



148 Ambassadors, area industries thanked

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Over 2014, Barnwell County has had its challenges when it comes to economic development.

It took a full year for the county and the municipalities to come to an understanding with regards to the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Board.

It has taken over three months for candidates for an EDC executive director to be recruited, interviewed and recommended to the county council. That effort has yet to be finalized.

But while there have been economic development woes, there have also been those champions who have worked tirelessly in the background.

Forty-eight of those people were named Economic Development Ambassadors by the State of South Carolina, representing their counties and state as the leaders for growth.

In our immediate area, Kay Still of Barnwell County, Robert Connelly of Allendale County and Robert Chatman of Bamberg County were among those honored by Governor Nikki Haley and the South Carolina Department of Commerce in a ceremony held April 2 at the Governor's Mansion Complex.

The event was the highlight of Industry Appreciation Week.

We want to add our congratulations and thanks to Still, Connelly, Chatman and all those who were honored as Economic Development Ambassadors.

These are the people who work on our behalf to recruit industry and provide the means for local residents to find jobs.

On page 2A of this week's edition, we have shared some of the profiles of Kay Still, Robert Connelly and Robert Chatman. We hope you will take time to read about all they do for our area. It's a lot of dedication.

We also want to thank all the industries who have made this area their home.

Those of us who live here know we live in a great area. We appreciate those industry leaders who agree and make the decision to invest their money in this area.

Let's face it folks - these industries and businesses operate to make a profit. And when we are able to provide the location, resources and manpower to enable them to make a profit, then we all enjoy success through jobs and the dollars that flow through our communities.

Let us all do what we can to support our local industries and help them to continue to be our employers, our neighbors and our friends.

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Industrial ambassadors honored

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As part of the annual Industry Appreciation Week, the South Carolina Department of Commerce on Thursday announced the 2015 Ambassadors for Economic Development.

Recognized for their exceptional efforts to bolster community and economic development activities in South Carolina, the ambassadors were honored in a ceremony held on Thursday, April 2 at the Governor's Mansion Complex. This year, 48 individuals from 46 counties were selected.

"We're honored to spotlight these 48 individuals for their contributions to our state. South Carolina's people are what truly make our state one of the best places in the world to do business, and events like yesterday's ceremony give us the opportunity to recognize just some of the people that help make South Carolina so special," said Gov. Nikki Haley.

Kay Still

Among those honored were Kay H. Still of Barnwell County, a retired senior vice president of Regions Bank, Robert E. Connelly, Jr. of Allendale County, owner of Connelly Farms/Farmers Grain & Supply, Inc., and Robert Chatman of Bamberg County, a retired educator.

According to Kay Maxwell of Southern Carolina Alliance, "Kay H. Still has been named as Barnwell County's choice for 2015 S.C. Economic Ambassador

because of her lifelong service in promoting economic development in Barnwell County. A former Senior Vice President with Regions Bank, Kay Still played a pivotal role in recruiting both businesses and families to the Barnwell area through her personal efforts, as well as in her professional role as a leader in the banking community until her retirement in 2007."

"Still's efforts continued throughout her career and well after retirement. She has remained a leader in building economic development efforts in the county, working through numerous civic efforts and organizations, including serving as Chairman of the Barnwell

County Economic Development Commission, Chairman of the Barnwell County Chamber of Commerce and later as Chairman of Southern Carolina Alliance Board of Directors (2007-2009)," said Maxwell.

"An advocate for workforce development, the successful implementation of a regional WorkKeys® certification pilot program was implemented under her leadership in the region from 2007 to 2009. Today, the WorkKeys® certification program is a mainstay in evaluating the emerging and current workforce."

"Ms. Still was also a key leader in brokering the historic collaborative effort that formed a multi-county

revenue sharing agreement among the counties of Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell and Hampton, to bring shared prosperity and cooperation to the citizens of the area, while providing an additional incentive to industrial prospects.

"Under Kay Still's leadership, several critical economic development projects were won, including the Crane Dixie Narco expansion, which saved hundreds of jobs in 2009 during a time of manufacturing plant consolidations across the country."

She and her husband, Merrell, reside in Barnwell, where, in their spare time, they enjoy fishing and spending time with their children and grandchildren.

Robert Connelly Jr.

Robert Connelly Jr. is the owner of Connelly Farms and Farmers Grain and Supply, Inc., in the Town of Ulmer. He is a second-generation agribusiness owner and has earned the respect and admiration of his peers as the recipient of numerous awards, including the "Master Farm Family in South Carolina" in 1983 by Clemson University and Progressive Farmer magazine, in addition to consecutive multi-year awards as the Top Grower per Acre by the South Carolina Peanut Board. Further, his innovative and progressive farming and harvesting skills of over 14,000 acres in a four-county area of the Lowcountry is



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emulated throughout the Southeast.

His business operation is devoted to helping other farmers in the Southern-Carolina Alliance region by offering assistance with storage, processing and drying of various farm commodities. Connelly offers a fleet of long distance tractor trailers and grain trailers to deliver commodities to the various markets in Georgia and South Carolina.

