



## March 2025 League Lines

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**1. CALENDAR**

**Monday, March 3** (5:00 – 6:00 pm): LWVSC Legislative Update (Zoom). See [#3](#) below.

**Tuesday, March 4** (1:00 – 2:30 pm): VOTE411 Committee meeting (Zoom + Still-Hopes Retirement Community). Contact Gloria Prevost by clicking **HERE**.

**Thursday, March 6** (6:30 – 7:30 pm): Membership Committee meeting (Zoom). Contact Nicole Sanchez by clicking **HERE**.

**Monday, March 10** (6:00 – 7:15 pm): Board meeting (Zoom). Contact Christine Hait by clicking **HERE**.

**Wednesday, March 12** (10:00 – 11:00 am): Education K-12 / Observer Corps meeting (Richland Main Library). Contact Kathryn Brookins (click **HERE**) or Amy Mikell (click **HERE**).

Monday, March 17 (2:00 - 4:00 pm): Judiciary Study group meeting at Still Hopes Multi-Purpose Room, Bldg. 5, Exum Drive. See [#5](#) below.

**Monday, March 17:** all members will receive the draft “Local Program” for fiscal year 25-26 (starts July 1) and can provide comments to the Board until April 22. Contact Mary Edmonds by clicking **HERE**.

**Tuesday, March 18** (6:30 – 7:30 pm): Voter Participation Committee meeting (Zoom). Contact Aisha Jones by clicking **HERE**.

**Wednesday, March 19** (2:00 – 3:00 pm): Book Club. See [#9](#) below.

**Thursday, March 20** (11:30 am – 1:00 pm): Public Policy Luncheon at the Lourie Center. See [#4](#) below.

**Tuesday, May 6:** Midlands Gives. See [#7](#) below.

**Friday, May 16: Saturday, May 17:** LWVSC Biennial Convention in Greenville

**Thursday, May 22** (5:00 pm): LWVCA annual meeting. Details TBD.

## **2. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



It's the *League Lines* for March! That means spring, my favorite season and perhaps yours, too, will soon be here. The spring for the League is a busy time, and I hope that in between working in your garden and perhaps taking a long walk, you will make time for upcoming league activities.

We had an impressive turnout for our February Public Policy Lunch, which launched the beginning of our Federal Judicial Study. League member Pat Forbis provided a comprehensive review of the components of the federal judiciary and outlined some of the issues that our league will consider during our study. Look out for announcements about upcoming consensus meetings and please try to attend. At these meetings, we will measure the degree of consensus we arrive at in response to questions about judicial accountability, transparency, independence, and ethics among other subjects. The answers we and leagues across the country provide by April 14 will help the LWVUS develop apposition on the federal judiciary as an essential component of US democracy.

It is not just the Federal Judicial Study that makes spring a busy time for our league. We will also be preparing for both the LWVSC Biennial Convention in Greenville, May 16-17, and our LWVCA annual meeting on May 22, 5:00 p.m. We will be sending delegates and observers to the convention, and our annual meeting and social is designed to bring our

entire membership together to vote on a number of significant agenda items and to enjoy fellowship together after the meeting.

These events occur as we continue our efforts to promote VOTE 411, register and educate voters, and work on issues (education and the environment, for example) critical to our local area.

This is an exciting time to be a member of the LWVCA and an important time, too, as we engage in meaningful discussions about our government and our democracy, as we work to educate ourselves on issues, and as we promote civic engagement in our local community. Here's to a busy and productive spring!

In League,

*Christine Hait*

### **3. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

**March 3 at 5:00 PM via Zoom**



The House **energy bill** H.3309 has been under consideration in Senate subcommittee. It was improved in the House before it was sent over but remains far too much geared to **gut regulation of the utilities** of which we are all captive customers.

We are opposing the **draconian abortion ban** H.3457, scheduled for testimony in the House Constitutional Laws subcommittee the day after the legislative update.

