



September 2025 League Lines

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1. CALENDAR

August 31- September 9: LWV of the Columbia Area T-Shirt Sale; see [#7](#) below.

[Monday, September 1, 11:00 am, Labor Day Rally and March, SC Statehouse](#)

Thursday, September 4, 6:30 pm: Membership Committee meeting via Zoom.

See [#9](#) below.

Wednesday, September 10, 1:00 pm: Vote 411 Committee meeting at Still Hopes and by Zoom. See [#12](#) below.

Thursday, September 11, 6:00pm: Voter Participation meeting via Zoom.

Contact Tracey Lee.

Monday, September 15, 6:00 pm: LWVCA Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 16: National Voter Registration Day

Wednesday, September 17, 6:00 pm: Environment Committee meets by

Zoom. See [#10](#) below.

Thursday, September 18, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm Public Policy Luncheon. See [#5](#) below.

Thursday, September 25, 6:00 pm: LWVCA New Member Orientation meets via

Zoom. Contact Amy Mikell or Marianne McGrath.

Friday, October 3, time TBD: Famously Hot SC Pride Parade. March with LWVCA as we support and celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community! Contact Laura Woliver .

2. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is hard to believe September is here! I look forward to a new year of committee meetings, Public Policy Luncheons, and tabling events.

Last week I sat down (remotely) to take notes during the Richland Two School Board Meeting for the Observer Corp. I did not have the energy to fight the traffic on the drive out to the Sandhills area! It was nice to just sit and observe what is happening on the local level. I was happy to see a teacher there advocating for their school and the essential classroom items that were missing the first week of classes. The board members debated for a while about the district not meeting a goal and they wanted to know why that goal was not met. Highlights of accomplishments were presented.

Being back, focused on things on the local level, reminded me that our work here in the Columbia area must not stop while we are distracted by all the noise and chaos on the national level. (But that does not mean the items on the national level aren't important.) National LWV has had a lot to post and say on social media in response to many things that are pushing boundaries including voting rights and extreme gerrymandering. If you have not looked lately- check out their social media accounts!

As a grassroots organization, our local work is still so important. Stay focused on the day-to-day workings of our city councils, school boards, county councils. Help to educate people of the importance of elections at all levels of government. Municipal elections are just around the corner and so few people will get out to vote (or even know they are happening!). As you know, local elections are important! These futures leaders will be the ones making decisions that affect us, our neighbors, and the quality of life locally.

While we need to continue to stay educated on the national level, there is still so much we can do here in Richland and Lexington counties.

In League,

Sara Phillips

President

3. WELCOME TO MORE NEW LEADERS



Elva Stinson, new Membership Director

Elva joined the league in September of 2022 as she was concerned about the erosion of voting rights. Initially she joined Voter Participation and is now excited to serve in this new role as membership director so she may be another “brick in the foundation of this important and impressive group”.

And THANK YOU to Nicole Sanchez, the outgoing membership director. You provided a lot of creative ideas and enthusiasm in growing our league.

New Co-Chairs for Education K-12 Committee

Melanie Trimble and Paula Waters have graciously agreed to co-chair this important committee, as the previous chair Kathryn Brookins is now our 1st vice-president. So thanks in advance, Melanie and Paula!

4. UPDATING YOUR CONTACTS FOR OUR NEW OFFICERS

Because the new officers inherited the emails that the previous officers used, you may have to update your contact list.

For example: look for “president@lwvcolumbiasc.org” in your contact list. If you have created one, click on it and change the name from “Christine Hait” to “Sara Phillips.” You may have to wait for several minutes until the changes take effect.

This should apply to any of the email platforms you may be using, such as Gmail, Outlook, Hotmail, yahoo, AOL, etc.

If you have problems with this, or have any questions, please contact me by clicking **HERE**.

Susan Cirulli


[C](#)ommunications Director

5. SEPTEMBER PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON

Thursday, September 18, 2025, 11:30 AM - 1 PM

The Lourie Center


1650 Park Cir, Columbia, SC 29201



September 2025 Public Policy Luncheon

MEDIA LITERACY: CRITICAL THINKING FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Longtime media educator Frank Baker, (author of Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom and several other books) will bring important information, advice and recommendations for thinking critically in the age in which we live. For more than 25 years, he has taken the "media literacy" message to educators throughout South Carolina. This is a great opportunity for us to sharpen our skills as savvy consumers of the media.