Robert has spent over 50 plus years in the farming/farming supply business but has also been equally involved in his community. As an avid supporter of higher education, he has been the prime sponsor of the University of South Carolina - Salkehatchie's annual "Appreciation Event" for supporters and students. This event is very popular and has been held for over 30 years and is the mainstay of activities that highlights and supports the university.

A member of the Southern-Carolina Alliance Board of Directors, Connelly has participated in assisting with several projects producing jobs in the region. Connelly was very instrumental in recruiting EDF-Renewable Energy (formerly Southeast Renewable Energy) by providing several different options for a potential site. Additionally, he worked tirelessly within the community in support of the project, including addressing environmental and economic development issues. Robert Connelly's input and advocacy were also instrumental when a major commodity producer/broker decided to locate in the county.

On the Southern-Carolina Alliance Board of Directors, Robert Connelly collaborates with business leaders in a six-county area to bring economic development to the region. With his family involvement in every aspect

of the farm and business, their contribution to the prosperity of Allendale County and the SCA region is being written with each passing day. Robert shares his passion, pride and commitment with his wife, Alma and three

children, Robert III, Mark and Jennifer, plus six grandchildren. Robert Connelly, Jr. is a true Ambassador for Economic Development for Allendale County.

Robert Chatman

According to the release, "For the past 10 years, Chatman has served as Chairman of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments' development corporation, making low interest economic development loans and providing much needed infrastructure support for start-up companies in the Southern Carolina region. Mr. Chatman has also represented Bamberg County on the Bamberg County Economic Development Commission and is an advisory board member of the Southern-Carolina Alliance."

"As a retired educator, Mr. Chatman has also taken an interest in workforce training and has routinely provided youth with interview skills coaching.

In addition, Mr. Chatman has been involved with the planning of Bamberg's speculative building program as well as assisting with the planning and refurbishment

of a number of Bamberg County industrial buildings.

"As a life-long resident of Denmark and a member of the Bamberg Economic Development Commission, Robert has been an important player in bringing these economic development projects to fruition," said Bamberg County Economic Development Project Manager Kell Anderson.

According to Southern-Carolina Alliance Chairman

Johnny Williamson, "Robert is one of those Bamberg County community leaders whose support of economic development has been invaluable in bringing jobs to our area, and we are pleased to see him honored in this way."

Each year the Department of Commerce joins local communities to thank businesses for their vital contributions to South Carolina's economy during the state's Industry Appreciation Week. As part of the celebration, the state recognizes individuals throughout South Carolina as Ambassadors for Economic Development. These individuals include local

leaders from the private sector, representing a variety of businesses committed to advancing their communities.

"The success that we're having in economic development in South Carolina can largely be attributed to our team-first approach. These ambassadors truly reflect the enthusiasm and commitment that makes Team South Carolina so successful, and we're thrilled to recognize them for all they've done to advance their respective companies and communities," said Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt.

In addition to honoring the 2015 Ambassadors for Economic Development at last night's ceremony, the state also recognized five students as Young Entrepreneurs of the Year.

The students, which consisted of one 2nd grader and four 11th and 12th graders, were acknowledged for their unique entrepreneurial ventures.

Among their ventures were a graphics design operation, baked goods business, art gallery and museum, hair accessory venture and agribusiness company.





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Governor Nikki Haley, Barnwell County Ambassador Kay Still, and S.C. Secretary of Commerce Executive Director Bobby Hitt.



Governor Nikki Haley, Allendale County Ambassador Robert Connelly, and S.C. Secretary of Commerce Executive Director Bobby Hitt.



Governor Nikki Haley, Bamberg County Ambassador Robert Chatman, and S.C. Secretary of Commerce Executive Director Bobby Hitt.



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Council Takes Moves to Settle Mt. Vintage Issues

Passes First Reading of 2015- 2016 Budget

The Edgefield County Council passed on first reading by title only an ordinance that authorizes the execution of an agreement between the County and LL of SC, LLC, a South Carolina Limited Liability Company, and other

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potential parties to establish a program to complete construction of certain roads at Mount Vintage subdivision at their regularly scheduled monthly meeting, Tuesday, Apr. 7. This ordinance appeared on Council's agenda as item number nine under new business, but with consent of Council, was moved to be discussed after Council's scheduled executive session. After that lengthy executive session, Council returned to vote unanimously for this ordinance. While there was no discussion by Council on this issue, Councilman Dean Campbell spoke to the public saying that while this ordinance was passed by title only at this time, full details of it would be provided to citizens before the ordinance's second reading which is expected to be at Council's May meeting.

