

Another view of

Openness and transparency in county government – water and sewer dilemma

By Chuck Cook

The latest water quality deficiency notice, issued Feb. 28, 2022 by the McCormick County Water and Sewer Authority, was mailed to water and sewer users with their recent bills. It indicated that the latest water quality test conducted at the test site on Charlie Brown Road – near Troy – contained amounts of Trihalomethanes (TTHM) that exceeded maximum contaminant levels. The notice advised water users that although the amount of TTHM detected exceeded the allowable standard of 0.080 milligrams per liter by 0.019 mg/L this did not constitute an emergency situation and that no corrective actions on their part were necessary.

The notice also indicated, however, that “People who drink water containing trihalomethanes in excess of the [maximum contaminant level] over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer.” It also advised water customers that the W&S Authority was taking appropriate corrective action by flushing the water line that contained the contaminants under a plan created with the assistance of the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control.

What the notice did not say, unfortunately, was just as important as what it did say. TTHM contamination in the Troy area of the county is a longstanding problem that has required many such notices to county water users over the past few years and that the cause of the problem is insufficient water usage from a main water line that supplies this area, i.e., too little water is being drawn from this main by users to reduce contaminants to acceptable levels – hence the need to frequently flush the lines.

It would be easy to blame the W&S Authority for allowing this problem to persist over an extended period of time, but this is not the purpose of this essay. The real issue is a lack of openness and transparency in the assessment of our county’s water and sewer infrastructure that has allowed and will continue to allow more universal system deficiencies to exist. The basic problem that plagues our fresh water systems is a lack of circulation that allows contaminants to build up over time. Throughout much of the county, our one-way water mains terminate at the end of a street or road. Unless enough water is drawn from these terminuses by users, contaminants – including toxic chemicals and silt – will accumulate and potentially cause short- or long-term water quality issues for those on the county’s water system.

Under this fundamental structural situation we are faced with the following problems: First, we do not normally test water quality at the very end of our water lines, so we don’t really know whether and to what extent potential contaminants exist or the health problems they may create for users. Second, when we do detect contaminants in the lines – often by visual observation of dirty or algae-laden water by users – our only option is to flush the lines at the water hydrants that are usually located well above the end of the water mains. This results in clearing contaminants above the hydrants, but not at the end of the lines where users often reside. Third, even though there may be water release valves at the end of some of our water mains, state law prohibits flushing treated county water into our streams and lakes, which is where most of it would go if these release valves – where they exist – were used. Finally, the obvious solution of installing return lines that would circulate our fresh water supplies and eliminate the build-up of contaminants would be prohibitively expensive, even if it was technically feasible.

So, what’s the solution? Regrettably, there do not appear to be any quick, painless and cost-effective solutions, but this does not mean that the situation is hopeless. The first step is to acknowledge the problem. We can’t continue to sweep it under the rug or deny its existence. Second, we need a professional assessment of our water and sewer infrastructure to identify and quantify the seriousness of the issues we face and to develop options – procedural and technological – that may be pursued over a reasonable period of time. Third, we need to bring together on a collaborative basis all of the stakeholders that contribute to or are affected by our water and sewer infrastructure. This would include the county and municipalities involved in providing water services, residents who will be affected by any remedial actions taken, businesses and other commercial interests that depend on a consistent and high quality water supply to operate safely and successfully, and appropriate state, regional and Federal officials and agencies who may be essential sources of professional, technical and funding assistance – both for conducting such an assessment and for providing the resources to implement remedial solutions.

Effective, efficient and affordable water and sewer services are essential for the continued economic development of our county and for the health, safety and prosperity of our residents. The time to begin is now.

The State Capitol Report

By Rep. Anne Parks, 434D Blatt Building
SC House District #12

March 1 - 3, 2022

The House amended, then sent to the Senate H. 4919, an absentee ballot and other comprehensive voting reforms proposal. This bill would establish Monday through Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. early voting in South Carolina for the two weeks preceding any general election and enact various other voting reforms as well. A county’s population and square mileage would determine the number of early voting locations to be established.

