

**Regular Meeting of City Council
New Ellenton Community Center
Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022 7:00 PM**

WORK SESSION 6:30 PM

Presentation by Retail Strategies

WELCOME: Mayor Kimberly Williams

INVOCATION: Kenneth Cook

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: All Stood

ROLL CALL FOR THE RECORD:

Council present – Kimberly Williams, Elvira Johnson-Holley, Ricky Foster, Carl Culpepper, III, Jason Morgan, Kendrick Patterson, Faye Durham

Council Not Present-N/A

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Presentation by Kenny Brown from Aiken Electric Cooperative:

***Kenny Brown, Marilyn Bryce-Schanhals & Keith Wallace** –Presented the “Help My House” initiative: a home energy makeover and low interest loan option available to Aiken Electric members in good standing.

The “Help My House” flyer is attached and will be available with minutes at www.newellentonsc.com with further details about the program

***Michele Springsteen**-spoke to Council about information in the newsletter from Senator Tom Young she received about RIA funding and grants that will be available (the excerpt below is from Senator Tom Young’s newsletter pertaining to RIA funding...“**ARPA Funds**: Last week, the Senate approved its plan to allocate the federal funds received by the state from the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”). Phase one of the Senate’s plan would provide over \$453 million in funding to SCDOT, \$400 million to the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) for the State Broadband Office to expand access to high-speed broadband internet, and \$900 million to the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA). The RIA would be directed to use approximately \$800 million of the designated funds to establish three separate grant programs for water, wastewater, and stormwater projects to provide local governments with opportunities to build and update aging infrastructure across the state. The RIA would also designate \$100 million of its allotment for projects that are deemed significant to economic development. Additionally, the RIA would be required to transfer \$500,000 to each of the 10 Council of Governments (COGs) for planning assistance, development of grant proposals, and compliance assistance related to improvements in water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure for smaller systems. The legislation also holds back approximately \$750 Million for future allocations. Also, last week, the House passed its proposal for the ARPA funds which is very similar to the Senate plan. Differences in the two plans will be worked out and sent to the Governor for his review in the coming weeks”).

Michele asked Council if they reviewed information she left for them in December pertaining to upcoming funding information. Mayor Kimberly replied that she wasn’t aware of the information and will look into the information.

* Senator Tom Young’s full newsletter is attached and will be available with minutes at www.newellentonsc.com *

***Geneva Jackson**-Attended the meeting with SCDOT Board as an advisory citizen concerning the Eagle Rd. project. Construction date is set to begin by April 2022. The next scheduled informational meeting with SCDOT is March 3, 2022.

***Pastor Debra Creech**-gave an update on the construction of Christ Central (new heating/cooling system; toilets; lights) and Foreman Memorial Church to install windows. Council was asked; “individually and collectively” to contribute whatever possible as Christ Central is in the community to assist. Asked council to

find out who owns the dilapidated property on Talatha Rd. or Dr. (Mayor clarified that it is on the corner of Risher Ave.; Councilman Elvira clarified that it is near Pastor Debra Creech's building).

***David Alexander-Recreation Director-** Update: press box, located at the New Ellenton Middle School's football field, has been completed. Walk through was done with Dr. Murphy with Aiken County School Board on February 9th. Meeting with Recreation Committee included discussion of having the entire council, when available, do a walk-through, also. He is waiting bids from 3-4 electricians in order to have it wired for electricity for use of the box next football season. There will be a meeting about 1st Tee program to finalize the start of the program in the upcoming weeks. (David was asked by Geneva Jackson if there will be a soccer program so that the soccer goals at Evans Field could be utilized) The problem with a soccer program is getting into a league. If New Ellenton were to create a soccer league there will need to be coaches and it would not be able to play against the Citizens Park league because they do not allow outside teams to play in the league; they must participate individually through the program that is offered at Citizens Park (anyone can participate in Citizens Park recreation at an out-of-town rate).

***Resident of The Pines Subdivision (seated to the right of Michele Springsteen)-**asked if David has spoken to the coaches at Citizens Park and mentioned that many of the soccer/lacrosse teams in the area may desire to use our field for their games or practices which will cause more visitors to the city, in turn visits to local businesses and increase in revenue. David replied that he has spoken to the Director at Citizens Park and will look into the use of Evans Field by area leagues. Councilman Jason Morgan replied that Evans Field soccer goals are ready for rental/use by area teams; the sprinkler heads have been replaced/irrigation is working properly and seeding will be done on grass.