Four public speakers addressed Council at the meeting's first public speaking portion in regards to matters at Mount Vintage. Wayne Rayford spoke first and ask Council to consider the proposal he and his attorney had in regards to completing the roadways at the subdivision. "If you will work with me, we'll get it done," Rayford told Council. Rayford's comments were followed by his attorney, Ray Jones, who told Council, "We've had a great dialogue here," and called the headway made on the matter "tremendous." He also thanked the County for thinking "outside the box" and said that he felt a resolution was close at hand. Bob Porter, a resident of the subdivision who lives where roads have not yet been paved, told Council that he is currently paying 50% of the property value he first paid when he moved into the subdivision. Porter said he would not mind paying more taxes as a result of increased property values. Dan Binz, also a resident of Mount Vintage, concurred with Porter,

telling Council that it is not every day citizens come in and say they want their taxes to increase. Saying that he wanted a solution with higher revenues, Binz also asked that the protection of the golf course be ensured and that plots be legally platted as some are not currently so. "I think we're as close as we've ever been to a working solution," Binz told Council.

In other business, Council unanimously passed the first reading of the 2015-2016 General Operating Budget. The budget is expected to in-

crease by \$558,257 to a total of \$9,510,516. The County expects to use \$348,055 of the fund balance in order to balance the expenditure and revenue budgets for the general fund. This will leave approximately 3.9 months of operating expenditures in the County's reserves. There is no anticipated tax increase with this budget.

Council passed several measures under their consent agenda including the appointment of a new Edgefield County Hospital board member and approval to fund the replacement of the roof at the Sertoma Club Building in Johnston. Sandra Collier was appointed to the ECH board. She replaces Byron Robinson who resigned from the board citing conflicts with his work schedule. As for the replacement of the Sertoma Club Building roof, this will cost the County \$4,300 and will be paid for from Council's contingency fund. This building is used as a voting site and has also been used in the past to host various County meetings.

Council passed unanimously on second reading an ordinance authorizing the County to solicit a general obligation bond in the amount of \$750,000 for the purchase of county vehicles and other lawful purposes. The duration of the bond will be four years and its interest rate is expected to be around 2%. This bond will be funded through the debt service fund and will not cause any changes to the tax millage.

Council approved on first

reading several ordinances including one that allows the County to postpone for one year the implementation a program that requires the County to revalue property taxes every five years. This revaluing is required by law, but the law also allows for the one year postponement. Administrator Lynn Strom told Council that the extra year for implementation was needed as the County Assessor's office operated short staffed for a time and because the office is still adjusting to new software being used. Reassessments will still be based on 2015 numbers. Another ordinance approved was one to allow the County Administrator and County attorney to work with Robert Quarles in allowing him an easement to run a sewer line. Mr. Quarles lives on Star Road and owns property adjacent to the County's EMS base and the Health Department. A sewer pump station is located between these two buildings, and Mr. Quarles has requested an easement to run a sewer line from the

pump station to his property.) The Edgefield County Water and Sewer Authority support this request which will be done at Mr. Quarles' cost. Councilman Dean Campbell questioned is any other residents in this area would need this easement. Administrator Strom was to check on into that concern. Both of these measures had the full Council's support.

Council was asked to give approval of the job description for a County Planner position. This position was recommended by the Edgefield County Economic Development Committee. Council was also asked to grant approval for this position's inclusion in the 2015-2016 general operating budget. This measure passed in amended form in a 4-1 vote; Councilwoman Betty Butler voted against it.

Council voted as one to award Midwest Maintenance, Inc. of Augusta the job of washing the entire exterior of the courthouse. In addition, the company will also apply a

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waterborne 7% siloxane water repellent to the brick and repair damaged brick using a soft line and sand mortar. Midwest was the lowest of three bids at \$31,000. Council also voted unanimously to award Cullum Electric & Mechanical, Inc., of Greenwood the commercial HVAC maintenance service and repair contract. Cullum was the lowest of two bidders at \$11,980. The term of this contract is for one year with the option to renew for up to five.

Council heard from Louise Settles in the final public speaking portion of their meeting. Settles, speaking on behalf of GLEAMS, remind-

ed Council of her request for financial support of the organization. "Help me with these young kids so we can continue to make Edgefield grow," she said.

In her closing comments, Administrator Lynn Strom advised Council that a bid for a janitorial contract had been withdrawn because it did not specify which buildings would need to be serviced at night. Those who had already responded to the bid were contacted, and a new bid package with the pertinent information has since been issued. Strom also made Council aware of employee training scheduled for Apr. 15 at 2:00 at Council

Chambers. This training will be on the Sovereign Citizens movement and will be conducted by Andy Henderson. This program is not open to the public. Council was also informed that the county was awarded a \$1400 grant by the NRA for body armor for the Sheriff's Office.

In her closing comments, Chairwoman Genia Blackwell congratulated Carolina Coverttech for their recognition by Governor Haley as a 2015 Ambassador for Economic Development.

Being no other business to discuss, Council adjourned.

Tiffani Ireland

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Haley: Zero tolerance for litter in April

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley proclaimed April as Zero Tolerance for Litter month during a press conference at the State House.

Surrounded by law enforcement officers from around the state, Haley addressed the important issue of litter control in South Carolina.

"Everyone coming together today should send a strong message that we love our state, and that it is a great day in South Carolina because we appreciate all

that we have," she said. "But so much of what it means to love our state is to take care of what we have been blessed with.