We are also attempting to get additional sponsors for S.257 that would establish a **uniform response when polls fail to open on time**. It was filed by Tameika Isaac Devine and Ed Sutton at our request. We also hope to have an equivalent bill filed in the House.

The House Education and Public Works Committee made significant revisions to the Senate's version of the voucher bill, including changing the funding source and expanding the pool of eligible recipients. The **League opposes both new ideas, as well as the overall concept of using public money for direct support to private and parochial schools**. The modifications set up a likely conflict between Senate and House versions.

Meanwhile, a **Freedom-to-Read bill** with more than 20 sponsors has been filed, attempting to affirm student access to curated materials in public school libraries and offer some protects to school librarians and media specialists.

**Register**

#### **4. MARCH PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON**

**Thursday, March 20, 2025, 11:30-1:00**

**Lourie Center, 1650 Park Circle, Columbia, SC 29201**



*This Month's Topic:*

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL JOURNALISM**



**SPEAKER: JIMMY NESBITT, COLUMBIA EDITOR FOR THE POST AND COURIER**

**COST: FREE (BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH) OR \$12 FOR A CATERED LUNCH**

Jimmy Nesbitt, Columbia Editor for The Post and Courier, will lead an interactive discussion on the importance of local journalism. We'll also learn about what reporters are seeing on the ground in Columbia and the Midlands. This will be a great opportunity to engage in a conversation about a topic critical to good government.

*The League of Women Voters recognizes the decline of local news and supports "credible and ethical journalism as essential to our democracy."*

[Click Here to Register](#)

## **5. FEDERAL JUDICIARY STUDY**

The League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area is looking for volunteers to host/organize our consensus meetings for the League's Judiciary Study. The league's responses to the proposed questions are due April 14<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, time is of the essence.

An effort is being made to hold these meetings at different times and places so as many of our members will have the opportunity to participate.

There will be meetings on

- Monday, March 17, 2 - 4 pm at Still Hopes. Anne Sinclair will be the Discussion Leader.
- Monday, March 24 at Lill Mood's house in Chapin

Other possible dates are March 10, March 31 or April. 7, as needed.

Each meeting will require a moderator/facilitator, recorder, timekeeper and resource. Hosts will not be required but may certainly serve in any of these capacities. However, other folks are more than welcome and encouraged to serve.

Below are links to important resources. Each link has important information about the judiciary and the questions leagues are asked to weigh in on.

[2024-2025 Federal Judiciary Study Process, Committee, and Resources | League of Women Voters](#) provides an overview of the process, along with links to the following:

- [Discussion Prompts](#)
- [FJS Consensus Form](#) (PDF) *This is a copy of the online survey form that state and local Leagues will complete with their consensus responses. This form can be used in your consensus meetings, but the official form must be completed online by a local or state League representative. No paper forms will be accepted. Forms from individuals will also not be accepted.*
- [Online Survey Form](#) *Please note this form should be completed by League affiliates, not individual members.*
- [Study Guide](#) (PDF)
- [Groups.io discussion group](#) *Connect with League members from around the country regarding the study*

Please respond to me by clicking [HERE](#) and I will coordinate and get a schedule out to everyone.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this very important project.

**Pat Forbis**

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## **6. FEBRUARY PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON RECAP**

Let me start off with saying time was short for me to submit this article so I had cut a few corners. But I do want to say Happy Birthday to Keller Barron who looks terrific at 93.

Our own Pat Forbis was our guest speaker, a graduate of Duke University and USC law school. Pat provided us with a basic understanding of the United States legal system particularly at the federal level. This will be helpful as we work toward a consensus by developing a position on the Federal Judiciary as an essential component of US democracy.

The federal court system is established in Article III of the Constitution. Identifying the roles, responsibilities, and all other details of the judicial system. Please review that section of the Constitution for more detailed facts and information that will be essential

in understanding the study and responding to the consensus. There are 94 district courts across the country. There are 13 circuit courts of appeals. The appeals courts have what is described as bench trials, no juries are involved. The courts have the final say as to how this nation is run. Understanding how the courts are accountable to the nation, their ethics, and transparency would go a long way in determining how influential they are in our democracy.

