



From Richland County Councilman Norman Jackson

District 11



Greetings District 11,

As your voice on Richland County Council, I strive to make sure the interests and concerns of everyone in District 11 are represented, especially about how tax dollars are used. It is vitally important that the unincorporated areas of the County receive the benefits of the transportation penny, hospitality tax proceeds and other programs and services.

I also want to make sure you are informed about events and other happenings in District 11. Therefore, I hope you will take the time to read the information presented in this update prepared especially for residents in Lower Richland.

I welcome your feedback and thank you for the privilege of representing you on Richland County Council.

*Norman Jackson,
Richland County Council
District 11*

Lower Richland Sewer Project

While plans for the Lower Richland Sewer Project have been delayed, the project is expected to proceed. The concerns raised by many citizens have been heard and will be addressed. It is my goal to ensure this project is something we can all support.

As discussed in several community meetings, the benefits of the sewer line are clear:

- The current approved Eastover Wastewater Treatment Plant has a capacity of 750,000 gallons and can serve up to 2,500 homes.
- The project will assist McEntire by allowing it to tap on to the sewer line, instead of treating its own wastewater. The base is the only one in the United States to do so.
- The County's monthly sewer rate is a flat fee of \$37.60 per residence, whereas a typical City of Columbia customer bill varies from \$45 to \$80.

Please be on the lookout for more information about the project as we move forward.

TRANSPORTATION PENNY AND OTHER COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Several projects funded by the transportation penny program will benefit District 11. Future plans include a series of road widening and intersection improvement projects. The road widenings are:

- Leesburg Road from Fairmont Road to Lower Richland Boulevard
- Pineview Road from Garners Ferry Road to Bluff Road

A neighborhood improvement project, Southeast Richland Neighborhood, includes three projects which are a multi-use path on Rabbit Run from Rabbit Run Connector to Lower Richland Boulevard, a multi-use path on Lower Richland Boulevard from Rabbit Run to the High School, and a Rabbit Run Connector which will be a two-lane road on a new location from US 76/378 (Garners Ferry Road)/Garners Ferry Sports Complex to S-2089 (Rabbit Run), approximately 0.5 miles.

As many of you know, I'm a big supporter of McEntire Air National Guard. Richland County is fortunate to have the best tactical fighting squadron in the country and one of the best in the world right here in District 11. I've endorsed several studies in recent years that provide land use recommendations that would ensure the viability of the installation and its mission. That's why I am again lending my support to the base as it vies to be one of two bases to house the Air Force's new F-35 fighter jet program.

McEntire contributes to the local economy, and like the other military installations here, it's a major point of pride. A decision is expected in the next few months on the F-35 program. Being the base for the program would be major victory for our community.

In addition to the transportation program and the possible McEntire addition, the Recreation Commission and other organizations continue to enhance the Lower Richland community by offering a variety of activities, learning opportunities and health care services.

Richland County provides funding for the Recreation Commission, which has several facilities in Lower Richland that offer great programs. For example, the Adult Activity and Education Center on Garners Ferry Road has regular adult exercise classes and other activities, and the education center offers a variety of computer-related classes. For more information, I suggest you visit www.richlandcountyrecreation.com, call 741-7272 or stop by one of these great facilities.

The Hopkins Pediatrics and Family Medicine Community Health Center on Garners Ferry Road area also is serving citizens well. The facility, which received funding through a federal grant administered by Richland County's Community Development Department, opened in 2014. It is a much-needed and great addition to our area, which was medically underserved for years prior to this facility opening.

Hospitality Tax Program

The equitable distribution of hospitality tax money is a top priority for me. I'm adamant that the citizens of Lower Richland benefit from the program. I think we're moving in the right direction with the establishment of Pinewood Lake Park and various activities that are bringing people to Lower Richland to see firsthand the beauty of our community.



In 2003, Richland County Council passed an ordinance establishing a 2 percent hospitality tax on all prepared food and beverages sold in the unincorporated areas of Richland County. The proceeds from this tax are to be used for the dedicated purpose of promoting tourism in Richland County.

The County's h-tax program has greatly benefitted organizations within the city limits of Columbia:

- Historic Columbia, which maintains the Woodrow Wilson House – the only presidential site in South Carolina and owned by the County – has received \$3.3 million in h-tax funding since 2010. The County also provided more than \$5 million for the renovation of the historic house, plus more than \$350,000 to repair the steps.
- The Columbia Museum of Art has received more than \$5.5 million in h-tax funding since 2010, plus additional funding for renovations – bringing the total so far of more than \$10 million.
- EdVenture has received nearly \$1.4 million in h-tax funding since 2010.
- H-tax funds also support the County-owned Township Auditorium, which also was awarded \$11 million in 2008 toward its renovation project. Since 2010, it has received nearly \$2 million in h-tax funding from the County.

While all of these entities each have their own merit, not one brings tourism to Lower Richland. Several organizations have stepped up, applied for and qualified to receive grant funding. They are helping to shine a spotlight on our corner of Richland County.

The Second Chance Afterschool Learning Environment, Inc. (SCALE) has received approximately \$80,000 in h-tax funds annually for the past three years to promote several programs that draw people from all around to Lower Richland. The reggae-themed Sunsplash, Horror Hill Historic Festival, SC Gospel Fest and several related events have been big successes.

The South East Rural Community Outreach Ministry (SERCO) received approximately \$250,000 annually to hold several programs, including the popular Swamp Fest, Lower Richland Heritage Program, Veterans Day Parade and more.

The Kingsville Historical Foundation, which puts on the Kingsville Festival, was allocated \$61,000 this fiscal year and The Lower Richland Sweet Potato Festival received \$50,000. People look forward to these two annual events each year and they draw big crowds.

Perhaps one of the boldest investments in Lower Richland was Pinewood Lake Park. The property was purchased at a cost of \$1 million for 44 acres, including a 20 acre lake. An additional \$6 million is being used to develop the property with walking trails, a pier, two public restrooms, a 500-seat amphitheater, a 12,000 square-foot-multipurpose building with a capacity of 1,600, a splash pad and play park for children, exercise stations, picnic sheds with grills, park benches made by Lower Richland High School workshop students, a 12-bed community garden and other amenities.



The Pinewood Lake Foundation was approved by County Council to manage and promote the park, until the County's Conservation Department takes over next year. The foundation has held a variety of events at the park to draw more people to enjoy it and Lower Richland in general.

As I mentioned, hospitality tax grants provide financial support to organizations and projects whose primary mission is to attract tourists by promoting dining and overnight accommodations. Any qualified nonprofit, regardless of its mission, can apply for h-tax grants. The County's grants office investigates and verifies every nonprofit organization that applies, and all approved funding requests are granted through a majority vote by Richland County Council. No funding is approved by any individual Councilmember.

Taxpayers can be assured that all allocations of h-tax dollars are vetted, researched, studied, voted and approved by a majority of Richland County Councilmembers.

Councilmembers at one time competed to fund projects in their districts, but recently Council decided to be fairer and divide the funds equally. This gives each district an opportunity to benefit from h-tax proceeds.

The grant cycle for fiscal year 2018 opens in January 2017 – and this time, all grants must be completed online. Visit www.rcgov.us or call 576-2069 for more information on the grant process.

It is my hope that more Lower Richland-based organizations will apply to draw even more tourists to the community.