***Kevin Ingram-**has volunteered in the past and this year as a coach, his children participated in the (recreation) program and believe that the recreation program at the city is needed. He feels there is disconnection between the community and the city's program, that there are enough children in the area for all sports programs to exist in the city. The recreation program, which has "saved his life," has a lot of community support and talented children. He has learned a lot from the program and he feels he has "taken the burden" when he hears from disgruntled residents and people put their trust in him, but assures them that "it will get right." He would like to work with and meet with council to discuss the program and assist in saving the program that saved his life. He has been with the program in some form since he was three years old and has started writing a book of his experience with the program and other guys he has grown-up with and four pages are completed. Mayor Kimberly responded that she understands Kevin's frustrations and has shared in that frustration for many, many years. She gets a lot of messages, emails and phone calls about our youth sports program. Her two young children do not participate in the city's recreation program right now because she felt that she had to move them many years ago to Citizen's Park while her husband was a coach in the city. The youth sports program is something that they will be working on and invited Kevin, parents and citizens to sit down and discuss what they would like to see from the program so that residents will not have to run to Aiken for everything. Kevin mentioned an article about there being 150 children come out the first year he started. He will speak to the person that he started with about getting a baseball season started, even though it is the end of the season; he believes that it can be pulled off to have one team represent us. Mayor Kimberly responded that there are some things that are holding back the baseball season starting now and encouraged a meeting so that it may be an option in the future. Councilman Elvira stated that as a council, they will work behind anyone coming together to have functions that bring New Ellenton together and will be here for everyone. Geneva Jackson stated that she would like to give Coach David Alexander (Recreation Director) accolades because he deserves credit for what is taking place, thanks him for what he is doing and she has seen a change in her Grandson's character since participating in the football program. Mayor Kimberly thanked Coach David and she is happy to see the football program coming back. Councilman Jason Morgan stated that Coach David has a lot of things coming and planned for the football field/program.

***Chief Alesia Parks (Police)-**For the month of January: 16 cases that were closed, 4 arrests, 23 calls to assist other agencies, 3 calls involving motor vehicle theft, 5 larceny, 82 citations issued and 42 warnings. After speaking with the Police Commissioners, it was brought up to purchase two additional Tasers and supplied them with quotes, minus shipping, handling and taxes, of the pricing. Councilman Kendrick Patterson stated that tasers are needed and you should always have that less lethal option.

Motion to approve the purchase of two Tasers @ \$3265.84 plus taxes & shipping:

Jason Morgan

2nd to the motion: Rickey Foster

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval

***Chief Mike Kellems (Fire/Water Commissioner)**-For the month of January: 116 calls for service and stated that council has report in package; most were medical calls with 25 being fire calls in some form. Received trucks(2) that were ordered through state contract; one being purchased with carried funds from last year's budget and the other purchased through the sale of another fire truck. In the process of outfitting truck (decals, radio, etc.)

Water Commission-Mike stated there was a resident's complaint given to council in their packet and it is the first time he is aware of the complaint. There is a special meeting scheduled for tomorrow night so that all commissioners can be made aware of complaint and look into it. Mike referenced the Tom Young information mentioned by Michele Springsteen and stated that the CPW had requested funds from the DOE Plutonium Settlement that should be finalized soon. It doesn't look like they will be receiving the money requested and wondered if something was piggy backed with the City of New Ellenton for the CPW. Stated that the cities of Wagner-Salley, Jackson, Burnetown and New Ellenton \$5Million in total Highway 19 corridor business, economic development, improvements for New Ellenton; downtown water/sewer infrastructure, economic growth or development for Wagner-Salley, Jackson and Burnetown. Mike stated that he's pretty sure they will not receive the money they requested and he has no clue as to what the city has put in for. He thinks the CPW's request was a little over \$2Million and he's sure that theirs is not part of what the city will receive. Mike formally announced his intention to run for Aiken County Council as Camille Furguele will not be running for reelection. Mike stated he was on city council before and Fire Chief; stated it was not an issue and these are not dual commissioned office. Filing is in March and Primary is in June.

***Eric Heard**-He and partner; Brett Wadsworth, who could not attend, are the owners of Carolina Homecrafters, LLC and are building new homes in New Ellenton and looking to bring more new homes to the area. They will be bringing company to South Main St. and will be in the city often. He appreciates the women in the office being patient while turning in forms for the house that was approved; plans to do more. He has been on the phone with Mr. Cook, (Kenneth Cook, City Administrator), petitioning for properties that the city owns saying how much he would like to pay and what he would like to do with the property. Eric runs Air BnB's in Aiken and partner is from New Ellenton and Dad lives in New Ellenton. Eric has met some members of council and stated that if they needed anything to let him know. They plan to do commercial and residential builds. Eric Heard is a developer and private lender who owns EricEHeard, LLC.

APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:

Jan.18, 2022- Regular Meeting

Motion to approve: Carl Culpepper, III

2nd to the motion: Jason Morgan

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval

OLD BUSINESS:

1. 2nd Reading of Ordinance to Amend the Planned Development Zone at "The Pines" Subdivision

Motion to approve: Jason Morgan

2nd to the motion: Carl Culpepper, III

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval

***Kenneth Cook**-stated that Mark Gilliam and Phillip Green, developers, were in attendance. There were requirements added at 1st reading for overlay of the roadway and traffic study. In full build-out there is a little over one second delay and one car stacking found from traffic study and should not cause a traffic issue. Councilman Jason Morgan stated that he spoke to residents in The Pines and wanted to know if the city or will the residents will take ownership of the pavilion that is planned in the new development upon completion. Kenneth stated that if the city owns it technically anyone could use it. *Resident out of camera view stated that having a cleared area with nothing would be boring for residents. Mark Gilliam plans to begin within one year as zoning will last that long. Mayor Kimberly asked Kenneth if the 2nd reading tonight could be approved and deed ownership of pavilion at a later time; Kenneth answered yes.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discuss Establishing a Fire Commission

Motion to approve: Carl Culpepper, III

2nd to the motion: Kendrick Patterson

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval for Jason Morgan and Kimberly Williams

2. Approval of The Pines Section 5

Motion to approve: Kendrick Patterson

2nd to the motion: Jason Morgan

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval of work that has been completed pending information(asphalt test) back to Kenneth Cook

3. Discuss Selling Land on Virginia Avenue-Tax Map Parcel 126-08-27-003

Motion to approve: Faye Durham

2nd to the motion: Jason Morgan

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval for all vacant properties that the city has no intention of using be up for bidding

4. Discuss Purchasing Equipment for Streets & Roads

*Councilman Jason Morgan-Has been impossible to find a backhoe for purchase. Kenneth will start the process for finding a backhoe and bring information back to council. Jason will gather all equipment for sale through sealed bidding in the next few months. Discussion with Mike Kellems that the city may be able to have rental agreement with CPW for use of equipment and not purchase costly equipment to dig sewer taps if they will not be using at least 25% of time.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL:

***Faye Durham**-waiting to receive bids for air conditioner unit for concession stand at field behind NEMS (New Ellenton Middle School). Special Events-Committee would like to purchase Christmas Tree for \$4,292.02; no vote needed as purchase price is under \$5,000 per Kenneth Cook

ADJOURNMENT FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion to approve: Carl Culpepper, III

2nd to the motion: Jason Morgan

There was a unanimous vote in favor of approval

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Personnel Matters

Minutes after executive session were taken by City Administrator, Kenneth Cook
Councilwoman Durham made the motion and Councilman Culpepper seconded.

Council voted to come out of executive session at 10:41

VOTES TAKEN AFTER EXECUTIVE SESSION:

After coming out of executive session, Council voted to suspend employee A for three days without pay. Councilman Morgan made the motion and Councilman Culpepper seconded. The vote was six in favor with Councilwoman Johnson-Holley abstaining.

Council voted to change the Police Department schedule to 6:45 to 7:15 starting March 4, 2022. Councilwomen Johnson-Holley made the motion and it was seconded by Councilman Patterson. The vote was unanimous.

Council voted to change the schedule of the Streets and Roads Department to 6:00 am to 2:30 pm beginning with Daylight Savings time and going back to 8:00 am to 4:30 pm after Daylight Savings Time ends. Councilman Morgan made the motion and it was seconded by Councilwoman Johnson-Holley. The vote was unanimous.


ADJOURNMENT:

Council Adjourned at 10:53 p.m. Councilman Foster made the motion and it was seconded by Councilman Morgan.

INFORMATION:

Supporting materials attached:

Ordinance No. 1-18-22
South Carolina Quitclaim Deed



City Clerk Signature/Date

 3/21/2022

Mayor/Date

Save Energy. Save Money.

How it Works

1. Contact Aiken Electric and ask if your home qualifies for an energy audit.
2. If so and the audit predicts enough savings, your home qualifies for Help My House.
3. Choose a contractor to make the improvements identified in the audit (see below for list of possible improvements).
4. Your contractor completes the work and must pass a second audit and inspection by Aiken Electric's team.
5. Aiken Electric pays the contractor and you begin making loan payments with your electricity bills.