There will be several meetings related to developing a consensus. Please look for additional information (see [#5](#) above) and always feel free to ask questions. Ask yourself, have you ever met a League person who didn't like to talk?

*Pamela Craig*

## **7. MIDLANDS GIVES**



CENTRAL CAROLINA  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

It's Midlands Gives time again! Midlands Gives will take place on May 6, 2025. The League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area will be participating again.

Contact Anita T. Baker (click **HERE**) to find out how you can help with 1) raising the match funds 2) helping post on social media the week of May 6, 2025, or 3) writing thank-you letters to our donors.

Visit our profile at [www.midlandsgives.org/organization/LWVColumbiaArea](http://www.midlandsgives.org/organization/LWVColumbiaArea)

## **8. EARLY VOTING ACTION TEAM**

### **Team Background**

As a part of “Making Democracy Work,” the Columbia League kicked off an Early Voting Action Team in January 2024 to review early voting as legislated by the General Assembly



and implemented in Richland and Lexington Counties. The team provided a summary of their review and recommendations to the Richland and Lexington County Voter Registration and Elections Directors and Boards by letter in spring 2024.

### **Early Voting Locations**

One of the recommendations was to implement as many early voting locations as possible. For the November 2024 general elections, Lexington County implemented six early voting locations and Richland County implemented seven, the maximum allowed by South Carolina law.

Our calculations showed that having multiple locations dispersed throughout the population areas reduces driving distances significantly for many people. It can reduce the driving distance by an average of 10 miles and as much as 40 miles for tens of thousands of voters.

In Richland County, the two northeast Columbia locations were the most used. In Lexington County, the downtown location was the most used. This may be related to population proximity. However, all locations were used, and it is important to note that the outlying locations provide access to voters who would otherwise have to drive a long distance.

Letters of appreciation were sent to the Richland and Lexington County Voter Registration and Elections Directors for implementing the seven and six locations, respectively.

### **Early Voting Statistics**

The data for the November 2024 general elections showed a marked increase in the proportion of early voters compared to previous elections. Early voting was introduced in South Carolina in June 2022. In November 2022, the first general election after implementation, 33% of South Carolina voters took advantage of early voting. This proportion almost *doubled*, to **57% in the 2024 general election**. In Lexington County 56% of voters voted early, consistent with the SC average. In Richland County 62% voted early, a greater proportion than the SC average.

You can view a presentation of this information by clicking [HERE](#).

## **Early Voting Period**

The early voting period lasted for two weeks, excluding Sundays. Fewer people voted on the first Saturday and more people voted on the second last day as compared to the other days. Voting was spread equally across the other days.

## **Summary**

Early voting was implemented in South Carolina in June 2022 and its use has increased significantly since then. In the November 2024 general election, 57% of voters in South Carolina voted early, with a similar proportion in Lexington County and a greater proportion than state average in Richland County voting early. Lexington County provided six early voting locations and Richland County provided seven, the maximum allowed by SC state law. The two week early voting period and the multiple locations provide ease of access for SC voters. Ease of access encourages voting.

## **9. BOOK CLUB SCHEDULE FOR 2025**

**March 19:** It Could Happen Here by Jonathan Greenblatt. Leader: Janet Wedlock

**September 17:** Humankind: a Hopeful History. Leader: Marianne McGrath

**November 19:** Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond.  
Leader: Laura Woliver

We still need book leaders for May 21st and July 16th

Anne Mellen will coordinate the book club for 2025. Contact Anne for additional details by clicking **HERE**.

## **10. VOTE411 UPDATE**

**Next Vote411 Committee Meeting: 1 p.m. March 4, 2025, at Still Hopes Guignard Mansion Dining Room (in person) or Zoom**

## **VOTE411— LOOKING FORWARD**

Do you live in a city? One of the 13 in Lexington County or 6 in Richland County, or in an unincorporated area? Are you affected by decisions made by them?

