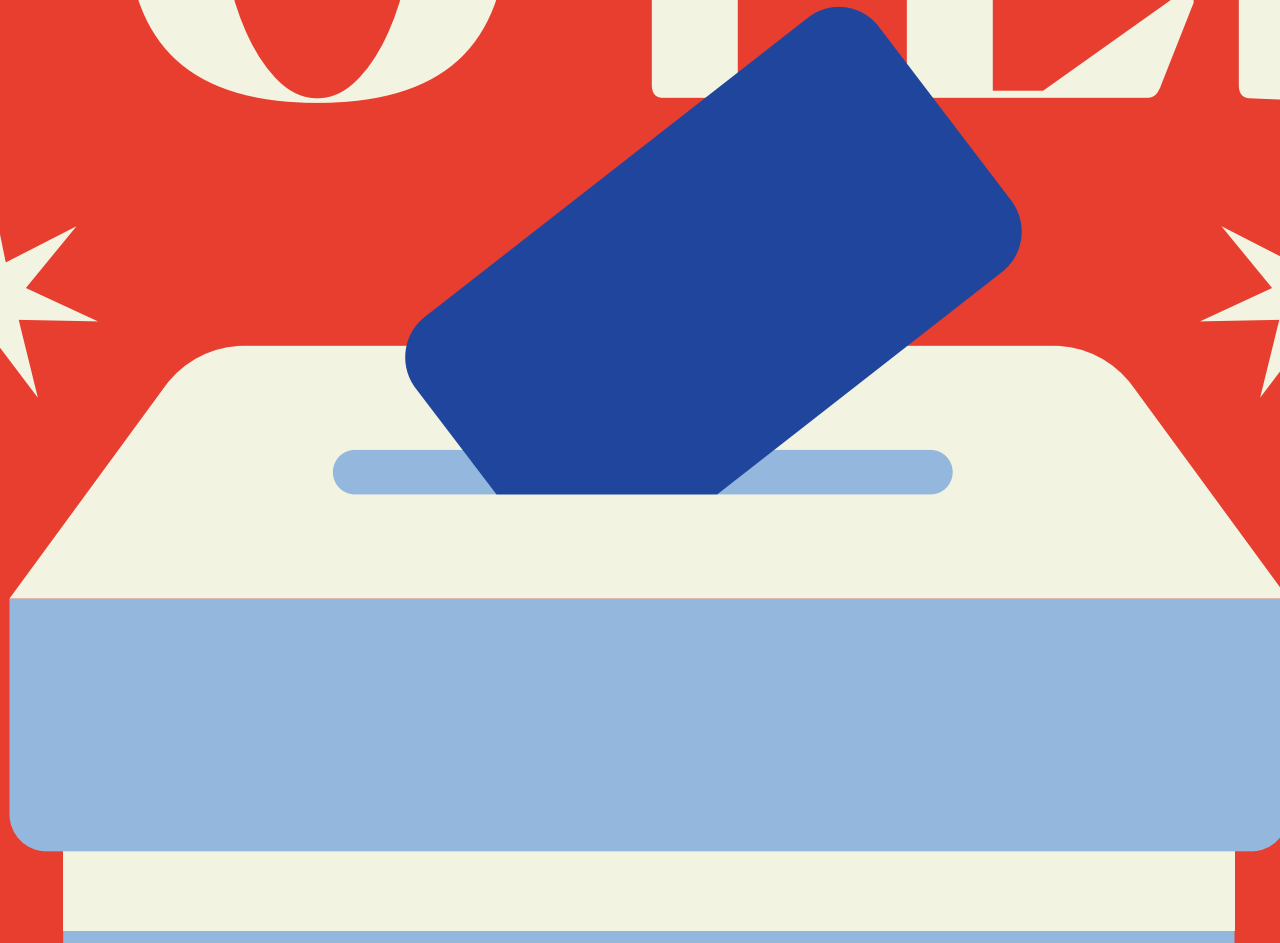




A MANNING TIMES
SPECIAL PUBLICATION

CLARENDON

VOTES





CLARENDON VOTES



With the Nov. 3 general election approaching, The Manning Times is presenting Clarendon Votes, a special section designed to help residents learn more about the candidates seeking to represent them at the state and local levels.

The decisions made by elected officials affect nearly every aspect of life in Clarendon County, from property taxes and public safety to education, economic development and the services residents depend on every day. We believe voters deserve the opportunity to understand where candidates stand on these issues before heading to the polls.

For this special section, The Manning Times invited candidates in local and state races to participate in a question-and-answer feature addressing their backgrounds, qualifications, priorities and positions on issues affecting our communities.