"What you are seeing here is that we are going to make this month one that we are all very

focused on litter, but it can't be just one month out of the year. This has to be something that all South Carolinians are focused on throughout the year."

Zero Tolerance for Litter is a joint initiative of the South Carolina Lit-

ter Control Association, statewide law enforcement agencies and PalmettoPride to heighten awareness of the litter laws in South Carolina. This public awareness event unites law enforcement officers from municipalities to state agencies in a two-part mission: to enforce the state litter laws and to educate the public on the effects of litter.

For more information, please contact Sarah Lyles at syles@palmettopride.org.



Provided

**Gov. Haley
 talks about
 the state's
 anti-litter
 campaign.**

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¹⁴⁸ **S.C. Legislature: half way home but still lost**

By **PHIL NOBLE**

Guest column

Last week, the S.C. Legislature reached the midpoint of the 2015 session, so they celebrated by closing up shop and going home for a week or so.

Given their lack of substantive achievement so far, I'm not sure that anyone will really realize that they are gone.

There have been a few important things that they have dealt with, but "dealt with" is the key phrase here. They are dealing with some things but nothing much has been resolved. Let's look at the list:

Ethics reform – Despite lots of pious words and self-righteous posturing, nothing much has happened. Gov. Haley has been reduced to showing up at civic clubs around the state and trashing the legislators in the local area who have not supported her bill. Given the fact that her bill is so weak to start with, this says a lot about how serious – or not serious – the Legislature is about real ethics to start with.

Domestic violence – With women in South Carolina dying from criminal

domestic violence at a higher rate than most any state in the nation, you'd

think some-thing would get done. So far the whole thing has become bogged down over the

issue of whether we should take guns away from people who have used them to try and kill their spouse or significant other.

Most of us learned this lesson in kindergarten, when the teacher took away the scissors from bad Bobby after he tried to cut off one of little Suzie's pig-tails. I guess this lesson does not apply to adults in South Carolina if it's a .38 special and Bobby's half drunk.

Highway repair – Here the Legislature just seems to be kicking the can down the road (no pun intended). Unfortunately, the can has fallen into a pothole so deep that it may stay there for a while (sorry, I couldn't resist). The situation has gotten so bad that

the truckers who pay the most in gas taxes are begging the Legislature to raise taxes to fix the roads, and the head of Michelin says the roads are so bad it's hurting their business (and that's from a tire company).

South Carolina State University – If there is one prime example of everything that's wrong with state government, it is how SCSU has been allowed to get into its current mess. It is a compound problem made all the worse by a toxic combination of political corruption, racism (black and white), neglect, incompetence, and just plain old criminal behavior. Everyone agrees that something needs to be done – but no one agrees as to what it is or even who is in charge. The only thing we know for sure is that there will be more lawsuits, more wasted time and money, and the students will be the ones who suffer the most.

The state budget – It seems that at least some folks have been working on the budget a little, and this sort of makes sense, as no one's going to get paid if they don't get this done.



NOBLE





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But, by all accounts, the whole process and likely outcome will be “more of the same” with rational, needs based budgeting giving way to politics as usual budgeting.

As bad as their inaction is on these important issues, what’s really an outrage are all the other really important issues that aren’t even on the table. Here are three big ones.

Tax reform/Act 388 – The one thing that most all legislators are in agreement on is that our tax system is broken and it doesn’t adequately or equitably fund the basic needs of our state. A few years ago the folks in Columbia made it even worse by passing something called Act 388, which was essentially an economic straight jacket that prevented state and local governments from devising a rational, fair tax system.

It is almost universally said by Republicans and Democrats alike that we made a big mistake, but virtually no one is seriously talking about doing something to fix it.

Incumbent protection – If there were two things that would have the biggest

long-term positive impact on improving how our state is governed, they would be term limits and an independent re-apportionment commission to eliminate the system of drawing safe legislative seats.

Without these we will continue to have a system that virtually ensures that incumbents of both parties are almost automatically reelected.

Now I’m not so politically naïve as to think that this is likely to happen any time soon – after all, few incumbents want to do anything that might mean losing their job. But such things have passed in other states, so it is possible.

Today, in our Legislature, and among so-called interest groups as well, almost no one will even acknowledge that we have a problem, and that there are real, workable solutions.

Technology and government – We are in the middle – the beginning actually – of the digital revolution. And indeed it is a revolution that is radically impacting every aspect of our society, from finance, to entertainment, to education, to virtually every-

thing. New technology is having a huge impact on how we live our daily lives, so what are we hearing out of state government? Almost nothing.

In other states, they are making great strides in using technology to make government more efficient, work better, and provide quicker services, all at a lower cost. And what is our state government’s plan?

Google “S.C. state government technology plan” and see what you get ... lots of bits and pieces, but no overall plan.

So now that the Legislature is out of session for a while, maybe they will have a little time to think about what they have done (or not done) so far. And maybe, just maybe, some of them might realize that it’s time for them to take care of the people’s business, and not just their own.

Unless they decide to actually do something constructive, maybe they should just stay home.