Improvements may include

- ⇒ Repairing/replacing HVAC
- ⇒ Air sealing windows, doors, etc.
- ⇒ Sealing duct work
- ⇒ Insulating attic, crawlspace
- ⇒ Adding crawlspace vapor barrier

AIKEN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

2790 Wagener Rd.
Aiken, SC 29620

Phone: (803) 649-6245



Shape Up Your Home for Energy Savings

Is your home wasting energy and leaving you with high electric bills?

Aiken Electric may have a solution: a home energy makeover and low-interest loan from its *Help My House*® program.

For homes that qualify, Aiken Electric offers members in good standing zero-down, low-interest *Help My House* loans to make their homes more comfortable and energy efficient. The loans pay for approved contractors to make improvements that save energy and money. Members make their loan payments when they pay their monthly electricity bills using a portion of the savings. Interested? Contact Aiken Electric today and ask if your home qualifies for Help My House!

- 100% financing
- No money down
- No credit checks
- Convenient payment with your monthly bill



**Aiken Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MARIA BUSH

From: Tom Young <tom@youngthurmondlaw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 11:59 AM
To: maria@newellentonsc.com
Subject: FW: SRS Settlement, Tax Cut, and More -- February 21 Update from Senator Tom Young

Maria: I was asked to send this to you. Thank you.

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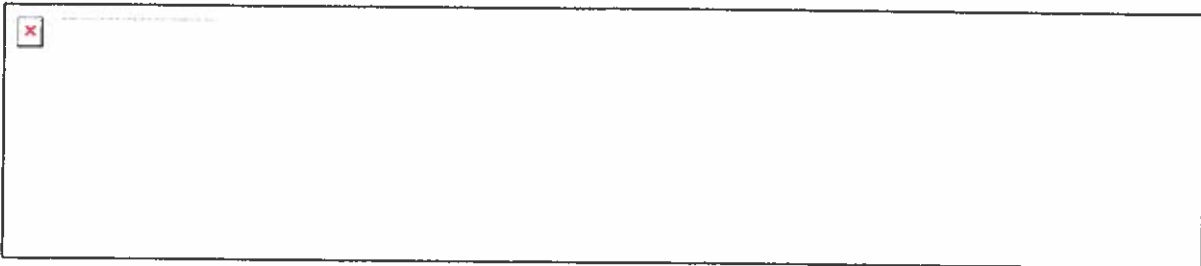
Senator Tom Young
South Carolina Senate District 24
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P.O. Box 651
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**** See Tom's website for weekly legislative updates **** =====

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From: Sen. Tom Young <tom@tomyoungforsenate.com>
Sent: Monday, February 21, 2022 9:09 PM
To: Tom Young <tom@youngthurmondlaw.com>
Subject: SRS Settlement, Tax Cut, and More -- February 21 Update from Senator Tom Young

See Senator Young's Latest Update



SRS SETTLEMENT, TAX CUT, AND MORE
District 24 Update -- February 21, 2022

Good evening! The State Senate has been working on issues affecting our region including the SRS Settlement funds allocation discussed below. Other matters addressed herein include the recent tax cut proposals; the state's latest revenue estimates; the medical marijuana bill; industry recruitment by the State's Commerce Department; the State's Conservation Bank; and more. If I can help you with an issue, please let me know. Thank you for the honor and the opportunity to serve in the South Carolina State Senate.

SRS Settlement Funds

Savannah River Site ("SRS") Plutonium Settlement Funds: In 2015, the Aiken County Legislative Delegation met with Governor Haley and Attorney General Wilson to request that the State consider its options to address the Federal Government's failure to fulfill the MOX Project promise and its failure to remove stored plutonium at SRS. These options included litigation to collect the statutory penalties that the Federal Government would owe beginning in 2016 if the MOX production objective was not achieved with a reduction in the stored plutonium at SRS. In February 2016, the State filed suit which culminated in the \$600 Million settlement announced on August 31, 2020. Since then, the Aiken County Legislative Delegation has spent an enormous amount of time working to gain legislative approval for allocating a large portion of the settlement funds to our County and impacted region. Last week, the Senate unanimously gave final approval to legislation that would allocate the net settlement funds totaling \$525 Million with 65% to projects in the affected counties (Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale); 10% to projects in the perimeter counties (Edgefield, Saluda, Lexington, Bamberg, Orangeburg, Colleton, and Hampton); and 25% to the County Transportation Committees of the state's counties except for Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale (the 3 first tier counties). The projects that would be funded in Aiken County total \$206.75 Million and can be seen [here](#). The legislation now goes to the S.C. House of Representatives. Our Delegation continues to work on this extremely important issue to our district and region.