The cost is free if you bring your own lunch, or \$12 for a catered lunch. In both cases, you MUST register by clicking the button below:

Note: registration closes on Monday, September 15 at 4 pm for the catered lunch and Tuesday, September 16 at 4 pm if you bring your lunch.

6. WORKING GROUPS AND REQUEST FOR MEMBERS

From Laura R. Woliver, LWVCA and co-chair of LWVSC Gender & Women's Equity

Working Group:

Working Groups of the LWV of South Carolina were set up to help educate members and the public on important issues, legislative proposals, and activities pertaining to their area. Groups abide by the mandate that the League speaks with one voice and adheres to state approved agendas and policies. Please see the attached link detailing Working Group Guidelines by clicking ***HERE***.

The Gender & Women's Equity Working Group needs are

1. Another co-chair who needs to be from a local League other than the Columbia Area LWV
2. Volunteers from smaller local Leagues in South Carolina

A Columbia Area Gender & Women's Equity local committee is being organized. The chair of that committee will be a member of the state committee. If you would like to chair the local committee or be a member of the committee, please contact Sara Phillips by clicking ***HERE***.

7. T SHIRT SALE

Per the League of Women Voters, "women are playing a crucial role in defending democracy through initiatives like the 'Women Defend Democracy' campaign, which focuses on empowering voters and combating anti-democratic actions." So why not let people to know where you stand? The following t shirt is available to order for \$20.



The sale runs from August 31 to September 9. Sizes are S, M, L and XL, and the shirts are 100% cotton.

You can pay online via PayPal or Venmo, or you can write a check to “LWV of the Columbia Area” and mail it to

LWV Columbia T-Shirts, 1529 Brennen Road, Columbia, SC 29206

If you are paying by check, skip over the “PayPal/VENMO” options, then fill out the form with your information and the size(s) and number of shirts you would like, then click on “Submit” at the bottom.

For those paying with PayPal or VENMO, don’t forget to fill out the rest of the form with your contact information, your shirt size(s) and number, and click on “Submit” at the bottom.

You will be contacted when the shirts come in and how to pick yours up. To order click ***HERE***.

If you have any questions, please contact Susan Cirulli by clicking ***HERE***.

8. BOOK CLUB SCHEDULE

September 17: Humankind: a Hopeful History by [Rutger Bregman](#)

Leader: Marianne McGrath

November 19: Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond

Leader: Laura Woliver

January 21: Crooked Cross by Sally Carson

Leader: Janet Wedlock

Contact Anne Mellen for additional details by clicking ***HERE***.

9. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

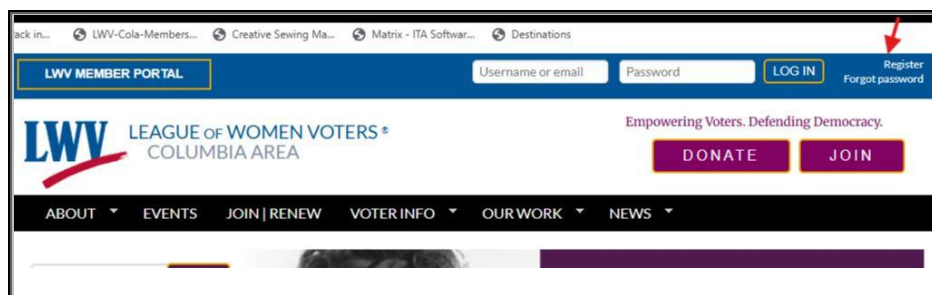
Join us for our next Membership Committee Meeting on Thursday, September 4th at 6:30 PM via Zoom! Contact Elva Stinson [HERE](#) for more information and a link.

Membership Directory

Congratulations! You now have access to our membership directory online via our website!

However, you MUST create a logon id to access. Here's how:

Go to lwvcolumbisc.org in your browser. You should see "Register" in the upper right-hand corner:



If you haven't created a userid and password before, click on "Register" to create your userid.

Once you have logged on, you will see a "Members" tab:



Click on the "Members" tab, and you'll see several choices:

- Calendar of events and meetings for our League

- League Lines Archive
- Membership
- Public Policy Luncheon Resources Archives

Click on “Membership,” and the membership spreadsheet will open. Note that there are 3 tabs:

1. [Active members sorted by last name](#)
2. League Leadership (officers and committee chairs)
3. QR codes for our social media

The membership tab will be updated monthly as needed. If you have any questions or issues, please contact Susan Cirulli by clicking **HERE**.