Phil Noble is president of the South Carolina New Democrats, E-mail him at phil@scnewdemocrats.org



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148 Screwomatics earns economic development award

By **KEVIN SMITH**

For The Progressive Journal

The S.C. Department of Commerce and Gov. Nikki Haley named Screwomatics of South Carolina Inc. Ambassador for Economic Development.

Tom Hogge, Screwomatics owner and president of manufacturing, accepted the honor on March 24th at the Governor's Mansion in Columbia.

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Award

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"It was an honor to be invited to the Governor's Mansion," Hogge said. "This award highlights our commitment to the economic development of not only the town of Pageland but to all of Chesterfield County."

Screwomatics is one of Chesterfield County's largest employers and has expanded many times over its 26 years in busi-

ness. A new addition is currently being added to the property on Highway 9 West in Pageland.

In addition to The Ambassador for Economic Development award, Screwomatics was recently honored with the Business Expansion award by the Pageland Chamber of Commerce.

"We've enjoyed continuous growth in Chester-

field County and look forward to even more in the coming months," said Billy Hogge, Screwomatics Business Operations manager.

Following the ceremony, honorees were treated to a personal tour of the Governor's Mansion and complex.

More information about Screwomatics can be found at Screwomatics.com.

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Richardson rises through the ranks to become solicitor

BY MICHAEL SMITH
FOR THE HERALD

HEATHER ELVIS CASE

been transitioning from a historically Democrat stronghold to Republican.

Jimmy Richardson thought he was going to be fired.

The year was 1998, and Greg Hembree had just defeated former Solicitor Ralph Wilson in a hotly contested seat for the 15th Judicial Circuit.

As Richardson recalls, Hembree wasn't expected to win. Aside from working as the North Myrtle Beach city attorney for six years, Hembree's political experience at the time was limited.

"Greg was so far of an outsider, I never thought he had a chance to win that election," Richardson said.

So he campaigned for Wilson, the incumbent Democrat.

It seemed like a logical move because Wilson had just given the recent law school graduate his first prosecutor office job, and there were still plenty of Democrat-heavy precincts in Horry and Georgetown counties to ensure job security in the solicitor's office.

One day in September 1998, Richardson and other solicitor's office employees were at the Aynor Harvest Hoe Down when Hembree decided to approach the young lawyer, in his hometown no less.

"Jimmy was from the Aynor area, but he was up there campaigning for my opponent," Hembree recalls. "He had on a 'Ralph Wilson' T-shirt and was up there waving it around."

What neither Richardson nor Hembree realized at the time was that the political tides had begun to shift.

Horry County had already

The shift was less pronounced in Georgetown County, but enough precincts flipped Republican to swing the election results. Hembree went on to defeat Wilson by more than 3,000 votes, picking up 52.5 percent of the voting electorate.

Richardson got nervous.

He had just landed a position with Wilson after clerking the previous year with former Circuit Judge Sidney Floyd, which Richardson said was a temporary position.

"Judge Floyd had a rule where you could only work one year," Richardson said. "It didn't matter if he liked you or disliked you. You had a job for one year."

Once his year was up, Floyd referred Richardson to Wilson, who hired him as an assistant solicitor in August.

After November it appeared the opportunity would evaporate.

Sometime during the lame duck session between the November election and Jan. 1, Richardson mulled the possibilities as he drove to North Myrtle Beach to meet his new boss.

"I really did [think] I was getting fired," Richardson said. "I had a job for six weeks and now I'm out on my ear."

Hembree, however, had other plans.

"Jimmy walked in and said, 'I know you're going to fire me.' He said, 'I know I was out there waving that sign and waving that T-shirt,'" Hembree recalls.

"[Richardson said], 'but I want to say one thing. That was my boss and I was loyal to my boss and if you're my boss, I'll be just as loyal to you.'"

Hembree was impressed by Richardson's candor and pledge of loyalty, so he kept him aboard.

Richardson would go on to rise through the ranks, first becoming a team leader and then succeeding Fran Humphries as deputy solicitor when Humphries decided to enter private practice.

Sixteen years after that fateful election, Richardson now holds Hembree's old post, which Hembree vacated when he ran for the S.C. Senate District 28 seat.

"I strongly supported him when he was appointed to fill out my unexpired term and supported him when he ran for solicitor," Hembree said.

In 2012, Gov. Nikki Haley formally appointed Richardson to fill out Hembree's unexpired term. Richardson won re-election in 2014 after running unopposed. He still keeps a reminder of that anecdote from that election on his cell phone.

"I got 99.4 percent of the vote. I did go through all of the write-ins too. I think Mickey or Jesus was second," Richardson said.

His accomplishments

In his short time as solicitor, Richardson has focused heavily on trying to clear the backlog of cases.

At his swearing in ceremony in January, Richardson said the 15th Judicial Circuit is one of only two in the state to have met S.C. Supreme Court guidelines for moving cases.

Richardson said there's a judicial mandate to move 80 percent of its cases within 540 days. He said only the 15th Circuit and 16th Circuit, which includes York and Union counties, have accomplished that.