We would like to begin our visits to the municipalities in order to know the issues, meet the council members and introduce them to the League of Women Voters.

If you would like to be a part of “Getting to Know You...” by attending a Municipal meeting, with a partner, please text 803-413-7089, Keller Barron, co-chair.

In preparation for the Public Policy Luncheon April 17, members of the VOTE411

Committee met with the speaker Todd Glover, Executive Director of the Municipal Association of SC, to discuss the importance of Municipal elections this year. Our take-away: *GROWTH and CIVILITY*. Save the Date to hear about local government and the dearth of voter participation. Can we make a difference?

Click [HERE](#) to see the Municipal Association of South Carolina website.

Click [HERE](#) to see a description of the “Know Your State: South Carolina Government, 2023 Edition,” and how to order from Amazon. (The cost is \$15).

Would you like to join this dynamic committee? Next meeting is March 4, 1:00 pm, in-person/zoom. Contact Gloria Prevost by clicking [HERE](#).

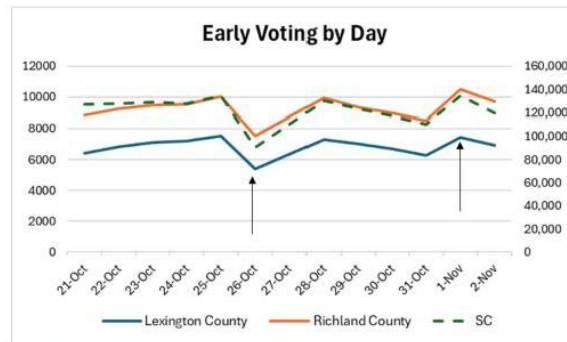
## VOTE411— LOOKING BACKWARD

### Early Voting Numbers Compared to Previous Elections

Early Voters, % of Total Voters			
	Lexington County	Richland County	SC
2024 General Election	<b>56%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>57%</b>
2024 SC Primaries	23%	24%	27%
2024 Presidential Primaries – Democratic	29%	31%	37%
2024 Presidential Primaries – Republican	26%	18%	27%
2022 General Election	29%	36%	33%

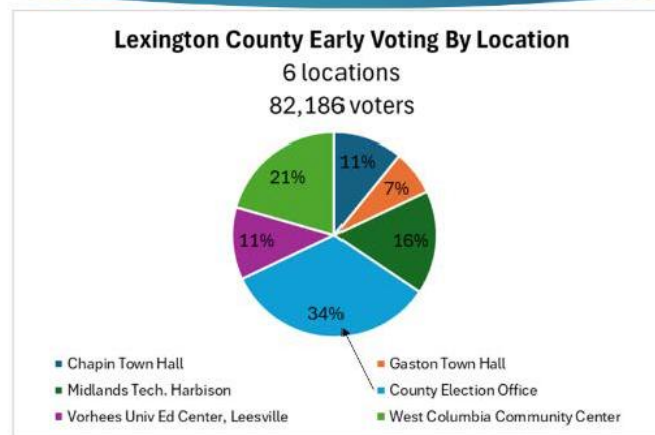
- Much higher rate of early voting in 2024 General Election
- Early voting in SC started in June 2022

## 2024 General Election Early Voting by Day

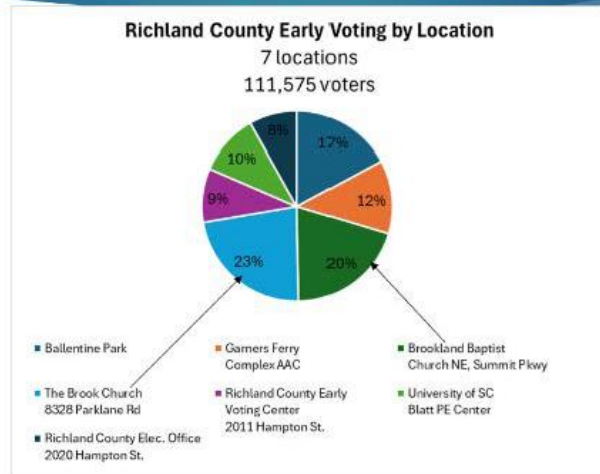


- Fewest voters on first Saturday
- Most voters on second last day
- Otherwise evenly spread out