OTHER STATE GOVERNMENT NEWS

Hands Free Act -- Distracted Driving Bill: Distracted driving from cell phone use is a public safety issue. Most drivers in our Senate district are familiar with the Georgia hands free law which started July 1, 2018. Last week, the Senate started debate on this bill and may continue that debate later this week. I am the primary sponsor of the bill. Aiken Rep. Bill Taylor has worked on this bill for years in the S.C. House. To see the most recent version of the bill, go [here](#).

Certificate of Need ("CON") Law: Since my last email update, the Senate passed legislation that would repeal the State's Certificate of Need requirements as to certain medical facilities and investments but keep it in place for long-term care nursing facilities. The bill now is in the House of Representatives. I voted for this bill.

State's Revenue Growth: Last week, the S.C. Board of Economic Advisors (BEA) increased the revenue estimates for this fiscal year, FY 2021-22 (FY22), and next fiscal year, FY 2022-23 (FY 23), in anticipation of higher revenue collections than previously forecasted, resulting in an unprecedented additional \$4.628 billion in forecasted recurring and nonrecurring revenues this budget cycle. The BEA raised its current FY 22 estimate by \$921.0 million, increasing the General Fund forecast from \$10.901 billion to \$11.822 billion. This change reflects consistently higher than expected revenue collections this year, including exceptionally high growth in multiple revenue categories. As a result of unusually strong revenue growth through January of 20.1 percent, revenues for FY 22 are now expected to increase 6.6 percent over the record high collections in FY 2020-21 (FY 21). In addition, the BEA increased its FY 23 estimate from \$10.920 billion to \$11.541 billion, an increase of \$621.5 million. The increase is due to three major tax categories being above normal ranges: Sales, Individual Income, and Corporate Income Tax. The BEA's announcement gives the Legislature more flexibility in crafting the state's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. To learn more, go [here](#).

Tax Cut Proposals Announced Last Week: Currently, South Carolina has the highest marginal individual income tax rate (7%) in the southeast. With the revenue growth described above, last Thursday, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Harvey Peeler introduced his comprehensive tax relief bill. Items in the proposal include:

- An immediate reduction of the top marginal individual income tax rate from 7% to 5.7%
- An immediate deduction of all military retirement income from South Carolina taxable income
- A lowering of the industrial property tax rate from 10.5% to 6% while keeping the current fee in lieu system in place
- A Taxpayer Rebate Fund and an allocation of \$1 billion to the fund for a one-time rebate to taxpayers.

Meanwhile, earlier in the week, House of Representatives leadership introduced a comprehensive tax relief bill that includes the following:

- Would collapse the current six income tax brackets into two, with earners of \$16,040 or less paying a rate of 3% immediately and earners of \$16,040 or more paying a rate of 6.5%.
- Additionally, the 6.5% rate would be reduced to 6% over five years.

By June, we should know the specifics of any tax cut legislation enacted this session and what it means for our State and its citizens.

ARPA Funds: Last week, the Senate approved its plan to allocate the federal funds received by the state from the American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA"). Phase one of the Senate's plan would provide over \$453 million in funding to SCDOT, \$400 million to the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) for the State Broadband Office to

expand access to high-speed broadband internet, and \$900 million to the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA). The RIA would be directed to use approximately \$800 million of the designated funds to establish three separate grant programs for water, wastewater, and stormwater projects to provide local governments with opportunities to build and update aging infrastructure across the state. The RIA would also designate \$100 million of its allotment for projects that are deemed significant to economic development. Additionally, the RIA would be required to transfer \$500,000 to each of the 10 Council of Governments (COGs) for planning assistance, development of grant proposals, and compliance assistance related to improvements in water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure for smaller systems. The legislation also holds back approximately \$750 Million for future allocations. Also, last week, the House passed its proposal for the ARPA funds which is very similar to the Senate plan. Differences in the two plans will be worked out and sent to the Governor for his review in the coming weeks.

