire to cut separate checks for each person involved, I can make their information available for you."

The invoice also states that the rates of pay, including \$85 per hour for Turner and \$50 for his deputy director, are based "on the initial Statement of work submitted to you totaling approximately 556K for six months."

In October, a behind-closed-doors move by Richland County council members Kelvin Washington and Norm Jackson to approve a \$1 million contract with AT Consulting Group LLC to do nothing but "coordinate" and "distribute" donated items failed to pass when details of it became public.

In November, in response to the negative publicity generated by disclosure of that deal and details surrounding some council members' – including Washington and Jackson – commercial flights and extended stays in Nashville for a trip to learn about flood mitigation resulted in a motion by Jackson on Nov. 17 seeking to give council members the power to fire county employees caught distributing information to the press outside of proper Freedom of Information Act channels – channels that denied the existence of the Oct. 23 bill *The Nerve* obtained.

When *The Nerve* first learned of the existence of the Oct. 23 invoice, a request was made under the Freedom of Information Act to Richland County's ombudsman's office. On Friday, Dec. 4, the manager of that office, Kelly Cunningham, replied that "No invoices (from AT Consulting Group LLC) have ever been received or paid."

Back on Oct. 28, five days after the Oct. 23 invoice was filed, a request under the Freedom of Information Act was



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filed seeking any contracts or proposals received by Richland County from AT Consulting Group LLC. At that time, Cunningham wrote that such documents were exempt from FOIA requests.

"Please be advised that certain documents responsive to your request, documents of and documents incidental to proposed contractual agreements, are exempt from disclosure pursuant to S.C. Code Section 30-4-40(a)(5). The exempt documents are proposed contracts relating to AT Consulting Group, LLC. Those documents will not be produced.

"Richland County has no further information regarding this matter."

A call to Turner's cell phone and message to his email inquiring about the invoice were not returned.

Turner's two-year term as Gov. Nikki Haley's choice to run the Department of Employment and Workforce ended with his February 2013 resignation a day after fielding tough questions from legislators about why his agency closed services in 17 rural counties while giving raises totaling nearly \$440,000 to dozens of employees. Those questions followed a 100-page audit from the Legislative Audit Council that was highly critical of the agency.

AT Consulting Group LLC lists its business address on the S.C. Secretary of State's website as 2601 Read Street, which is the address for Benedict College's Business Development Center.

Ron Aiken works for The Nerve.



Free Times
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148 Syrian Refugees Are Here

Syrian refugees are beginning to arrive in South Carolina. According to *The Greenville News*, the Department of Social Services indicates that a pair of refugees have been resettled in the Midlands, with the help of Lutheran Services Carolinas. Gov. Nikki Haley previously asked Secretary of State John Kerry that refugees not be placed in the Palmetto State. Haley's office says it has notified law enforcement about the arrival of the two refugees. — *Chris Trainor*

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148 **THEIR VIEW**

This is the year for gas tax increase

It has been 28 years since South Carolina last raised its 16.75-cents-per-gallon gasoline tax. Last week, a Winthrop University poll showed 61 percent of state Republicans favor an increase in the gas tax if the money goes to repair roads and infrastructure.

It looks like the time may be right for the state Legislature to finally approve a gasoline tax increase to help overcome a massive deficit in state highway funding. And it should do so in strong enough numbers to overcome a promised veto from Gov. Nikki Haley.

Some put the funding deficit at \$1.5 billion a year. Although it's likely less than that, the deficit surely exceeds \$750 million a year.

The House has taken the first step to bridging that gap, last year passing a bill that would raise the gas tax by 10 cents a gallon and raise the sales tax cap on vehicles to \$500 from \$300. A Senate bill that was discussed last year would go a step further, raising gasoline taxes by 12 cents without a corresponding income tax cut.

A gasoline tax increase on its own will not completely bridge the road-funding deficit. But a tax increase does need to be a component of a comprehensive roads bill. Those in the Legislature who support an increase need to make the case to their colleagues. And all South Carolinians who support such a step need to reach out to their representatives and tell them it's more than OK to raise the tax, it's the right thing to do.

— The House bill only would generate roughly half of what's needed on an annual basis to get the majority of the

state's roads in good condition, according to a recent report in The Greenville News. The Senate proposal from last year goes much further, and would provide about \$800 million annually.

The main obstacle to passing a gas tax, and even perhaps a comprehensive road funding bill, ironically could be a \$1.2 billion state revenue surplus. There will undoubtedly be a strong push by some lawmakers to use at least a portion of that money to meet infrastructure needs this year and kick the comprehensive bill down the road once more.

Republican Sen. Tom Corbin, for instance, said at a recent Upstate Chamber of Commerce meeting he opposes a gas tax and the road funding money should come out of that surplus. His constituents, he said, "want to see the waste in government cut first and the money prioritized."

Corbin is right on one point: South Carolina needs to be careful not to waste the relatively meager amount of funding it sends to its highway system, and money could always be spent more wisely. But the state's gasoline tax is among the lowest in the nation, and the majority of its roads are in poor condition.

The state's infrastructure needs are serious enough that a portion of that \$1.2 billion should indeed go to road funding. But that should not be done instead of a comprehensive bill, but rather in addition to one.

The state's roads are important to the economic well-being of South Carolina and to the quality of life state residents enjoy. But if roads are not brought into better condition, employers will take notice, and drivers will be less safe. In fact, some business leaders have said they might find it more attractive to move out of state if South Carolina does not address its infrastructure needs.

This is the year for South Carolina to finally pass a comprehensive road funding plan that increases available revenue. The Senate needs to follow up on the House's work and pass this meaningful reform without stripping away one of the most needed components.

— The Greenville News

Christmas in Clinton & Columbia

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Opening The People's House. Chronicle Staff Photographer Vic MacDonald traveled Dec. 7 to The Governor's Mansion with Rita Stanley, of Clinton, and Pat Little Adamson, of Laurens, who served as the governor's pianist for the annual Christmas drop-in for the public. The Columbia Garden Club decorates the mansion for the holidays, and Gov. Nikki Haley welcomes guests there on behalf of the State of South Carolina. The Christmas Tree is decorated with ornaments donated by people from throughout the state. Carolers, decorations including a gingerbread scene created by the governor's culinary staff, refreshments and a visit with Santa are included for visitors on The Governor's Mansion grounds. Tours also are available during the holiday season.

