



Newberry Utility Director Tim Baker, City Manager Matt DeWitt, and Mayor Foster Senn (l-r) along with WCFIBER Board President, Wes McAllister and WCFIBER CEO, Jeff Wilson.

WCFIBER recognized by Newberry exec team

By Bob Stockton

Newberry Mayor Foster Senn, City Manager Matt DeWitt and Utility Director Tim Baker presented WCFIBER Board President Wes McAllister and CEO Jeff Wilson with a replica of the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award, an economic development award Newberry received for its Fiber to the Home project.

“We were struggling as a community with slow internet for years, then we formed a partnership with WCFIBER that has been fantastic,” said Mayor Senn. “Getting broadband fiber throughout the City of Newberry has greatly improved the lives of our citizens.

“When Newberry won a statewide award for the project, we felt the partnership won the award. We decided to make a replica of the award to present to WCFIBER,” said Mayor Senn.

The Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award was created in 2010 and named after a Charleston mayor. The City of Newberry and 27 other cities and towns submitted entries for the award. With WCFIBER’s help, the City of Newberry became the first municipality in South Carolina to serve all its residents and businesses over a fiber optic network.

Planning for the fiber build-out began in 2018 and was set to be a three-year project, but was expedited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This was our first partnership endeavor with a public entity, and this partnership paved the way for so many more,” McAllister said.

“We are changing lives and business by bringing fiber internet to Newberry, which is an investment in the community and its citizens. Our partnership with Newberry has been great for our company, but the connections we made along the way were priceless,” said McAllister.

Messenger Mail

And throw away the key

The letter appearing in the 2/10 edition, talking about the GOP loss of its soul, does not need any embellishment from me or anyone. The writer hit many nails on the head.

One thing has been obvious to me during all the events and words since 1/6/21 – there is NO sense of outrage coming from the GOP (rare exceptions) that a sitting President did the following:

1- Destroyed Presidential records which should, by law, have been turned over to the National Archives;

2- Mishandled other records, 15 boxes worth, by moving them to his Florida home (some may have been classified);

Side note, do you remember when candidate Trump incited his rally crowds to yell “Lock Her Up,” referring to Hillary Clinton’s mishandling of thousands of emails? Why don’t we hear those dulcet tones again, from either GOP or Democratic sources, regarding the mishandling and destruction of these materials by Trump?

3- Pressured various State elections officials to change the results of the state’s Presidential election tally, looking for the necessary switched votes to flip respective states. Caught on tap, no explanation or excuses needed, too late to deny commission of this crime;

4- Incited the 1/6 insurrection, causing death and destruction by his followers at the center building of our democracy. And please stop calling those events peaceful demonstrations, political discourse, or anything other than an attempt to prevent the peaceful transfer of power;

By inciting that insurrection (it was more than just a riot), Trump himself aided and abetted seditious acts.

Sedition is overt conduct, such as speech and organization that tends toward rebellion against the established order. It often includes subversion of the Constitution and incitement of discontent, or insurrection against established authority, such as the Electoral Vote certification in Congress on 1/6.

The 14th Amendment of that same Constitution, Section 3, specifically forbids those who have taken an oath to defend the Constitution, such as members of Congress and Presidents, from engaging in seditious acts, such as what happened on 1/6. There were over 100 members of Congress who, by fighting the certification of the results of a free and fair election (NO, Trump did NOT win), committed this serious felony. As did the sitting President at the time.

This is just a short list of the continuous abuses of power practiced by the 45th President, all fraying away on the foundations of our democracy. Where is the GOP outrage over this?

- David Flom

Democracy

Meaningful democracy cannot survive without the free flow of information, even (or especially) when that information threatens the privileged and the powerful. We need to remember that. - Paul Wellstone

- Mary Lou Hoyt

Another view of

Openness and transparency in county government – slouching toward redistricting VI

By Chuck Cook

Following the Feb. 7 public hearing on the redistricting of county council districts, council chair Jennings called a special meeting of council members on Feb. 14 to discuss the three options that have been developed for consideration. The results of the public hearing – with 4 of the 6 speakers strongly supporting option 3 and none supporting any of the other two options – were somewhat surprising and probably precipitated the chair’s decision to have a further discussion on the issue prior to the third and final reading of the redistricting ordinance. That decision will have been made by the time this issue of the *Messenger* goes to print.

The Feb. 14 meeting of council was hardly decisive, but did clarify what is likely to be the two options that will be presented for a vote at the Feb. 15 regular monthly meeting of council. With a full house at the special called meeting – a larger turnout than for the Feb. 7 public hearing – councilman Bernie Hamby and I indicated our preference for option 3, while councilman Henry Banks and councilwoman Jackie Brown stated their preference for option 2. Council chair Jennings declined to state a preference, although – if past voting history is any indication – it will likely be for option 2. Although the public was not allowed to speak at the meeting, about half of those in attendance displayed signs and placards printed with the number three or stating an explicit preference for “Option 3.”

Those who have followed this process for the past few months will know that there is very little difference between options 1 and 3, while option 2 is structured much differently. This is also not surprising, as option 2 was personally developed by Chairman Jennings during his December visit to the state’s Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs and with their assistance. Options 1 and 3, on the other hand, were developed as legitimate alternatives by RFA sometime later and sent to Mr. Jennings for his consideration.