Marijuana for Medical Purposes: On February 9 by a vote of 28-15, the Senate passed the medical marijuana bill after several days of debate. The bill has been sent to the House of Representatives and is in the 3-M committee. As amended, the bill creates a regulated medical marijuana program to allow individuals with serious illnesses to access and use medical marijuana when recommended by a physician. The following provisions are included (this is not an all-inclusive list):

- Allows that patients with these conditions could get it with a doctor's prescription and after qualifying for a medical marijuana registry identification card: Cancer; Multiple sclerosis; a neurological disease or disorder, including epilepsy; post-traumatic stress disorder, subject, however, to the evidentiary requirements in Section 44-53-2100(A)(4) to confirm that the applicant has experienced one or more traumatic events; Crohn's disease; Sickle cell anemia; Ulcerative colitis; Cachexia or wasting syndrome; Autism; Severe or persistent nausea in a person who is not pregnant that is related to end-of-life or hospice care, or who is bedridden or homebound because of a condition; A chronic medical condition causing severe and persistent muscle spasms;
- Provides that people who work in these jobs cannot get it: Medical marijuana cannot be dispensed to law enforcement, anyone with a CDL, charter license or pilot's license, anyone operating heavy machinery or someone who operates buses or public transportation;
- Provides that an employer is not required to make accommodations to allow an employee to use medical marijuana. An employer may also discipline or terminate an employee for being under the influence of marijuana while at work even if taken for medical purposes;
- Provides that local governments may regulate the locations, hours, and number of medical marijuana businesses or prohibit medical marijuana establishments from operating in the jurisdiction;
- Establishes a system where marijuana establishment applicants must meet certain conditions, and in cases in which more applicants apply than are allowed by the local government, the local government shall follow the preference analysis procedure established by the Department of Health and

- Environmental Control (DHEC);
- Imposes a 6 percent sales tax at the point of sale that will also be subject to any applicable local option sales tax enacted pursuant to Chapter 10 of Title 4;
 - Provides that, in order to be licensed as a medical marijuana establishment, the establishment principal applicant shall submit to DHEC a completed electronic application signed by each principal and a copy of any local registration, license, or permit required by local government for the proposed medical cannabis establishment;
 - Allows "gelatin-based chewable products" that can contain up to 10 mg of Delta 9 THC;
 - Will not allow smoking marijuana leaves but will allow vaping marijuana;
 - Provides penalties for doctors or patients who falsify records;
 - Provides that the provisions of this legislation will sunset on December 31, 2028.
 - **My Position:** I voted against the bill. Based on what I read and learned about allowing marijuana for medical purposes from the experiences in other states, I did not vote in favor because of the unintended consequences that may arise; marijuana is still a Schedule 1 drug under federal law; the state already has a work force shortage; the scope of conditions eligible for marijuana use under the bill includes some subjective conditions which can be abused; marijuana use for medical purposes has not been subject to the evidence-based review and FDA regulatory oversight applied to other medications; and states enacting similar legislation have seen many problems. Those problems in other states include an increase in driving under the influence; increased marijuana use among all young people; adverse impacts on workforce; an increase in drug cartel activity; and other problems. Additionally, law enforcement has very strong concerns about the bill. My vote against this bill should not imply that I do not have great empathy for people who may benefit from it. For example, in 2014, I voted in favor of the CBD oil (derivative from marijuana) legislation which allows epilepsy patients to have access to marijuana extract to treat their epilepsy. In sum, as to this bill in 2022, I decided that the risks and consequences to the state and the public were too great to legalize marijuana for medical purposes.

Unencumbered Time for Teachers: Last week, the Senate passed a bill that would guarantee each teacher at least 30 minutes of unencumbered time each school day. The bill will now go to the House of Representatives.

Convention of States: A lot of people in our Senate district are interested in this legislation. Last week, a Senate Judiciary subcommittee approved the House bill and it now moves to the full Judiciary Committee. To learn more, go [here](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates: Last Thursday, a Senate Finance subcommittee amended a House bill which prohibited public employers from mandating a COVID-19 vaccine and required private employers to honor religious and medical exemptions. The bill now moves to the Senate Finance Committee as amended.

Election Laws: Recently, the House of Representatives amended legislation and sent it back to the Senate. That bill is in the Senate Judiciary and can be seen [here](#).

State's Export Sales -- Department of Commerce: On February 14, Gov. McMaster, the S.C. Department of Commerce, and the SC Ports Authority announced that the state's 2021 export sales totaled \$29.7 billion. The state remains the nation's top exporter of tires and completed passenger motor vehicles. To learn more, go [here](#). To see the State Dept. of Commerce's latest economic outlook, go [here](#).

2021 Industry Recruitment - Department of Commerce: Earlier this month, the Department of Commerce announced its 2021 industry recruitment results, which break multiple records set throughout the past decade. **In total, the state won 153 projects, accounting for \$5.7 billion in capital investment and more than 18,000 new jobs.** For more information, go [here](#).