## 2024 General Election Early Voting by Location



## 2024 General Election Early Voting by Location



The Vote411 Committee met on January 21 with nineteen participants. This large number reflects a growing interest in Vote 411. Three representatives of Sumter County were welcomed to share their 2024 experience.

An overview of 2024 activities was provided by Rachel Dieter and Angela Valvasori. LWV Columbia Area covered two referendums and 88 races with 171 candidates in the November General Election. The candidate response rate for all races covered in Lexington, Richland and Sumter counties was 70% for this election, and for opposed races was 79%. For the year, there were five different elections including the November General Election, the June Primaries, and three municipal elections with a total of 123 races and 268 candidates. The overall response rate for the year was 70%.

There were 19,890 users of Vote411 in the three targeted counties and 24,285 users in all seven counties in targeted General Assembly races. This indicated a significant increase in users in 2024 over earlier years.

The Committee set future meeting dates for the first Tuesday of each month with our next meeting on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 1 pm. The meeting will be at Still Hopes (in person) and by Zoom. The agenda will highlight Early Voting 2024 statistics, planning for 2025 Municipal Elections and municipal visits.

Key dates are: 5/13 City of Forest Acres General Election, 8/15 possible Eastover General Election and 11/4 for most municipal elections.

Any interested members, especially new members, are welcome to participate in committee meetings and all activities.

## **11. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

### **Buddy System**

Joining a new group can be daunting, if not overwhelming, but buddies make it easier. For that reason, LWV Columbia has begun offering a new service to its new members – a buddy to show them the ropes and help them get acclimated to all the League has to offer. Interested newcomers to our chapter will be paired with a veteran member who will act as their guide and a recognizable face.

If you'd like to be a buddy to a new member or are a new member wanting to be paired, please email Nicole Sanchez, chair of our Membership Committee, by clicking **HERE**. We are actively looking for veteran members who we can call in for the right newbie.

## **12. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

The Environment Committee met on Saturday, February 15th via zoom. The agenda featured Christine Hait, President, LWV of Greater Columbia, and Mary Edmonds who gave updates on the process for State positions. The Committee reviewed and voted on State and Local positions/actions. The Committee took action to approve both for further action by the Board. The recommended changes to the State positions on the Environment and Transportation were discussed at the Lourie Center Policy Forum last month. The Committee also discussed further action on climate change possibly featuring the issue at the May State Convention and other local activities. The Committee also plans to have another community meeting this Spring following upon environmental justice advocacy work in Lower Richland.

On March 22nd, there is a celebration of **World Water Day**. Anyone interested in sponsoring an event, there are resources available, check out our Climate Interest Group

website by clicking [HERE](#). If you choose to hold an event, contact [dismoreswift@gmail.com](mailto:dismoreswift@gmail.com).

### **13. EDUCATION/OBSERVER CORPS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Education Committee and the Observer Corps met at the Richland Main Library on February 12. We reviewed our goals from 2024 and voted to keep them and to add one more. Our goals are

1. Observe local school boards and bring LWVCA's attention to concerns.
2. Register teachers to vote and promote voter participation among school faculty and staff.
3. Increase advocacy as private citizens.
4. Educate League members and about League positions.
5. Alert voters to upcoming school board elections. (Newly added goal)

Observer Corps has grown a great deal. Thanks to Amy Mikell's efforts, we have the most active Observer Corps in the state! As a committee, we are going to continue to reach out to local school districts to register teachers and staff to vote and we plan to use the new Advocacy website, created by David Smith, to continue to be active citizens.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, March 12 at 10am at the Richland Main Library in Meeting Room A. Please contact Kathryn Brookins (click [HERE](#)) if you'd like to attend for the first time.