For those of you who asked for a printed copy, we have handed out several and hope to deliver the rest at the September PPL.

10. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Please join us for our Next Meeting, Wednesday, September 17th, 6:00-7:00 via Zoom. Contact Frances Eargle (click [HERE](#)) or Elaine Cooper (click [HERE](#)) for more info and a link.

Committee Activities

The Environment Committee met via zoom on Wednesday, August 20, with two featured speakers: Paul Black, Sierra Club, and Pamela Greenlaw, Sierra Club. A recording of the meeting can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

Paul Black gave a presentation on the gas pipeline proposed to traverse a swath of old growth forest, wetlands, two major river corridors and impact rural and environmental justice communities. Santee Cooper proposes clear-cutting old growth in the Francis Beidler Forest, for a new transmission line. Beidler is the world’s largest old-growth cypress-tupelo swamp forest, featuring thousand-year-old trees, and an ecosystem of international significance and habitat for threatened and endangered species. Santee Cooper is taking comments through the S.C. Public Service Commission (PSC). You can submit a letter voicing your concerns at <https://tinyurl.com/BeidlerForestTransmission>.

Pamela Greenlaw, Sierra Club, gave a presentation on *Reimagine Richland County*, which is a comprehensive plan in its third and final phase to update the 10-year County's Comprehensive Plan. When complete, the Plan will theoretically guide leaders in shaping long-term development and conservation practices. In her presentation she highlighted the development interests that the state and county are presenting in the Plan without adequate protections for the environment and public health.

Richland County has scheduled meetings for public questions/input: Meeting schedule (all 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.):

- Sept. 3 – Meadowlake Park, 600 Beckman Road, Columbia
- Sept. 10 – Upper Richland Community Center, 280 Camp Ground Road, Columbia
- Sept. 15 – Garners Ferry Adult Activity Center, 8620 Garners Ferry Road, Hopkins
- Sept. 17 – Pine Grove Community Center, 937 Piney Woods Road, Columbia

Climate Change

The Environment Committee will focus on climate change at the next meeting. If you have any issues or input, please contact: Franni Eargle (click [HERE](#)) or Elaine Cooper (click [HERE](#)).

National Level

On July 29, 2025, EPA proposed to rescind the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding which regulates emissions from new motor vehicles and new motor vehicle engines. EPA proposes to remove GHG regulations for light, medium and heavy duty vehicles. This action is the largest deregulatory action affecting clean air and will result in increased exposure to air pollution and affect the number of emergency room visits, increased rates of chronic illness and heightened health care costs. It will also neutralize the federal government's ability to combat climate change and enforce laws intended to protect public health. In reaching out to the National LWV's office, Rebecca Golden, has stated that the League is partnering with other organizations to oppose

this EPA action. State attorney generals are starting to file lawsuits to reverse this action such as California and Michigan. Public comment has been extended to September 22, 2025. For more information and to submit comments click [HERE](#).

11. EDUCATION K-12

The K-12 Education Committee has new Co-Directors, Melanie Trimble and Paula Walters. More information about upcoming meetings and committee activities will be available soon.

Paula shared this valuable online resource for Banned Books Week October 5-11, 2025. To learn more, click **HERE**.

12. VOTE411 COMMITTEE

The next Vote411 Committee meeting will be at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at Still Hopes Guignard Mansion Dining Room (in person) and via Zoom. Contact Janet Wedlock (click [HERE](#)) or Keller Barron (click [HERE](#)).

VOTE411 Report - Municipal Elections

SC Municipal Election Day - Richland and Lexington Counties - November 4, 2025

To learn more about Municipal Election Day, click [HERE](#).

The VOTE411 Committee is preparing the League's voter guide for the November 4 municipal elections in Richland and Lexington counties: Arcadia Lakes, Batesburg-Leesville, Blythewood, Cayce, Chapin, Columbia, Gilbert, Irmo, Lexington, Pelion, Pine Ridge, Springdale, Summit, Swansea, West Columbia.



Register to Vote by the Deadline

Important dates:

- You must register by Sunday, October 5 to vote in the election on November 4.
- The last day to register in person is Friday, October 3.

- Mailed applications will be accepted if postmarked by Monday, October 6.

Make sure your voter registration is current by checking your registration information at scVOTES.gov. And if you have moved from one county to another, you must register in your new county to be eligible to vote.

