

Edgefield County Council Chairman's Update September 9, 2011

Redistricting Update on County Council Districts

County Council has begun the process of redrawing County Council districts. We started the process in a special meeting on August 30 to hear from the S.C. Office of Research and Statistics, the state government office tasked with drawing maps for the state, counties and cities.

We requested some revisions that included drawing two new maps for us to review, then we gave the our ordinance first reading at our September 6 meeting, and we have a new map drawn. Please go to the County building or County website to see the map we have available for public comment. (It should be up by Friday. If not, it will be there by early next week.)

At our October 4 meeting, we will have a public hearing to get your comments on this map before we move forward. Of course, we have been receiving public comment as we go along, and we will continue to do so.

Keep in mind that these are just County Council districts. Each town, plus the Edgefield County School District, draw their new districts as well. The new County Council districts are required by law after each census.

Once County Council gives third reading to the new districts, the plan is then sent to the U.S. Justice Department for final approval. Our goal is to finish our work no later than early November to give the Justice Department time to review it prior to the sign-up period for Council seats in February-March.

Want to complain to County Government?

We have made it easier than ever to send your complaints, concerns, and, yes, even your compliments, to County Government.

On the county's website, there is now a link from the front page that allows you to send us what you think. And, no, it won't go into a black hole! The address is: info@edgefieldcounty.sc.gov.

We will take each email and respond to you. That's our commitment.

It is my hope that you will use this new communications avenue to give us feedback, tell us where you see problems we can address, and remind of us things we might have missed. The goal is for the County to provide better service to you, and this new communication tool is another way in which we can hear from you.

County finances are now online

If you go to the County website, you'll also see that we are now posting each month our financial transactions. This new brand of transparency is our way of making sure you can actually see where money is spent that the County Council has budgeted. Let us know how we can improve this webpage as well.

Congratulations to our new Clerk to the Council

I usually don't mention positions in which we're hiring, but only two people report to the County Council: The Administrator and the Clerk to the Council. We interviewed four candidates for the Clerk's position on Tuesday. Council selected Jennifer Gilley. Congratulations to her!

Next Evening 'Chat with the Chairman' Set

The next evening "Chat with the Chairman" will be held at Edgefield Town Hall on October 6, 6:30-7:30 p.m. All are welcome to come!

Remember, these are informal discussions – no speeches or anything. I'll give plenty of notice where I'll be, and no matter where you live in the County, you can attend! It's a way for us to have two-way communication. I'll move them around the County, so stay tuned!

Coffee with the Chairman: Up next is Northside

Thanks to those who have joined me for the early morning "Coffee with the Chairman" stops! I enjoy the feedback, and I appreciate the time taken by those coming in.

The next morning meeting will be held Friday, September 16, 6:20 a.m. to 7:10 a.m., Northside Park, located off Walker Road. I look forward to seeing you there. I especially encourage anyone who lives in that area to stop by on your way to work to visit! These sessions, like the Chats, are informal discussions.

Council's 'Field Trip' to Johnston

On August 8, the County Council met with the Johnston Town Council.

The purpose of these meetings is to ensure we are working together with other governmental organizations. If we can help each other and pull in the same direction, we will be able to better position Edgefield County for well-planned growth, quality of life, and many other areas that overlap between governmental entities. I look forward to the County Council discussing the future with all these leaders.

The Johnston Town Council and County Council discussed several issues.

For example, we discussed economic development as a key concern of the County Council, and how the Town of Johnston plays a role in that process. In addition, they told us they'd like to receive funding for their library and that when redistricting is done shortly, the Town of Johnston would like to be in one County Council district instead of divided into two districts, as it is now. They also told us that recreation is a key concern, including how planning for future recreation will be done and how state grant money, which passes through the County, is distributed to municipalities. The Town leaders also asked us to include the towns in any radio frequency changes that are going to be handled in the next several months.

We also agreed that we would both stay in touch, particularly on economic development issues. We appreciate the Johnston Town Council helping us better understand the Town's issues and its future plans.

New industry still eyeing Edgefield County

Many of you have read about a new industry that is looking closely at coming to Edgefield County. This industry has not made a final decision yet on where they would like to locate. While they want to move

quickly, this new industry has the final say on where and when they will pick a place to open. We have had, and continue to have, discussions with them.

Stay tuned for more information as we work to bring more new industry and jobs to Edgefield County.

Edgefield County Strategic Plan is on the Horizon

In the next few weeks, you'll start hearing more about a new Strategic Plan for Edgefield County! It will involve a Steering Committee, which will meet in open sessions with media and public invited. In addition, the public input will be the cornerstone of building this plan that will guide us for years to come.

New Charitable Opportunity Is In Full Swing!

Have you read about my new "Give Heat" project?

Too many people in Edgefield County don't have enough money to pay their utility bills, especially when cold weather arrives.

To help combat that problem, I have created a new Project for citizens to share with others by donating money to assist in paying utility bills of those who really need it. The Project involves the local United Way and the Edgefield County Department of Social Services (DSS).

The average citizen may not realize what a need this is for many Edgefield County citizens.

For example, the Edgefield County 211 Helpline, sponsored by the United Way of Edgefield County, shows that for the past two years the number 1 plea for assistance is help paying utility bills. Other local charities and government entities have some funds available to help, but they run out of money quickly because the needs overwhelm these groups. The Helpline is designed to help callers find assistance for needs they have.

In 2010, Edgefield County received approximately \$8,000 from the Emergency Food and Shelter Program to help pay utility bills of those who need it most. However, the amount of money has steadily decreased while the need has risen. On a day-to-day basis, DSS sees that help paying electrical bills, particularly in the wintertime, is a significant need in Edgefield County.

Donations for the "Give Heat" Project can be sent to the United Way of Edgefield County (P.O. Box 72, Edgefield, SC 29824). Donations sent to the United Way should be designated to the "Give Heat" Project. The United Way will then pass the earmarked money to the local DSS.

The Project runs during the month of September, and your donations are tax deductible.

Dean Campbell

Did you receive this newsletter by email?

If you didn't, and you want to, go to www.edgefieldcounty.sc.gov, click on the Edgefield County Update link, and provide your email address to receive the Update directly. The distribution list will be updated

prior to each publication of the Edgefield County Update. If you received this newsletter and don't want to get it, please reply and let us know that as well, so we can delete your email address.

How this Update will work

As Chairman of Edgefield County Council, I have introduced this newsletter to help explain County issues and try to answer questions from citizens. We will protect the email addresses of those who are interested in receiving this newsletter.

I'd like to send this newsletter to you at least monthly, depending on issues upcoming or ongoing, or if issues need more explanation.

Finally, if you have a question about an issue, please reply to me. I'll be happy to try to answer your question.