He credited hard work not only by prosecutors, but also defense attorneys.

"I don't see it as an adversarial relationship," Richardson

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Solicitor Jimmy Richardson looks on during a Jan. 30 bond hearing as Terry Elvis (left) and his wife Debbi (right) argue against granting bail for Sidney and Tammy Moorer.

said. "It is an adversarial system, but we really are friends."

The 15th Circuit moved 18,027 warrants from 2011-2012. That increased to nearly 20,000 a year in 2013 and 2014.

Richardson said those numbers do not include the explosion of juvenile cases in the family court, nor do they reflect criminal domestic violence and driving under the influence charges in magistrate's court.

"I believe this is the job that God created me to do," he said. "This is my perfect job. I absolutely love what I do. I love the people I work with and I love the people of Horry and Georgetown counties. I could not think of a better job for me."

In his time with the solicitor's office, Richardson has tried numerous murder cases, earning the respect of judges, attorneys and law enforcement.

Horry County Sheriff Phillip Thompson spoke of that respect at Richardson's swearing in ceremony in January. That

respect is not only within law enforcement circles, but it also "applies to all aspects of Jimmy Richardson," Thompson said.

"You're always willing to sit down and listen. You're always willing to talk," he said.

Thompson added that Richardson's positive attitude and unflappability make him the perfect person to prosecute cases in Horry and Georgetown counties.

"You have that right attitude and that right personality," Thompson said. "You are right for this job."

Multiple missing persons

In the last 15 years, Richardson recalls only one Horry County missing persons case that turned into a full-blown trial.

Richardson was with the solicitor's office when Horry County police charged Vartasha McCollough-White and her husband, Eddie Kevin Bennett of Loris with homicide by child abuse in the disappearance of their daughter Ky-

nande Bennett.

Bennett was 4 years old when her parents reported her missing from Whiteville, N.C. Kmart on Sept. 29, 2002. Her body has never been found.

In 2005, charges against Eddie Bennett were dropped due to lack of evidence. But in 2006 a jury convicted McCollough-White of homicide by child abuse, unlawful neglect of a child and inflicting great bodily harm on a child. She was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Now the solicitor's office is handling three high-profile murder cases involving missing persons.

Christopher Anfony Brown and Javon Dion Gibbs have been charged with murder in connection with the disappearance of Zachary Malinowski, who was last seen in August 2013.

Randy Gale Robinson has been charged with murder and obstruction of justice in the Jan. 22, 2014 disappearance of Angie Pipkin.

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Arrest warrants say Robinson killed Pipkin, dismembered her and disposed of her body parts into a Darlington County river.

And, of course, Richardson's office is prosecuting Sidney and Tammy Moorers in the disappearance of Heather Elvis, who was last heard from Dec. 18, 2013. The Moorers have been charged with murder, kidnapping, obstruction of justice and two counts of indecent exposure.

Richardson couldn't discuss particulars of the Elvis case because of a gag order that remains in effect. But the solicitor said he couldn't remember a time when so many high-profile missing persons cases unfolded simultaneously.

"We got hit with three in six months," Richardson said. "All three of them were back-to-back-to-back. These missing body cases are much harder to deal with."

Richardson has maintained a relatively low profile in the Heather Elvis case, allowing assistant solicitors Nancy Livesay and Martin Spratlin to handle most courtroom affairs.

He has, however, become the public face behind the prosecution efforts, speaking at news conferences before the gag order and coordinating press statements after the order took effect.

In 2014, Richardson tapped private attorney Henrietta Golding to assist, mainly with First Amendment issues associated with the gag order and also to argue against the release of search warrants in the case.

And as recently as January, the solicitor's office asked the

S.C. Highway Patrol to close a portion of Highway 814, the road where the Moorers live, as part of the Heather Elvis investigation.

"I can say that was us. It was on the Moorers case, but the specifics of it really can't get into," Richardson said in January.

The Moorers were scheduled to go on trial the week of May 11, but prosecutors and defense attorneys have mutually agreed to a continuance, according to an order signed March 24. A new trial date hasn't been set. Richardson said it wouldn't be until the end of May before alternative trial dates receive further consideration.

Regardless of when the trial begins, Hembree said Richardson's temperance makes him the perfect attorney to oversee prosecution efforts in the Heather Elvis case, which has generated considerable angst in the community.

"When you're in the decision making process and managing the case, there's no place for hot head activity," Hembree said. "You don't want to react out of emotion. You don't want to react out of anger."

Hembree called Richardson "unflappable" in the courtroom.

"You have to be very thick skinned and well-grounded. People are clamoring for some kind of action, and you can't let that drive the train," Hembree continued. "When everyone is going crazy and losing their cool, he has the ability to bring the attention down."





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Solicitor Jimmy Richardson delivers a speech during his swearing in ceremony in January.

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148 It's got to be fair for all

Caveat Emptor—Let the buyer beware.

That's the stance the city of Myrtle Beach is taking on the latest trend in getting around town.