### **14. OBSERVER CORPS REPORTS**

#### **February 2025**

#### **Regular Meeting, Columbia City Council, 2/4/25 (Paula Walters)**

Perhaps the most significant item on the consent agenda for those who park in downtown Columbia concerns the installation of 12 new Cosmo Pay Stations from the 1200 to 1700 blocks of Main Street. The revised budget amount for this project is \$225,247.32. Parking prices will increase to \$1.50/hr from \$.75 for on street and \$25.00 from \$10.00 for Daily Meter Reservation. Owner occupant vehicle permit increases to \$30.00 from \$5.00. A ticket for an expired meter will increase to \$25.00 from \$8.00. New

procedures will require one to enter a license plate number, the desired length of stay, and use of a credit card for the transaction. A receipt will be issued from the kiosk for proof of payment. These pay stations will be operational in early March 2025.

Another approved item is the resurfacing of Ring Road. The contract was awarded to In-Line Paving Industries, LLC in Lexington, SC for \$545,066.11. A first reading ordinance was the consideration of granting an encroachment to USC for a brick paver field, seat wall, site furnishings, landscaping and irrigation adjacent to 1212 Green Street. Also, a resolution was authorized for beer, wine, and liquor consumption at the St. Pat's Five Points Festival on March 15, 2025.

The meeting concluded with the Columbia Classical Ballet and Second Chance Resources requesting continued funding from the council.

**Regular Meeting, Gaston Town Council, 2/4/2025 (Susan and Stephanie Phillips)**

State House Representative Ryan McCabe was on hand to swear in the newly re-elected mayor, Troy Bivins. Mayor Bivens then swore in re-elected Council Members Mike Cook and Carol McCombs. During a special called public meeting on 1/10/25, Ripple Fiber was approved for installation of wireless internet access. The purchase of a small plot of property was approved for town sign placement. There were no speakers for public forum.

Next, council approved adding a re-inspection fee of \$50 for construction requiring multiple inspections. Lastly, police reports and town budget status were reviewed.

**Regular Meeting, West Columbia City Council, 2/4/25 (Amy Mikell)**

The meeting began with approval of a proclamation designating 2/12/25 Black Business Day in West Columbia. Tara Greenwood, Asst. City Administrator of Development, gave an update on repairing the sections of the riverwalk that were damaged during the recent hurricane. As soon as FEMA approves the plan, repairs can be put out for bid.

Next, Bill Hancock, CPA, presented an overview of the 23-24 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report that his firm reviewed. He complimented the city on its "good stewardship" of public funds. Approval was given to the second reading of the ordinance on vape shops, etc. In addition to restricted glaring signs, such businesses will observe a 7 P.M.-9 A.M. closing time. Temporary lane closings for the annual Kinetic Derby Day



(4/26/25) were approved, as was construction of new living accommodations at 620 Sunset Blvd. The meeting was then adjourned to Executive Session.

**Regular Meeting, Lexington 4 Board of Trustees Meeting, 2/10/25 (Susan and Stephanie Phillips)**

Sandhills Middle School completed a presentation, the school is making progress with 45% of the students who were behind in grade level already hitting goals that they were not expected to reach until the end of the school year. They continue to work with a state assigned coach to plan progress and set goals. The fiscal report shows Lexington 4 to be in line with previous years.

Superintendent Nutter reviewed policies JIH and KLG. These policies address Student Interrogations, Searches and Arrests and Relations with Law Enforcement. He stated that there had been calls with concerns regarding immigration and potential ICE presence. The overview is that Law Enforcement must have a warrant “signed by a judge” in order to enter a school and the school principal ( or designee) must be present if there is contact with or questioning of a student. The school can’t be used for any routine interrogations. School staff will attempt to contact parents with any event. There were no identified needs for changes to these policies.