Rest Areas and Welcome Centers -- Renovations and Upgrades Coming: Many of the State's Rest Areas and Welcome Centers along the interstates are in need of repairs and upgrades. The S.C. Department of Transportation ("SCDOT") manages 11 pairs of rest areas along South Carolina's interstates. The S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism ("SCPRT) manages the Welcome Centers. SCDOT plans to renovate and replace all rest areas across the state. The renovations will also include larger parking areas for trucks. This \$150M project is being funded by \$44M State funds (provided by the legislature) and \$106M in federal funds identified by SCDOT. SCDOT says the rest area on I-26 eastbound just outside of Charleston is the oldest and is the first one scheduled for replacement. SCDOT is using that project as its template for all of the remaining rest area upgrades as it develops plans to renovate the remaining rest areas. When that template is completed, SCDOT will contract out the work to renovate those rest areas. As to the Welcome Centers, the State's Welcome Center off I-20 in North Augusta was built in 1980 is scheduled to be rebuilt and updated in 2023.

State Conservation Bank: Many people in our Senate district support the State's Conservation Bank which helps preserve significant lands, wetlands, and other properties in our state. In the past including 2018, I have worked on and supported legislation to restructure and reauthorize the Bank. Recently, the Bank issued its 2021 Annual Report which can be seen [here](#).

VETERAN INFORMATION

Aiken County Veterans Affairs: Major Dwight Bradham is the Aiken County Veterans Affairs Officer. He and his team do a great job for our veterans in Aiken County! The office can be reached at (803) 642-1545 and at dbradham@aikencountysc.gov by email. If you have any veteran issue, please call the office.

Congressman Wilson -- Veteran Assistance: The local number to Congressman

Wilson's Aiken County office is (803) 642-6416. My State Senate office also regularly assists veterans with many issues. The number is (803) 212-6000 or contact me.

Veterans Affairs Websites: The State's Department of Veterans Affairs provides many services. To learn more, go [here](#). The U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs website can be accessed [here](#).

Federal Benefits for Veterans: To see the latest benefits for veterans, their dependents, and their survivors, go [here](#).

South Carolina -- Top State for Veterans: South Carolina is home to more veteran-owned businesses than any other state in the U.S. South Carolina's military community is one of the strongest in the nation. In addition, South Carolina is number 2 in the Top 10 best states in the nation for military retirees. To learn more, go [here](#).

Veteran Educational Benefits -- Tech College System: The SC Technical College System provides educational benefits that veterans earned while defending our nation. To see more, go [here](#).

USC Aiken -- Top School for Veterans: USC Aiken is nationally recognized as a top school for veterans. To learn more, go [here](#).

Veterans - Online Tool for Upgraded Discharge Applications: The Department of Defense, through a joint initiative with the Department of Veterans Affairs, has a web-based tool that will provide customized guidance to veterans who desire to upgrade or change the conditions of their military discharge. The tool can be found [here](#).

Veterans Legal Clinic: The USC School of Law operates the Veterans Legal Clinic. Veterans can inquire about help with a legal problem by calling (803) 777-2278 or going [here](#).

Ten Best Financial Benefits for Military Families: *Kiplinger* provides a list of benefits and programs available to military families which can be seen [here](#).

COVID-19 INFORMATION

DHEC Guidance and Information: For the latest guidance and information about COVID-19 including testing, vaccination, monoclonal antibodies, and more, go [here](#).

COVID-19 Testing - Greater Aiken -- USC Aiken Convocation Center: A free testing site operates six days a week (every day except Sunday) from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the USC Aiken Convocation Center. The test is a saliva test and results are returned in 24-48 hours. Residents are not required to bring an insurance card, but will need a driver's license or a USC Aiken ID. To pre-register and learn more, go [here](#).

Other Testing Locations: To see other locations for testing locations in an area any given week, go [here](#). *In January, our legislative delegation requested that a testing site be established at Aiken Technical College. That site should open soon.*

OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

North Augusta -- Bergen Road and West Martintown Road -- Traffic Light: This light is finally up and operational. Thank you to SCDOT and the City for working together to get this done.

Eastern Aiken County -- Highway 302 Bridge: The SC 4/302 Bridge over the South Edisto River was closed for new construction since 2020. On February 5, it reopened to traffic.

Other Road and Bridge Updates: I will provide my semiannual update as to local road and bridge projects in the next update. In the meantime, if you have a question about a particular project, please let me know.