Called ridesharing, or in South Carolina legislative legal parlance—a transportation network company, Uber is a 21st Century phenomenon that has come into 300 cities worldwide.

In brief, potential riders download an app to their smart phone along with their name, address and credit card.

When they need to get somewhere, they go to their phone and signal Uber which sends a car right over. These are the private cars of independent contract drivers who have signed up to work for Uber.

Essentially, in a nutshell, passengers use Uber like they would a taxi but often times the rates are cheaper and the cars are a lot nicer.

Sounds like a good idea whose time has come. It just might be but there are some other problems that go along with the concept.

When Uber first started popping up in Myrtle Beach about a year or so ago, mostly in the Broadway at the Beach area, the city and the dozens of taxicab owners in town were outraged.

City officials worried that the passengers were hopping into vehicles that might not be safe and whose drivers might not have adequate insurance.

And on top of that, these drivers were making money in town without a business license.

The taxi drivers were beside themselves because they are part of one of the heaviest regulated businesses around.

Their numbers are controlled by the city; only a finite number of medallions are issued for taxis in the city. A taxi owner must possess a medallion in order to do business in town. And these aren't cheap.

One taxi owner said an initial medallion costs \$1,000. Then the city tacks on another



A DIFFERENT
DRUM

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er \$300 per vehicle on the road along with a business license for the company.

Each taxi vehicle is also subject to periodic inspections by the city police to make sure everything is working the way it should and passengers are at least riding in a safe vehicle.

Most taxi owners we talked to had rather not have to pay all those fees but they understand it's

part of the cost of doing business. And they really like the idea that the police keep a check on their vehicles.

So when Uber first appeared last year, they applauded the city's efforts to put a stop to the service. Of course they were concerned about the riders' safety but there was another basic element playing a big part in their ire.

Here was a rapidly growing form of competition coming in and taking their business that didn't have to abide by the myriad of regulations that taxis are subjected to.

When Uber first came in, city police ran sting operations and cracked down on the Uber guys and gals who were picking up passengers and didn't have a business license. Some even went to jail.

City officials admitted they were in a bit of a quandary because Uber was gaining popularity worldwide—even South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley took the unusual stance of vigorously defending Uber. The Public Service Commission said the company couldn't do business in South Carolina but then reversed itself to give Uber a brief reprieve until this summer.

Legislation has been introduced in the state Senate to allow Uber to set up shop in the state and not be under the auspices of the PSC.



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Apparently all was well in Myrtle Beach until word got out that the city has had a change of heart and is now allowing Uber drivers to take on riders as long as they pass a background check and buy a business license.

That's all they have to do.

And that's why the taxi owners are understandably upset.

The city is calling Uber a "personal service" and not a taxi even though they pick up passengers and charge them for it—just like a taxi.

And Uber drivers don't have to have a medallion which means there's a potential of many more of them plying the streets than there are taxis.

The Uber cars don't have to come off the road to be inspected like taxis do so the cars may be safe and may not be.

Now, granted, taxi companies probably need to take a look at why Uber is becoming so popular. Today's world wants everything NOW. They don't want to have to wait on a taxi or try to flag one down.

It's probably time the taxi companies upgrade their technology a bit and start using apps or whatever the latest gadget may be.

But this isn't about technology, it's about fairness.

Uber is a "personal service" and not a taxi service—really?

Let's see, somebody needs to get somewhere so they put a call out—be it by voice, app or flailing their arm—and a vehicle picks them up for a fee.

Either make Uber go by the same standards or drop the regulation of the taxis.

I think the "Duck Standard" should apply here.

You know—if it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck...

Then it's probably a taxi.

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Cab drivers saying city taking them for a ride

BY TOM O'DARE
THE HERALD

Many people in cities across the world are using the latest trend to get from Point A to Point B—Uber.

If you have a smart phone, you're just one click away from getting a

ride with Uber anywhere you want to go in Myrtle Beach or hundreds of other cities across the world.

This service hires private individuals who use their own vehicles to pick up passengers. And unlike the taxi industry, for the most part, Uber is only slightly regulated, if at all.

And cab owners in Myrtle Beach say that's not fair.

When Uber came on the scene a year ago, city officials and taxi owners protested with city officials con-

cerned about passenger safety and taxi owners saying they wanted an even playing field.

The city police began undercover sting operations, nailing Uber drivers who were operating in the city without a business license.

When the matter first came before the Myrtle Beach city council, city attorney Tom Ellenburg noted a list of city violations he found with the

company including not having a city business license, lack of a taxi or limousine credential and proper license tag and the danger for the passengers and drivers without adequate insurance.

Fast-forward a year and things

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CAB DRIVERS: City viewing Uber as 'a personal service' and not a taxi

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have changed in the city.

According to city spokesperson Mark Kruea, nine Uber drivers have been given the go-ahead to operate in the city.

Kruea said anyone wanting to carry passengers for Uber simply must pay for a business license and pass a background check. With that, they will be given a "U" sticker and allowed to operate.

And that's where taxi owners bristle.

Tom Martin, owner of Capital Cab, said his industry is highly regulated and he has no problem with that.