Absentee Voting

Apply now to request an absentee ballot application at your county election office. You may call, go in person, or mail a request. **You cannot apply electronically.**

Of interest, the town of Batesburg-Leesville has 15 candidates running for mayor or town council. The town of Gilbert has no one running for town council at all!

What a good opportunity for a write-in candidate!

Local Elections - Municipal Visits Team

The Municipal Visits Team (MVT) is planning visits to the municipalities in Richland and Lexington Counties in October to introduce VOTE411. Opportunities for members to attend a Council meeting will be scheduled at the September Public Policy Meeting.

Is local government important? See what the LWVUS thinks by clicking [HERE](#).

13. OBSERVER CORPS REPORTS

August 2025

Regular Meeting, West Columbia City Council, 8/5/25, (Amy Mikell)

As there were only two items of new business: Deputy Fire Marshal Richard Spivey being appointed to be a municipal code enforcement official, and approval of a bond for Faith Hill Subdivision, the meeting was adjourned in a record ten minutes.

Regular Meeting, Cayce City Council, 8/5/25 (Amy Mikell, Virtual Observation)

Despite there being a full house and one missing councilman, Phil Carter, the council and the mayor exhibited friction among themselves at several points during the meeting.

Normal proceedings began with presentations by three citizens who live in Churchill Heights. Their homes abut a commercial district that had been dormant

for years. They were upset when the trees on that property began being taken down in preparation for a Fairfield Inn, and they had not been notified in advance. They questioned what measures would be taken to protect their safety and peace. Following their comments, newly appointed Police Chief Bruce Wade reported that since he took over the department, fourteen vacancies have been reduced to just two. He noted that the annual Back to School Bash had successfully distributed 400 backpacks filled with school supplies. Council members complimented him on his successes.

Next, newly appointed City Manager Michael Conley spoke of a grant that would favor the city, as they would provide \$7 million to the \$29 million given through the Hazard Mitigation Grant. Mayor Elise Partin questioned where the \$7 million would come from, since it was not in the budget and the response is due 9/1/25. Councilman Tim James noted the need to find partners to help find the money. Council then voted to postpone a decision until the next meeting.

The next item caused tensions to flare. The council had discussed changing the date of August 20th meeting to the 27th due to a council member being unable to attend the regular meeting. The mayor sent emails to the council to confirm the change, and with little feedback decided to schedule something with her children that would keep her from the meeting on the 20th. She stated that having her emails ignored was “typical behavior towards her” (from council.) Councilman Byron Thomas objected, asking if it were to become common practice to change meeting dates. When it was decided to keep the original date, Mayor Partin appealed to the audience to be there, since during a past meeting when she was absent, the council had voted her off of most of her committees. (Note that this was covered in THE STATE.)

Next was approval of the Midlands Business Leadership Group Riverfront Rebranding project. In addition to the names of each of the three riverwalks: Cayce, West Columbia, and Columbia, the entire 27 miles of riverwalk will be referred to as “Three Rivers Walkway.” Council approved of the unifying effects of this change.

During the council comments, Tim James, who has served since 2020 and had previously announced his decision not to seek reelection this November, gave a heartfelt talk about how much he loved Cayce. When he was twelve, his brother was killed in a car wreck. The kindness shown to him and his mother by the police who had to break the news convinced him that he wanted to grow up and be like them. Years later he served with distinction, even “taking a bullet for the city.” Byron

Thomas spoke of how the summer reading program at the West Columbia Branch library, a program he helped sponsor, had grown from 14 children last year to 39 this year. He also spoke glowingly of how much Tim James had mentored him.

Councilman Hunter Sox also lauded Tim, and then spoke of how the Fairfield Inn will be an asset to the city, referring to the citizens' concerns. He said he would host a community meeting with the developer to address concerns about noise, lights, and safety.

They then adjourned for a lengthy executive session.

**Regular Meeting, Lexington County Registration and Elections Board, 8/4/25
(David Smith)**

Presently, a number of polling locations are not fully handicap accessible. Note that this is a statewide concern. The board plans to replace them with Community Voting Centers (CVCs). A high school, which is fully ADA-compliant, is an example of a CVC. However, implementation of CVCs would require changing several state laws. Executive Director Lenice Shoemaker reported that plans are still in the works to meet with the Lexington County delegation to ask for their help in drafting the needed legislation before the legislature returns in January.