Candidates seeking the same office received identical questions, allowing readers to compare their responses on the same topics. Questions were tailored to the responsibilities of each office, with some addressing recent developments covered by The Manning Times.

County Council and school board candidates were also asked about the specific needs of the districts they hope to represent. The Q&As are organized by race, with candidates listed alphabetically by last name within each race.

Candidates were asked to limit their responses to approximately 100 to 150 words per question and were offered the option of participating through a phone or in-person interview. Candidates seeking the same office received identical response guidelines. Answers are published as submitted, with only minor edits for grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, space and AP style. Response lengths vary according to the information provided by each candidate.

All candidates were given the same deadline to participate, which was subsequently extended to 10 p.m. Oct. 19 to allow additional time for responses.

As of the extended deadline, the following candidates had not submitted responses to the questionnaire: Billy Richardson, County Council District 1; George Frierson, County Council District 3;

Tamilla Green, school board District 2; Antonio Green, school board District 6; and John Hardy, school board District 8.

The Manning Times does not endorse candidates through Clarendon Votes, and the absence of a candidate's responses does not reflect an endorsement of or preference for another candidate. Our purpose is to give candidates an opportunity to explain their positions in their own words and allow voters to consider those responses.

As Clarendon County's community newspaper, we believe local elections deserve attention. The people elected to serve our communities make decisions that shape the county's future, and residents deserve access to information about those seeking office.

Regardless of political affiliation or personal perspective, every voter has a role in shaping Clarendon County's future. We encourage readers to consider the issues that matter most to them, review the candidates' responses and participate in the election.



COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT ONE



ROGER JOWERS (R)

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on Clarendon County Council. What experience would you bring to representing District 1?

I have been a resident of Clarendon County for over 35 years. Many of those years were spent working full time to pay the bills and provide for my family. After retiring, I was able to attend

various board and council meetings, getting a better understanding of how my government worked. I will bring a common-sense approach with conservative values, along with better methods of getting public input and participation in where our tax dollars are spent. A clear understanding of how those dollars can be better used to provide the services needed without unnecessary services that can't be justified as being beneficial.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you handle situations in which your party's position conflicts with what you believe is best for Clarendon County residents?

The answer is right there in the first three words of our Constitution: "We the People." That is why I am a member of our local Republican Party, not because they are perfect, but because the Republican Party aligns with my values

of Americans first, pro-life, pro-law enforcement, transparency, accountability, and a desire to have

open dialogue between government and all the citizens of this county. My party's values don't just benefit one party, but benefit everyone.

3. District 1 priorities

What do you consider the three most pressing needs facing District 1 residents, and what specific steps would you take as a council member to address them?

The needs of District 1 are the same needs in Districts 2 and 3, and they are making sure our citizens are protected and provided for. Our environment is protected. Our tax dollars are spent wisely. Our government is accountable to the citizens of Clarendon County. The departments within our government are communicating to ensure the needs of our county are met and solutions are found for any issues that may arise. Communication seems to be the underlying denominator to most of our inefficiencies in being a better government for the people and by the people.

4. County budget and spending priorities

Clarendon County Council approved

a roughly \$45.8 million budget for fiscal year 2026-27, including employee raises and a slight reduction in millage. What do you believe the county is spending too much or too little on, and what specific changes, if any, would you make to the budget or the process used to develop it?

I can't fairly judge the size of this budget before I ask if council sat down with each department that makes up this budget and evaluated the needs vs. wants of each, or was this budget managed by the administrator and the finance director? When I become a member of the Clarendon County Council, I will push to have council evaluate and question each department in an open and public setting. We seem to have a lot of job positions that have not been filled, either on purpose or by design, so that there is always excess money available. If these positions are not filled, does that mean they are not needed? If so, decrease the size of the government workforce to a number that accurately and honestly reflects what is needed. Then, the actual requests by departments would clearly show where the budget is actually going. Taxpayers should never be overcharged for county services.

5. Data centers and battery energy storage systems

County Council recently approved a six-month moratorium on most new data center and battery energy storage system applications, with exceptions for certain industrially zoned properties. What regulations or safeguards do you believe the county should establish before considering additional projects, and how would you weigh potential economic benefits against concerns about infrastructure, public safety and neighboring properties?