The additional reforms would include prohibiting candidates from filing more than one intention of candidacy statement for a particular election. It also would prohibit candidates from being nominated by more than one political party for a single office, or candidates’ names appearing on a ballot more than once in a single election. Candidates

Capitol Report, see page 6



Birthday wishes

Happy birthday to my brother, Jimmy Wideman (left) who celebrated his birthday on March 9 and to my pastor, Rev. Paul Nelson Wharton, who celebrated his birthday on March 5. Two distinguished men of Shiloh AME Church. God Bless. - Bea Gilliard

Birthdays/Wedding Anniversaries

March 18 – Marjorie Gehrhardt, Donna M. Cooper, Henry McDaniel, Jesseca Crawford.

March 19 - Glenn Hill, Jewel Quarles, Alyssa Lewis, Rodriquez L. Blair, Brittany Hill, Eddie L. Talbert, Joan Semsey, Jeanne Thornburg, Nikki Shirley.

March 20 - Mickey Goff, Will Deal, Porche Smith, Milton and Susan Self, Pam Howard, Kiya Williams, Shan Hood, Roger and Mary Lee Edwards, Katie Patterson Walton, Kaycie Patterson Wells, Edwin E. Bell, Bob Ashbrook, Todd Harmon, Vanessa Franklin, David Smith, David and Dollie Holloway.

March 21 - Gil Harper Jr., Wayne Fuller, Ashley S. Brantley, Grant Cann, Butch Freeman, Jacqueline Wideman, Bob Tolar, Bill McCarron, Cindy Timok, Thomasina Wideman.

March 22 - Johnny Bandy, Louis Tucker, Donna Faye Wiggleton, Floyd Williams, Joann Searles, Geneva Stevens, Glenn and Susan Hill, Sandra Burden, Cosetta Tinch, Dick Kesler.

March 23 - Jim Drennan, Wendy Brown, Mrs. Joe Walker, Pat Brewer, Jessie Curtis, Kelly Cason, Daniel Coffee, Bob Schade, John Snyder, Del Owen, Janet Inman, John Stoddard, Kaci Shirley, William Singletary.

March 24 - Coke and Lynthia Brown, Artina Houston, Brad Wilson, Lindsay Edwards, Traci Young, Joanne Sawyer, Eva R. Evans, Arnie and Mary Ann Anderson, Alan and Gayle Sheffield, Derek Katzer, Addison Baleigh Barnes.

Reply to March 3 letter concerning council meeting

I read with some disappointment the March 3 letter to the editor by Mike and Renee Finney. The Finney’s are alarmed that the council’s disgraceful vote for race-based redistricting wasn’t met with “civility and grace.”

Well. Perhaps being new to McCormick and Savannah Lakes Village, the Finney’s don’t know Southern and local history, so let’s quickly review. In 1835, the first Democrat elected President, slave owner Andrew Jackson, openly flouted a ruling from the US Supreme Court, leading to the “Trail of Tears” for the Cherokee Nation. In 1860, after losing an election, Democrats mounted a bloody insurrection to keep 32 million people in slavery. In 1870, Black Republicans won three Congressional seats right here in South Carolina while SC Democrats would not elect a person of color to Congress for another 123 years. In 1942, having already refused to grant asylum to German Jews, Democrat President FDR ordered Japanese-Americans, German-Americans and Italian-Americans be sent to DOJ internment camps all the while keeping racial segregation strictly enforced in the military.

Democrats instituted “Jim Crow” laws and violently opposed Civil Rights – in the words of Democrat Presidential candidate George Wallace: “I say segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” As if to make the point, on a cold February night less than 100 miles away from us in Orangeburg, three teenagers were murdered by the State Police while protesting against a segregated bowling alley.

Now over 50 years later, the Democrats are at it again. Democrat led McCormick County Council just voted to once again divide us by race in our county elections. At the first council hearing on redistricting the former Democrat chairman stood up and admitted he had segregated our districts by race in 2010 and proposed that they do the same this time around. Not a single Democrat council member spoke in opposition to this illegal idea. During the single legally required public comment hearing a month later, not a single resident of McCormick spoke in favor of the map the Democrats picked. It’s easy to understand why.