Next came discussion of the 11/4/25 municipal general elections. Staff reported that preparations are going well, including voting equipment, board member precinct assignments, post-election surveys, etc. Candidate filing ends Aug 15 at noon. There will be just ONE early voting center – the main office in Lexington.

There are opportunities for LWVCA to collaborate with Lexington County Registration & Elections, according to Lenice Shoemaker (Executive Director): They are open to joining us at our voter registration events this fall. Also, they are open to joining them when they go to high schools to register eligible students. Carolyn Harness will send a calendar to Sara Phillips. Contact: Carolyn Harness (charness@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov), Outreach Coordinator.

Regular Meeting, Gaston Town Council, 8/5/25 (Susan and Stephanie Phillips)

The chief of police reported that there have been increasing events of trespass violations by the unhoused.

Next, there were two speakers during the public forum. The first was addressing squatters on her property and around the town with limited response from town leaders noted. The speaker suggested reaching out to other towns to see if there

have been any successes to share. The mayor agreed to investigate this suggestion. The second speaker addressed flooding of property due to run-off barriers being removed. Planning for the collard festival is underway.

Finally, the council delivered a public word of appreciation to the Police Department for their work to provide a very successful community back-to-school.

Regular Meeting, Lexington/Richland Five Schools, 8/11/25 (Katherine Myers)

Opening presentations by the future Crossroads Middle and Spring Hill Middle Principals brought smiles to the Board and public alike. Following these two presentations, Dr. Ross presented his Superintendent's Report concerning the district's 5 year Strategic Plan update, the district's '25-'26 Priorities for students, teachers, and district, and, finally, a report about teacher retention by Human Resources.

Two individuals from the public participated. J Matthews was concerned that Cafeteria food going in the trash and wasting his tax money. The second participant informed the Board that they were in jeopardy of a new FIOA lawsuit as a result of a procedural decision.

All Action Agenda passed without discussion except for #14 (JICG Tobacco Use by students). Baynham wanted to add a last minute amendment for the district to purchase, maintain, and monitor VAPE machines in every school bathroom in the district. Baynham's motion failed, and #14 passed as originally stated.

Discussion agenda addressed the CEP (Community Eligibility Program) for school cafeterias, changes to Board Policy, and Professional Staff contracts. 13 schools operate in the CEP. The addition of 5 other qualifying schools is not financially feasible considering the needed funds from the General Fund.

The District cannot provide teachers with an accurate up-to-date pay scale because the District waits on the SC statehouse decisions on educational funding, which occurs after hiring has commenced for the district.

Regularly Meeting, Forest Acres City Council, 8/12/25 (Melanie Trimble)

The first two and a half hours of the evening's gathering was public comment and questions about the Unified Development Code Zoning Plan that the city council is proposing. There was standing room only, but no provision for microphones or print access to the plan. The main points are below, but it will be best to contact the city

council or go to the large draft document on the City of Forest Acres website. [https://www.forestacres.net/news/zoning-ordinance-update.](https://www.forestacres.net/news/zoning-ordinance-update)

The public hearing was preceded by a very limited presentation from White Smith and Cousino Development Partners. Generally, the plan is attempting to put extra zoning restrictions on a number of areas, variously identified as development districts or “overlay corridors”. The City Council presented that at the current time, all zoning designations are pretty big buckets with few restrictions. The look and feel of the city is dependent on the approval process on zoning changes, and then there is a great deal of freedom. If a lot is allowed to change to commercial, then many options are currently allowed. They state that the new plan creates additional restrictions in the identified areas: the Richland Mall intersection, the Trenholm/Forest Drive intersection area, the parcels along Forest Drive on both sides, and several other areas. They feel that the new plan allows for small local development along the main roads but places limits that work against big box stores, tries to limit high traffic driveways to certain areas, and to limit drive-thrus and high development.

Citizen response at the meeting was generally fearful and negative. Many felt that this explanation and designations, especially of the overlay districts, just open the door to developers. There were vocal groups from several small streets that empty onto Forest around Atascadero, Idalia, Greenhill, Cherry Laurel, Edgehill, and The Laureate. There are significant fears about residential properties along Forest Drive turning into commercial properties with heavy traffic. Citizens described people in some of these areas being “pursued relentlessly” by developers interested in picking up 7 or 8 parcels. Some people spoke about neighbors having secret plans to develop. Errors in the map parcels were pointed out, notably that the residential plots along the park near Forest/Beltline were misrepresented as commercial already. People felt that the council will do what it wants to anyway.