"We're regulated and inspected and that's a good thing," Martin said. "Having private individuals using their own cars is not safe for our residents or visitors."

Martin said a taxi owner has to pay \$1,000 for a taxi medallion in order to operate within the city and since the city has capped the number of medallions that are available, somebody has to buy a full business in order to get into the field.

He said he paid over \$50,000 to obtain his current company.

In addition, the companies pay \$300 a year per vehicle along with a business license.

"A couple of times a year, we're inspected by the city police," Martin said. "And the police do a great job and are very fair to us. It's to make sure that passengers are getting into a safe vehicle."

He added that taxis are metered and have to charge set amounts inside the city and have to provide proof of adequate insurance to cover the passengers.

"These guys come in without having the right insurance and can charge anything they want," Martin said. "Allowing them to operate makes our taxi medallions worthless."

Kruea said the city is now viewing Uber as a "personal service" and not a taxi.

As for the safety and insurance issues, the city is taking a "buyer beware" stance.

"If a passenger wants to get into a car where the insurance is unregulated, it's the rider's decision," Kruea said. "Maybe the passengers should ask, 'what sort of insurance company do you have and does your insurance company know you're doing this' before they leave."

Kruea said the city police would still be running sting operations to find Uber drivers with no business license.

He added the city is waiting to see what the state does in allowing Uber to continue.

Governor Nikki Haley came out in favor of Uber last year.

Currently, there is a bill in the South Carolina Senate dealing with rideshare companies.

The bill calls these types of companies Transportation Network Companies and would remove them from being regulated by the Public Service Commission.

Earlier this year, the PSC banned Uber from operating within the state but later

"stayed" that order until this summer. If the legislature doesn't act before the stay is up, the ban goes back into place.

The Senate bill would require Uber to carry a specific insurance policy and would require Uber drivers to pick up passengers only through their system and not from riders hailing them down on the street like normally is done for a taxi.

An Uber spokesperson said the insurance question has been cleared up company-wide.

Kaitlin Durkosh said a passenger using their service is now covered by Uber's insurance.

She added that using Uber is a much safer experience than using a typical taxi because each trip is GPS tracked and by using the app system, no money is exchanged within the vehicle lessening the likelihood of a robbery.

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148 Contact South Carolina 811 before digging

By Emily Meler

South Carolina 811 has announced results from a recent survey that found nearly half (45 percent) of American homeowners who plan to dig this year for projects like landscaping, installing a fence or mailbox or building a deck, pond or patio, will put themselves and their communities at risk by not calling 811 at least three full business days beforehand to learn the approximate location of underground utilities. Extrapolated to the full population of U.S. homeowners, approximately 38.6 million people will dig this year without first having underground utility lines marked.

The national public opinion survey of 646 homeowners, conducted Feb. 25-March 1, 2015, also found that 79 percent of those who plan to dig believe that something negative – such as a service interruption, bodily harm or financial ramifications – could occur if they were to dig without knowing the location of underground utilities.

An underground utility line is damaged once every six minutes nationwide because

someone decided to dig without first calling 811, according to data collected by Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the national organization dedicated to protecting underground utility lines and the safety of people who dig near them. Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in damage to gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines, which can lead to service disruptions, serious injuries and costly repairs.

"The results of the survey are troubling because the math doesn't add up in safety's favor," said Misty Wise, executive director of South Carolina 811. "As do-it-yourselfers plan gardening and home improvement projects this spring, we are reminding South Carolina residents that striking underground utilities is a serious concern and can cause not only inconvenient service outages for entire communities, but even bodily harm in worst-case scenarios. A free call or click to have underground utility lines marked before digging reduces the likelihood of an incident occurring to just 1 percent."

Everyone who calls South Carolina 811 at 811 at least three full business days before digging is connected to South Carolina's one-call notification center, which will take the caller's information and communicate it to local member utility companies. Professional locators will then visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines with spray paint, flags or both. Once a site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging around the marked areas.

To help put its free service even more at the fingertips of South Carolinians, South Carolina 811 launched a new mobile app in February for users to request that buried utilities be located, check on the status of their request, report damages and access information about South Carolina law. The app is available to Android users and will soon be available for Apple devices.

Gov. Nikki Haley is among the more than 30 governors proclaiming April as National Safe Digging Month in an effort to bring extra attention to the issue of underground utility line safety and reduce



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the risk of unnecessary infrastructure damage. As part of National Safe Digging Month, South Carolina 811 encourages homeowners to take the following steps when planning a digging project this spring:

- Always contact South Carolina 811 by calling 811, submitting a request online at www.sc811.com or through the South Carolina 811 mobile app at least three full business days before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.

- Plan ahead. Notify South Carolina 811 on Monday or Tuesday for work planned for an upcoming weekend, providing ample time for the approximate location of lines to be marked.

- Confirm that all lines have been marked.

- Learn what the various colors of paint and flags represent at www.sc811.com/homeowners.

- Consider moving the location of your project if it is near utility line markings.

- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that South Carolina 811 has been contacted. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.