**Regular Meeting, Lexington/Richland 5 School Board, 2/10/25 (Kathryn Brookins)**

In the superintendent's report, Dr. Ross shared how the district created student, parent, and teacher advisory boards to determine what they all expected from themselves and each other. The three main commonalities were involvement, working towards students' future career goals, and meeting students' academic goals.

A representative from Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission presented plans for the Lower Saluda Greenway Project, a walkway connecting Lake Murray to Cayce. The first phase will be from the Lake Murray Dam to Saluda Shoals Park and the second phase will be from Saluda Shoals to the area near the intersection of I 20 and I 26. The plan is to have the project completed in 2030.

An important item on the agenda was the approval of a local board approved course: African American Studies, Honors. It was evident that Social Studies faculty from the district worked tirelessly to create the course, and they were very excited when the Board voted in favor of it.

**Workshop, Irmo Town Council, 2/11/2025, (Nicole Sanchez)**

The Irmo workshop meeting commenced with discussions on the new town hall. They confirmed that they wanted the second option (a V-shaped building instead of the linear one) with the architects. The placement of the detention pond still needs to be decided.

They then moved into a discussion of whether or not to take out a bond for part or all of the construction effort. While the Town has the funds (partially through funds already in the Town's possession and partially through grants from the state and federal government), it would dramatically reduce the amount in their accounts. The Mayor in particular was concerned that the lack of funds in their accounts could prevent them from being able to respond to a disaster or emergency in the future. Several bond options were discussed with no decision made.

After the Town Hall discussion, they discussed zoning changes. They are considering changes to noise restrictions related to construction, architectural standards, corner lots, and billboard signs. They also had a discussion about parking. Currently, there is an ordinance that states residents are not allowed to park their cars on the grass, but it is generally not enforced. This is an issue in neighborhoods that do not have garages and only have one spot in their driveway. Some on council were concerned about having an ordinance that was not enforced. Many options were discussed. Guest Jake Moore recommended enforcing it on a complaint basis.

Lastly, the Staff brought a reminder about stormwater ponds. They are cleaned up and inspected twice a year. They recently completed the winter clean up, but the next will not be until summer. He warned council that they will likely get calls about the ponds needing to be cleaned up but assured them that this was the correct way to maintain them.

**Regular Meeting, Richland Two School Board, 2/11/2025 (Sara Phillips)**

The meeting began with a short video featuring Roundtop Elementary students' "Talk Show." It was most inspiring to see what young people can do when given the chance.

Next, the CTE (Career Technical Education) update was presented by representatives from Blythewood High School (engineering), Richland Northeast High (culinary arts), Ridgeview High (digital publications), Spring Valley High (building construction), Westwood High (firefighting), and R2i2 (Innovation Center) (electric vehicles.) There are many more such programs at each high school. Next year, certified medical assistant, Siemens Engineering, and fundamentals of AI will be added.

Surveys were sent to employees, parents, and students to ask their priorities for budget items. Only 25% responded. Employees asked for more behavioral support, better compensation, more classroom resources and supplies, smaller class sizes and case loads, and more support for special education. Parents noted the need for well-compensated, caring teachers; tutoring; early academic intervention; more behavioral intervention and support; and more support for special education. Students listed clean restrooms, better food, more arts funding, headphone use in class, and the use of phones during lunch.

The next board meeting will be on 2/25/25.

**Regular Meeting, Richland County Board of Voter Registration and Elections,**  
2/13/2025, (Nicole Sanchez)

The Director's Report began with discussing the new building for the Richland Election Commission. It is still incomplete, but they will be able to take a tour shortly. Board members were asked for their opinion on desk color options. Director Alexander continued the report by discussing training and certification through SCARE. Several staff in attendance discussed their takeaways from the training. They include a greater understanding of ADA laws and the ability to network with people they only see virtually.

Director Alexander discussed precinct splitting in the future. Some precincts are large and will need to be split, especially with the influx of people coming in. Blythewood was one area that was highlighted due to the Scout plant.