In response, the city manager and a few members of council explained their goals. They have added restrictions so that if these properties successfully petition to become commercial, that there will be more restrictions on what type of commercial that can be. No one’s zoning will change at all unless they petition to change it.

A pretty big point that few understood until the meeting, is that currently a person who wants to rezone to commercial has to have 2 acres minimum, UNLESS the small lot is adjacent to a commercial zone. In the Overlay Plan, anyone can ask for

rezone no matter what size their lot or what they're next to. The intention of this is to allow for small boutique uses of homes or small buildings, so that there doesn't have to be a big business or big box store to get it rezoned commercial. Citizens felt this seems truly to open the door for developers to buy up a bunch of tiny lots that ARE NOT contiguous to different zoning, get some rezoned, and then pressure the properties in the middle. Regardless of intention, all zoning changes would still be contingent on passing through the zoning board and city council, but citizens seemed to believe that council wants these properties to go commercial, whether small business or bigger.

Finally, a few other zoning plan issues were raised like drive-thru businesses (which would be limited in future to the two big intersection areas), short term rental regulations (which are relatively ignored in this plan), having access roads behind the commercial corridors on Forest (running behind Trader Joe's and so forth) which had been a part of a previous study, finding ways to revamp and improve the really ugly empty buildings, and concerns about the old Kroger becoming something horrible. A council member offhandedly mentioned the office buildings on the big parcel along Forest between Beltline and Landmark as "getting to the end of their life". A citizen mentioned that there should have been dedicated public town hall meeting at a large enough venue and with amplification for people to hear. After 2.5 hours the public hearing ended and most people left.

There will be first reading and final reading in regular city council meetings. The soonest those two events can happen are the regular city council meetings of Sept 9 and Oct 11.

Regular business proceeded at 8:30. Minutes from July 8 were approved. Municipal Association COO Jake Broome presented the Municipal Achievement Award to Forest Acres for the Gills Creek Park project, which was a multi-partner project dedicated to officers who died in the line of duty. Hospitality tax funds were approved to Midlands Light Opera for a second annual public performance. Funds were approved up to \$10K for marketing materials (swag, cups, hats, branded items) and up to \$15K for the Remember and Rise Event on Friday, Oct 3, marking the 10 year anniversary of the passing of Officer Greg Alia. Multiple appointments and reappointments were made to Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Commission, and Public Safety Foundation. Richland Mall is not too far behind; they are still working on the underground work. Speed bumps are in place around AC Flora, with help from the City of Columbia. City parks improvement is progressing, including

around the flood zone at the mall park, and Citadel and Quinine are on pace to be improved by October if approved. The police chief expects three new hires next month, which will make the department fully staffed. There is a resurgence of residential burglaries this week, and this is a high priority. Officers will be visiting more neighborhoods on front porches to hear from people.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Regular Meeting, Richland Two School Board, 8/12/25 (Sara Phillips)

Tonight's meeting was opened with a singing performance by a 4th and 5th grade choral group from Bethel Hanbury Elementary School.

The board moved to vote on their annual Minority Utilization Plan Report. There were motions to approve the report, however Monica Elkins-Scott expressed her frustration with the lack of time to educate the community on what this report represents as well as why and how they fell short of meeting this required goal. The procurement department requires the school district to have at a minimum 10% of work or services for the district be completed by certified minority owned contractors and vendors. Superintendent Moore explained that currently they have hired 9.2% blend of certified and non-certified contracts. Discussion continued and it was decided they would readdress this report at the next meeting. The original motion to approve the report did not pass. A new motion was passed to table the vote allowing for time for actionable steps to be put in place before the meeting on 8/26/25.

During public comment, a teacher from Pontiac Elementary reported that in the first 5 days of school, the 5th grade portable buildings are lacking WIFI, hard lined phones for safety, and working smart boards. She asked the board to make corrections immediately for the safety and learning environment of the teachers and students. Next, the board gave an update to the summer board retreat where they worked on personality assessments which they believe will help them work better as a team. Strategic plans for the new year were completed.

The meeting ended with an update from Superintendent Dr Moore highlighting accomplishments. A summer reading camp was offered at Bridge Creek Elementary during the month of June. This was available for students not achieving the SC Reading Ready levels. 168 students participated and 40 of those students made clear improvement. Many others did not achieve the state goal due to learning differences and language barriers. Dr. Moore also highlighted the

improvement to staffing on all levels within the district and compared numbers from the start of school in 2024 to this year.