The map chosen by the Democrats on the Council violates almost every redistricting principle. It splits voting precincts; it bypasses nearby populations for more distant ones; it divides communities. All bad, but worst of all it falls outside allowable variances under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment and section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Once again Democrats have flouted civil rights law. It didn’t have to be this way. There were two maps which were much more representative of the county’s population mix, didn’t split communities and minimized precinct disruptions, but these were rejected without debate in favor of this unbalanced, unrepresentative map which transforms our districts from diverse ones into racial super-majorities.

Republicans have always stood for equal rights, diversity and civil rights. Republican council members voted against the removal of their Black constituents because it is the right thing to do. They voted against a map that was drawn with a tiny loop designed to keep Chairman Jennings’ home narrowly within his current district instead of where it so obviously belongs. They voted against the nightmare of polling stations having multiple ballots for voters due to the splitting of communities to achieve racial super-majorities. Democrats, going back to their roots, voted to divide us by race.

Astonishingly, our Democrat council members want

Democrats, see page 6

Stockton’s View

Yoder Rosenberg gift to MACK will boost arts & all McCormick

By Bob Stockton

The recent news that the McCormick Arts Council at the Keturah has received a gift of \$1.1 million is huge for the MACK, the town and the county.

This gift will enable the MACK to embark on a rehabilitation of the old Hotel Keturah and grow its current good works.

Established in 1984 as a non-profit attraction for both residents and tourists, the MACK has been a source of art lessons, exhibits, programming and sponsorship of a multitude of special events both on its own and in cooperation with other organizations.

The MACK has done all this with an outstanding but small staff headquartered in a more-than-a-century old building. The original Keturah Hotel was built in the mid-1800s, burned down in 1898 and replaced shortly after by the current brick version standing today.

The “new” Keturah was badly in need of rehabilitation, but Mrs. Patricia, “Patti” H. McAbee felt that the building and grounds would be ideal for arts and cultural instruction, exhibits and performances back in the 1980s.

A non-profit status was granted in 1984, McAbee became the first director, and grants and funding got the organization started. A membership program was established and given a nice boost with the influx of Savannah Lakes Village residents.

Throughout the past 37 years, the old Keturah was a historic plus, but a bricks-and-mortar challenge. Climate control was non-existent, electricity sometimes challenging, windows leaking and funding inconsistent.

Despite this, the MACK soldiered on. A small endowment was established, Janice Grizzard became executive director and a MACK Artisans Guild and Gift Shop formed. Programming for youth and adults, Community Threads, Dinner with the Masters, Sundays at Four, Art Trots, public art and murals and programming with other organizations like the Smithsonian Institute flourished.

Then COVID came to McCormick. Programming continued with more than half its programs, but was less apparent to residents and tourists. The Artisans Guild and Gift Shop moved to a new location at 218 S. Main St. separate from the Keturah, and the old building became quiet.

The Yoder Rosenberg Family Foundation gift to the MACK, \$1.1 million, probably the largest private gift in McCormick history, will enable the MACK to rehabilitate the grand old Keturah to continue and grow its programs for residents and tourists. With this gift, the MACK can become the cornerstone for McCormick’s arts, culture and tourism into the 21st century.

While the Keturah stands quiet, there’s been a bevy of activity behind the scenes that will benefit all of McCormick. The Keturah and the MACK are poised to become county gems for years to come.

Community support needed

Thanks to the grassroots efforts of community, neighborhood volunteers’ level the Paul Dennis/ TRUTH Services Center is making progress towards establishing a place where our community and youth can come together in giving our youth hope and a future in McCormick. In the past many of our youth who graduate go away to college or venture out to follow their dreams for success. The center’s owners are working together with other businesses, organizations, McCormick schools and families in hopes to provide a united support system and establish a grassroots community organization to empower young people to make healthier decisions for their lives and the lives of future generations.

It’s a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving of their time, talents and monetary support that the center is moving towards reaching the goal of opening their doors in late April. Through a grassroots approach with little advertising and promotion, this can only happen through word of mouth and community support. If you or someone you know would like to join in supporting the center, please feel free to stop by on Thursdays between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., 123 N. Main Street, McCormick, SC 29835 or email truthyouthservices@gmail.com Your support is greatly appreciated.



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