Without going into details, the differences between option 2 v. options 1 and 3 are fairly fundamental. Option 2 tends to increase the concentration of the white population in the county into two county council districts – districts 2 and 3, while slightly increasing the white population in district 1. Options 1 and 3 provide more racially diverse voting populations in districts 1, 2 and 3 that recognize the radical changes in the demographics of the county during the past 20 years – from a majority black to a majority white population. That would probably not be a significant factor in electing county councilmen except for the undisputed statistical results of the past few council elections that clearly show an exceptionally high correlation between racial and party preferences for black voters. In brief, option two is designed to maintain – as much as possible – the election of three minority council members, despite a non-minority population plurality on a county-wide basis.

Politics being what it is, an effort by a party to maintain a racial majority of the elected officials of a county council – despite the lack of a plurality – is hardly unexpected. Chairman Jennings has called this “home rule.” Even so, it may be a somewhat hypocritical argument, considering the suits recently filed by the NAACP alleging the gerrymandering of SC congressional districts based on the allegation that the state legislature has failed to provide racially diverse districts and has, instead, concentrated a majority black population in only one of 7 state congressional districts.

Gerrymandering, of course, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. But when the result is the exacerbation of racial divisiveness in a county – like McCormick – that is already racially polarized, extraordinary care should be exercised to minimize any possible adverse impact that may endanger future economic development and prosperity.

We can thank our founding fathers that the redistricting process comes around only once every 10 years. Nevertheless, the flip side of the coin is that we have to live with the results for a very long time and should recognize that decisions made on a highly partisan basis are likely to have undesirable repercussions in the long-term. What goes around, as they say, comes around.

The State Capitol Report

Rep. Anne Parks
SC House District #12

This update contains weeks of session for February 1-3 and February 8-10.

The House, with an amendment, adopted and ordered sent to the Senate H. 3100 relating to unlawfully passing a stopped school bus. All school buses must be equipped with extended school bus stop arms. The State Superintendent of Education has the discretion to overrule the decision of a local school district regarding the placement of a student school bus stop. The exercise of this discretion is limited to school bus stops that the Superintendent determines to be dangerous. Also, the month of August of each year is declared ‘School Bus Safety Month’ in South Carolina.

Having been recalled from the Education Committee the previous week, the House adopted and sent to the Senate H. 4576, a bill that declares the third Tuesday in February of each year as “Historically Black Colleges and Universities Day.”

The House amended, gave third reading and sent to the Senate H. 4177, a bill that establishes a waterfowl advisory committee. Due to a decline in the state’s waterfowl due to destructive storms and financial management issues, the waterfowl advisory committee is created to help direct the manager of the waterfowl program within the Department of Natural Resources. This committee would assist in the management of waterfowl habitats, assist in the development, protection, and propagation of waterfowl, assisting in prioritizing the expenditures of monies.

Also, the bill increases the cost of migratory waterfowl permits (duck stamps) from five to fifteen dollars for five years. The additional revenue from duck stamps will be used to repair the state’s impoundments that have not been addressed over the years. It is noted that none of these funds will be used for operating the program. The committee shall make a report of its findings, activities, and long-term plans to the General Assembly by December thirty-first of each year.

The House amended, approved, and sent the Senate H. 4831, a joint resolution that directs the Department of Commerce to conduct an Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain Industries Economic Development Study to evaluate the state’s business advantages, economic climate, workforce readiness, and any other relevant state assets to create a roadmap for South Carolina to effectively compete in attracting offshore wind energy supply chain industries to the state. The Department of Commerce is directed to coordinate with the Office of Regulatory Staff, Clemson University, or other pertinent state agencies, and must submit the reports, roadmap, and any legislative recommendations to the Speaker of the House, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Chairman of the House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee, the President of the Senate, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Chairman of the Senate Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee one year from the date of funding by the General Assembly.

The House gave third reading and sent to the Senate H. 3889, a bill restricting the use of airboats during duck season. This bill reflects current law; however, it changes use of airboat restriction during waterfowl season to duck season.

The House approved and sent the Senate H. 4832, a bill providing for numerous insurance law revisions, clarifications, and updates, including provisions for aligning state law with recommendations of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners and authorizing South Carolina’s withdrawal from the Interstate Insurance Product Regulation Compact.

The House gave third reading and returned to the Senate with amendments, S. 203 relating to the removal of school district trustees and filling vacancies. School district trustees who willfully commit or engage in an act of malfeasance, misfeasance, chronic unexcused absenteeism, conflicts of interest, criminal misconduct in office, or persistent neglect of duty in office, or are adjudicated medically incompetent or medically incapacitated, are subject to removal by the Governor upon any of the foregoing causes being made to appear to the satisfaction of the Governor. Before removing any such officer, the Governor shall inform him in writing of the specific charges brought against him and give him an opportunity on reasonable notice to be heard.

The House amended and sent back to the Senate H.3444, proposed legislation to clarify

Capitol Report, see page 6

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