Regular Meeting, Irmo Town Council, 8/19/2025, (Nicole Sanchez)

The council meeting started with honoring two of Irmo's Little League teams: seniors baseball and juniors softball. Two more teams will be honored next month, including the one that almost made it to the Little League World Series finals. Though no one participated in the public comment at the top, there was ample discussion around the annexation of almost 19 acres in the Ballentine area. There was some discussion around whether parcels should be zoned before or after they are annexed into the town and the proper way to do it. The Deputy town administrator explained that it's a MASC best practice to do it at the same time. Councilmember Barb Waldman also pointed out that the town didn't seek this. The owners initiated the request. Mayor Danielson noted that those concerned about growth should welcome this option instead of more houses, since it will be zoned for commercial. Council voted 4-1 to approve the first reading with Councilmember Phylis Coleman dissenting because she wanted to fully understand what they were doing before voting for it. At the end, Henry Martin spoke against the annexation effort because of concerns that the infrastructure isn't there for more development.

The Town also completed its first reading of a hate crimes ordinance. Presented by Councilmember Coleman, the ordinance was voted on unanimously. I recommend you check out her impassioned discussion (Click [HERE](#); the discussion starts at minute 48:25). It will require a second reading in September.

There was also approval of a bond to ensure that a Chipotle restaurant conducts the necessary intersection improvements in the future. Finally, there were the appointment of new members to the Accommodations Tax Committee and Board of Zoning.

Regular Meeting, Columbia City Council, 8/19/25 (Christine Hait)

Mayor Daniel Rickenmann made three presentations at the August 19, 2025, Columbia City Council meeting. He proclaimed August 25-31 Black Breastfeeding Week and recognized Councilmember Aditi Bussells, who in cooperation with the Black Maternal Health Collective, works to provide resources for maternal health and infant care to traditionally underserved communities. Additionally, Rickenmann presented Keys to the City to Mr. Joshua Shumak and to Mr. Arthur Faust. Shumak is an activist focused on indigenous communities. The 25-year-old tribal leader

serves as the vice-chief of the Wassamasaw tribe and works with the South Carolina Commission of Minority Affairs. Last month Mr. Shumak received from the Governor the Order of the Palmetto. Mr. Faust was recognized for 50 years of service to the city. He has worked throughout Columbia's Parks and Recreation Department demonstrating what Rickenmann described as "the highest standards of public service."

During the meeting, council also addressed ongoing water and flooding issues. The council funded the Louisa Street Stormwater Pond Retrofit and Sewer Replacement Project, which aims to improve the water quality in Smith Branch as well as address problems with flooding. The Smith Branch watershed flows through parts of north and downtown Columbia. The work should be completed by fall 2027.

Regular Meeting, Cayce City Council, 8/20/25 (Amy Mikell)

Mayor Pro Tem Tim James presided due to the planned absence of Mayor Elise Partin. First up was a presentation by Ja' Juan Belgrave, owner of the Party and Event Store, a new business on Knox Abbott Drive. He described the value of his business and fervently requested council to allow him to display his inflatable advertising devices. Those are forbidden under an "overlay district rule" that older businesses near him are exempt from.

Next came a lengthy discussion of a Hazard Mitigation Grant, which would be worth just under \$30,000 but would require a \$7 million investment from the city. Council members agreed that since that money is not in the budget and the city is already engaged in a \$10,000 project to address flooding on the Avenues, there is a better plan for dealing with the problem. They showed photographs of ditches and drainage pipes that have become clogged with debris and growth, making them useless to direct water away from streets and yards. Byron Thomas noted that while in the past weeks, Cayce has "turned into Seattle," he agreed that it is best to work proactively with resources already available.

Following that issue, council approved a bid to handle the Airport Gateway Landscape Project, a much-needed move to improve the route from the airport into Columbia. It was noted that the project was first suggested by Dawn Staley, who complained years ago about the poor impression visiting basketball teams had from the unkempt appearance of the route. They continued that it would be most appropriate to invite her to be present for the unveiling of the completed project.

During the council comments portion of the meeting, Byron Thomas welcomed his new constituents (gained from redistricting) and urged citizens to volunteer on the city's events committee. Hunter Sox held a community meeting since last month's concerns about a Fairfield Inn being built near their neighborhood. The developer has been informed about requested accommodations, such as a privacy wall, to ease the neighbors' concerns. Phil Carter had just returned from a visit to France, which had included seeing Normandy. He said regardless of political unrest, we should all be grateful to live in a country with the freedoms so many had died for.