Road Repair Needed?: If you see a road problem such as a pothole needing repair, call the SCDOT at (803) 641-7665 or Aiken County at (803) 642-1532 to report the problem. You may also report the repair request online [here](#). If you do not get a prompt response, please let me know at tom@senatortomyoung.com or call me. Generally, most paved roads in the County are maintained by SCDOT and are identified on the road sign poles by a small black and white sign listing the road number, such as S-2-1669. Most unpaved roads in the County are maintained by the County.

Battle of Aiken Reenactment: The Battle of Aiken Reenactment is this weekend, February 25-27. Reenactors from around the nation will participate. To learn more, go [here](#).

Real ID -- Requirement Starts in May 2023: Beginning May 3, 2023, your South Carolina driver's license or identification card must have a gold star to show it is a REAL ID in order to use it as your identification to board a commercial airline flight, enter a secure federal building, or visit a military installation. To learn more, go [here](#).

Hitchcock Woods: Aiken County's Hitchcock Woods is one of the largest urban forests in the United States. To learn more, go [here](#).

SRS Retiree Association and Resource Center: The SRS Retiree Association can help SRS Retirees with a number of matters. The Resource Center can be reached at (803) 508-7065 and learn more by going [here](#).

SRS Heritage Foundation: Many residents in Senate District 24 are current or former employees of companies located at SRS. To learn more about the SRS

Heritage Foundation, go [here](#).

"Drivers for A Cure" License Plates -- Cancer Research: All of us have been impacted by cancer in one way or another. The 'Drivers For a Cure' special license plate will help fund cancer research with half of the money raised from license plate sales going to the Duke University Cancer Institute and half to the Hollings Cancer Center at the Medical University of South Carolina. I sponsored the bill and it passed the legislature in 2021. To learn more about ordering the license plate and supporting cancer research, go [here](#).

Walter Edgar's Journal: Dr. Walter Edgar, South Carolina's preeminent historian, taught me in undergraduate school at USC-Columbia. His weekly radio program provides interesting information into the history, arts, and culture of South Carolina and the American South. To learn more, go [here](#).

Silver Bluff Audubon Center and Sanctuary: This 3,250 acre property is located 5 miles Northwest of Jackson in Aiken County along the Savannah River. With assistance from the State's Conservation Bank, the property is now completed protected by conservation easements. It includes numerous Carolina bays, walking trails, and a wide variety of wildlife including 217 bird species such as Bald Eagles, Wood Storks, Cooper's Hawks, and Red-headed Woodpeckers. In addition, a 120 acre area is on the National Register of Historic Sites as the location of George Galphin's Trading post operated from 1750 until the end of the Revolutionary War. To learn more and how to visit, go [here](#).

Aiken County Legislative Delegation Office: The local legislative delegation office is staffed by the delegation secretary Jeannie Willis in the Aiken County Government Building on University Parkway. Mrs. Willis works on both Aiken County and Edgefield County legislative and constituent matters. One of the services provided by our local delegation office is the processing of paperwork associated with becoming a notary public. If you need help with this or other matters, let me know by responding to this email or call Mrs. Willis in the delegation office at [\(803\) 642-1694](tel:8036421694).

Litter Busters Hotline: To report someone tossing litter from their vehicle or areas where excessive amounts of litter have been dumped or have accumulated, call 877-7LITTER.

Search for Property?: The State Treasurer's Office maintains a link for residents to search for unclaimed property. Examples of unclaimed property include dormant bank accounts, certain checks (including paychecks), unclaimed insurance proceeds, forgotten utility deposits, uncashed dividend checks, and unexchanged shares of stock. To learn more, go [here](#).

Faith Magazine article: A *Faith* Magazine article about my public service and faith can be seen [here](#).

Contribute to Tom Young for Senate: Some people have asked about contributing to my State Senate Campaign Fund. If you have not done so and would like to

contribute to my Senate campaign fund, please go [here](#). You can also mail a check to Tom Young for Senate, PO Box 651, Aiken, SC 29802. Contributions can be accepted in any amount up to \$1,000.00 per donor per election cycle. The current election cycle ends in 2024. Sending this newsletter by email costs money, and I am grateful for all contributions no matter the size. Thank you!

Bumper Sticker?: If you would like a "Tom Young for Senate" bumper sticker, email me with your mailing address at tom@senatortomyoung.com and we will mail one to you.

Thank you for the opportunity and the honor to represent you. Please let me know if I can help you in any way or if you have questions about these or other issues. Your support and feedback are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Tom Young

[\(803\) 649-0000](tel:(803)649-0000) (o)

[\(803\) 215-3631](tel:(803)215-3631) (cell)

Legal Notice: This newsletter is not a solicitation for campaign contributions from any South Carolina registered lobbyist.

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