The League of Women Voters received a shoutout from Director Alexander for their early voting report. He read and appreciated it. He also thanked our League for being the only organization to thank him for his work this last election, including ensuring that all seven early voting sites were used and in appropriate locations. Great job Early Voting Team!

Director Alexander also brought up payroll issues. Immediately prior to the November election, they adopted a new system that did not fully communicate with their older system and problems have ensued. Some poll workers have still not been paid. Some of the issues involved a lack of a social security card. In the old system, a social security card was not needed and it led to issues when migrating. They believe the system is now fully integrated for future hiring, but the issues that already existed have not been fully fixed.

For the November election, they tried a new internship program. Twelve students participated and they are looking forward to expanding the program in the future. Director Alexander stated that the stories of the experiences were “heartwarming.”

Director Alexander also discussed a potential issue with early voting in the November election and how it was handled. They received information that the Irmo early voting location would be busier than they originally anticipated. They requested help from the legislative delegation and only Rep Nathan Ballentine (R-71) responded. He posted a video and personally referred at least one person to the election commission.

To be transparent, Director Alexander also discussed an issue in ballot style on 172 ballots. The difference between the candidates was 550 votes so this does not appear to have affected the results of the election. On these ballots, both school districts Richland One and Two were added. They found the problem with verification of the ballot style and fixed it by increasing the number of people to do the final verification from one to two.

A project that they have been discussing is Memorandums of Understanding between Richland County and the municipalities within it. Currently, their collaborations are informal and these MOUs will formalize the partnership. Some municipalities haven’t been compensating Richland County for the work that they do for the municipalities.

#### **Regular Meeting, Cayce City Council, 2/19/25 (Amy Mikell/Virtual Observation)**

First up was Maurice Pearl, Executive Director of the COMET. He explained the areas covered, sources of income, and growth from 2023-2023 (number of routes, buses, and ridership.) He noted that this bus service is vital as it provides transportation to work, food, and healthcare. The COMET website provides a trip planner and general information, such as the price: \$2.00 a trip or \$4.00 for a full-day ticket.

Next was a lengthy discussion about changes in district voting lines resulting from the 2020 census. There was concern about how soon and how often citizens should be informed about such changes.

Council then approved the leasing of office space and furniture to move the utilities staff from the overcrowded municipal office building to four offices in the Bank of America building on Knox Abbott Drive. Council also approved the cost of a new fire truck, not to exceed \$530,000. Building a new truck takes over a year, so Council is being proactive to provide needed, safe equipment for both the community and the fire fighters.

Finally, Mayor Parton noted that the annual City Soiree will be held on March 22, 2025.

## **15. MEMBER CORNER**

Jane Dreher Emerson, a longtime member of the LWV, passed on February 16, 2025.

As noted in her obituary, she was “a fierce and fearless advocate for women's rights, whose passion for justice and access to reproductive healthcare left an indelible mark on the state of South Carolina.” In addition to her professional work achievements, she also was a founder of the I Believe Anita Hill Party and served on the Richland County Election Commission, during a very turbulent time.

She served as Executive Director/CEO of Planned Parenthood of South Carolina, Director of Southern Women's Services, and Director of the Rape Crisis Network, and more recently she served on the Richland County Election Commission.

Click [HERE](#) to see her full obituary. To learn more about Jane's life from Kathleen Parker in the Washington Post, click [HERE](#).

## **16. CONTACTS**

#### OFFICERS

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2nd Vice President	Mary Edmonds	2024-26
Secretary	Sally Boyd	2023-25
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Membership	Nicole Sanchez	2024-26
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Environmental Affairs	Frances Eargle, Elaine Cooper
Nominating Committee	Marianne McGrath
Reproductive Health	<i>vacant</i>
Transportation	<i>vacant</i>
Voter Education	Cynthia Flynn, Lill Mood
Vote411 Co-Chair	Keller Barron



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