

Another view of Openness and transparency in county government – slouching toward redistricting IV

By Chuck Cook

By the time this article goes to press and is available for public review the McCormick County Council will more than likely have approved the second reading of its redistricting plan for council members. The first reading of the ordinance establishing what will be new council member boundaries for the next decade was passed at our special called meeting on Jan. 11, but without designating one of the three proposed options that have been developed with the assistance of the state's Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. The second reading, likewise, does not name the option proposed for implementation in the draft ordinance that is the first decision item on the Jan. 18 council meeting agenda that was published on Friday, Jan. 14.

Although a copy of the draft ordinance was included in the material provided to council members in advance of the second reading, it was – unfortunately – incomplete, as it did not include the attachments that provide information on the selection decision by council, including an Exhibit A (statistics) and Exhibit B (the map of the new district boundary lines). On its face, this would appear to be inconsistent with the provisions of county ordinance 2-84(d) which provides, in part, that, “At least two days prior to the second reading of an ordinance, *complete* typewritten or printed copies of the text of the ordinance and the committee report shall be delivered to every member of the council.” [emphasis added] Obviously, unless council acted to waive the provisions of its own procedures, approval of the second reading was – at a minimum – procedurally deficient. Nevertheless, there is much more to it than this.

First, although all three options developed for council by the RFA have been posted on the county's website for the past three weeks or so and have been available for public scrutiny, it may be difficult for citizens to focus on the advantages and disadvantages of all three options instead of the one specific option favored by a majority of council members. A public hearing on these options has been scheduled for 6 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 7 at the McCormick Middle School cafeteria, but a lack of public focus will make it difficult to produce the quality of information required for meaningful council consideration and public approval.

Second, county council districts are made up of discrete blocks of residents that are established for the purpose of carrying out the decennial census of population. If my recollection is correct, there are more than 800 individual census blocks in McCormick County that, together, contain all 9,526 county residents, as of the official date of the 2020 census. Deducting one census block of 899 prisoners residing in the state penitentiary leaves 8,627 residents for distribution or 1,725 residents in each of five council districts. It is important to recognize how these council district options have been developed to understand that serious objections to any of the districts proposed for adoption may, potentially, be mitigated by simply tweaking their construction by adding and/or deleting a census block or two from the proposed districts. Tweaking one option favored by council is a far more simple process in arriving at a consensus than working with three different options.

Finally, if council has not made a firm proposal on redistricting its boundaries until the agenda for its monthly meeting on Feb. 15 is made public on Feb. 11 – a decision for which the council chair has the sole and final discretion – it will be too late to schedule another public hearing or even for citizens to request to appear before council to speak on the option selected. In effect, given the prerogatives currently delegated to the council chair there is no legal or procedural obligation for him to consult other council members regarding the redistricting option proposed for a third and final reading, to consider any objections to the selected option raised by citizens at the Feb. 7 public hearing, or to consider minor adjustments to the option that would have made it more acceptable to the public. Potentially, this would constitute the ultimate expression of a lack of openness and transparency regarding the most important decision to be made by county council between 2011 when council redistricting occurred after the 2010 census and 2031 when council will next change its boundaries after the 2030 decennial census.

An update on what actually occurred at the Jan. 18 council meeting and what it means for the county will be provided in Part V.



City Southern Belles hold Christmas Fashion Show at McCormick Senior Center



Four members of the City Southern Belles joined Kathleen Morgan, fourteen ladies and two gentlemen who lunch at the McCormick Senior Center on Dec. 17 to present a fashion show of red and purple fashions. The men were good sports and even wore red hats!

Organizers of the event were (left to right) Bunny Cason, Linda Kidd, Pat Lee, Aldene Dorn, and Kathleen. The ladies were escorted into the dining area by the male participants as their outfits were described in great detail. Following the fashion show, a time of singing favorite Christmas carols was enjoyed.

The Red Hatters were joined by 11-time winner of the Carolina Beach Music Awards' Female Vocalist of the Year recognition – Rhonda McDaniel – who sang by special request. Rhonda (seated back right on the photo to the left) joined the City Southern Belles for lunch afterwards. The City Southern Belles are appreciative to the McCormick Senior Center for helping provide this fun opportunity.

SMILE

Dr. W. Walsh, DMD Walsh Dental Associates

Dear Friends, in this new year, we are reminded how very privileged we are to count special friends like you among our many blessings. We are honored that you have entrusted Walsh Dental Associates with the responsibility of serving your family's dental care needs and are grateful for the confidence you have shown us. We want you to remember that we are only a partner in your dental health. You need to do your part at home to keep periodontal disease at bay.



Taking care of your teeth at home can help you maintain your dental health and prevent periodontal, or gum, disease from developing. A whole arsenal of dental health tools is available in drugstores to help you clean your teeth at home. These range from regular toothbrushes to power toothbrushes, inter-dental cleaners (picks, etc.), waxed and un-waxed floss, oral irrigators, and mouth rinses. Our staff is always available to help you decide which of these tools you might want to include in your daily cleaning routine.

If you neglect the care of your teeth at home and fail to go to the dentist regularly, accumulated plaque could potentially lead to the development of empty spaces around your teeth. These spaces could eventually lead to the destruction of bone and other fragile tissues supporting your teeth, and you could lose your teeth. The good news is that being diligent about your dental health care and getting regular dental checkups can prevent plaque from forming and even reverse early gum disease. A plaque-free mouth is a healthy mouth, along with regular dental checkups, proper brushing and flossing.

From everyone at Walsh Dental Associates, we wish you and yours good health, happiness and prosperity this new year and for many years to come.

Funding, from page 1

speakers did a great job condensing the information and presenting it comprehensively,” she said.

Attendees received handouts containing printed versions of the presentation and contact information associated with each funding source.

“I believe the attendees were encouraged by the opportunities available to them,” she added.

For more information about community development, contact USCOG at 864-941-8050.

The McCormick Weather Report

By Bob Edmonds *Measurements taken at Cedar Hill Rd.

	Lows	Highs	Rain/Etc.
Tuesday, January 11	28°	48°	
Wednesday, January 12	26°	52°	
Thursday, January 13	32°	59°	
Friday, January 14	34°	59°	
Saturday, January 15	36°	48°	
Sunday, January 16	33°	29°	1.03"
Monday, January 17	34°	42°	

Free Books

Would you like to receive free books for your preschool child(ren)? McCormick County First Steps and Dolly Parton extend the invitation for you and your preschool aged child to enroll in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. To be eligible the child must be preschool age (birth to age 5) and must be a resident of McCormick County. If you are interested, contact NaToya Cartledge at McCormick County First Steps (located at McCormick Elementary School Room 133) 864-443-5382.

American Legion

McCormick American Legion Post #19 is now open for rent. For booking information, contact James Burt at 864-391-7421 or Mat Hardy at 864-602-0256.

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