Regular Meeting, Lexington District Two School Board, 8/21/25 (Amy Mikell)

Among the recognition of honors and awards, Roger Viegas of Fulmer Middle School has been awarded the USC College of Education's Coaching Teacher Award of Excellence. This award is given in appreciation of teachers who accept the challenge of hosting student teachers and excel in giving them sound footing for their future career. Next, Decker Anderson, an 8th grader at Busbee Creative Arts Academy, has earned a national award in archery. He ranks in the top five percent of all male archers in the country. More recognition was given to six district schools selected as National Beta Schools of Merit. Five year plans for advancing fine arts instruction included presentations from teachers of visual arts, chorus, band, orchestra, dance, theater, and general music. Much was made of the tremendous boost the new PAC (Performing Arts Center) has given the arts.

The newly appointed Director of Operations, Bill McFerson, gave an overview of maintenance projects undertaken successfully in the last few weeks. The work included replacing a restroom floor that had become cracked; he noted that "boys miss."

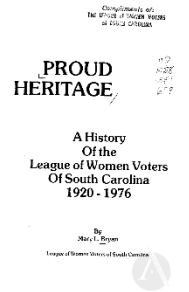
After approving several amendments and revisions, including naming the Airport High School Football facility the "Les Evans Field" to honor the long-time, multi-award-winning coach, the meeting was adjourned.

14. MEMBER CORNER

League Lore & Mini-Crossword

Discover hidden gems from our League's past—then test your knowledge about the past and present in the mini-crossword linked below.

Earlier this month Keller Barron sent me a link to [Proud Heritage: A History of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina 1920 - 1976](#) by Mary Bryan. To access this document, click [HERE](#).



One of my favorite quotes from this document, and the reason I am sharing information about our history each month, is “The Past is Prologue - Study the Past” from outside the National Archives Building in Washington D.C. We current league members have much to be proud of and much to learn from our history.

The earliest activities of our league focused on studying local government which led to efforts to pass a city ordinance requiring pasteurization of milk sold in the city and collaborating with other local organizations on an intensive campaign for a city-manager government in Columbia which was approved by voters in 1949. Then, as now, thorough study of issues provides the strong foundation for our work for change. This approach has increased our credibility and fostered trust and respect for the league and our members.

This book contains many more details about the early leaders of our league and their work, a chapter describing Keller Barron's state league presidency, and many other interesting stories and recollections. It is just one of the many archived documents in our collection. A visit to the archives is being planned - details will be available soon. I hope many of you will join us!

If you want to have some quick mini-crossword fun, click [HERE](#).

League Members at the August Social on August 23, 2025

What a wonderful time we all had at Sally Boyd's house, as the following pictures can attest to.

Richland Library Learn Freely Fest – Info Expo, August 9, 2025

We had an amazing time connecting with our community at this event, and proud to share resources on voter registration, election information, and the importance of civic engagement.

A huge thank you to Richland Library for hosting and to everyone who stopped by our table! You are the heartbeat of democracy!

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International Visitor Leadership Group

The Columbia World Affairs Council hosted the International Visitor Leadership Partnership group last week. We had the great honor to meet with this group of leaders from India, South Africa, Japan, Taiwan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories.

15. CONTACTS

OFFICERS

President	Sara Phillips	2024-25
1st Vice President	Kathryn Brookins	2023-25
2nd Vice President	Mary Edmonds	2024-26
Secretary	Katherine Myers	2023-25
Treasurer	Christina Goodwin	2024-26

DIRECTORS

Government Liaison	Missy Caughman	2024-26
Observer Corps	Amy Mikell	2024-26
Publicity	Anita Baker	2024-26
Women and Gender Equity	Laura Woliver	2023-25
Voter Participation	Tracey Lee	2025-26
VOTE411	Janet Wedlock	2025-27
Membership	Elva Stinson	2024-26
Communications	Susan Cirulli	2024-26

OFF-BOARD COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Education K-12	Melanie Trimble, Paula Waters
Environmental Affairs	Frances Eargle, Elaine Cooper
Nominating Committee	Marianne McGrath
Voter Education	Cynthia Flynn, Lill Mood
Vote411 Co-Chair	Keller Barron

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