We have people in our county who have actually worked in data centers and are willing to share their knowledge and experience. They can advise what guardrails need to be in place to make sure that if the citizens of Clarendon County decide to allow these industries in our county, we will have knowledge of the proper protection for the citizens and the environment. This information will also help ensure that the electrical infrastructure would never be a burden on this county and the cost would be absorbed by the industry wanting to locate here. Council has to be willing to have that roundtable discussion with the people who have worked in this field and who are the best source of information to help guide their decisions on what policies and regulations need to be in

 COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT TWO



MATT CHAPMAN (R)

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving

on Clarendon County Council. What experience would you bring to representing District 2?

Raised in Sumter County and now living in Clarendon County, I am currently doing environmental consulting work through Process Consulting SC, LLC, which I started in 2007. The environmental field, industrial service work, store ownership, farming and ranching have made up my professional experience.

As a devout Christian, I spend time speaking and preaching at various churches. I am the current treasurer for the Gideons-Clarendon Camp, a deacon at Promise Land Ministries, past master of the Masonic Lodge, former chairman of the South Carolina Waterfowl Association-Sumter Chapter,

board member for the South Carolina Sporting Dog Association, member of the board of directors for the South Carolina Foxhunters Association and former vice chairman for the Farm Service Agency-Clarendon.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you handle situations in which your party's position conflicts with what you believe is best for Clarendon County residents?

I am conservative by nature. The Bible is the rule and guide of my life, and from it I govern my beliefs and morals. No other man-made structure overrides that. My constituents' best

interests will always take precedence over an affiliation's agenda.

3. District 2 priorities

What do you consider the three most pressing needs facing District 2 residents, and what specific steps would you take as a council member to address them?

1. Roads and infrastructure

Clarendon County covers more than 607 square miles, with only about 51 residents per square mile. Providing roads, drainage, water, sewer, broadband and emergency infrastructure is fundamental and requires careful planning. I want infrastructure projects prioritized transparently based on safety, condition and demonstrated need.

I want residents to be able to see how road projects are prioritized and where their money is being spent. We also need to plan before approving development. The average Clarendon County worker already has a commute of approximately 31 minutes, compared with about 26 minutes statewide. New development

can create additional demands on roads, utilities and public safety. Those costs need to be understood before projects are approved rather than passed along to taxpayers afterward.

2. Jobs, economic development and reducing pressure on taxpayers

Clarendon County needs economic development that creates jobs and broadens our tax base. Clarendon County had 34,971 residents in the 2010 census and 31,144 in the 2020 census. The latest Census Bureau estimate places our 2025 population at 31,043. That means a loss of 3,900 residents since 2010, while South Carolina as a whole has been growing.

Our county's median household income is approximately \$52,400, nearly \$17,000 below the South Carolina median, and the average travel time to work is 31 minutes. We have to find a

See CHAPMAN | 22



Vote Coker

November 3rd.

DISTRICT 3

 **PAT COKER** 

COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT TWO



DELANEY KAY FRIERSON (D), INCUMBENT

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on Clarendon County Council. What experience would you bring to representing District 2?

My name is Delaney Kay Frierson. I have been a resident of Manning, South Carolina, for over 50 years. I remain a certified educator in South Carolina and retired after 39 years serving as a teacher, district administrator and middle school principal. All seven of our children were educated in Clarendon School District 2.

It was an honor to be appointed by the legislative delegation to serve on the South Carolina State Board of Education from March 2021 to April 2025, representing the 3rd Judicial Circuit (Clarendon, Lee, Sumter and Williamsburg counties). This leadership position allowed my voice and ideas to contribute collaboratively to setting policies for teaching and learning to ensure children are prepared for lifelong success.

I am the newly elected member of County Council as of May 12, 2026. I am also the incumbent seeking to continue serving the citizens of Clarendon County District 2 for the next four years.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there

positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you handle situations in which your party's position conflicts with what you believe is best for Clarendon County residents?

My political party is Democratic. I believe in helping people who are in need. I support social programs such as Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid and food assistance. Civil and social rights are important to me.

I am passionate about preserving our environment. I believe the quality of life for American workers should improve through higher federal and state minimum wages, especially when the cost of living warrants such increases. I believe in the need for protections through regulations and labor unions, and that fair taxation for those who can afford to pay taxes should be a reality.

As an unashamed Christian believer, I am persuaded by the following teachings: When we feed the hungry, provide water for the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those who are imprisoned, we have represented the kingdom of God and the Savior (Matthew 25:35-40).

It is not my responsibility to judge people facing these challenges. God promises that he will separate evil from good at harvest time. Learning to respect the opinions and beliefs of those who differ from mine is important.

Disagreement with dignity is being responsible, and compromise is always welcome. Bottom line: No hidden agendas. I am a servant to the people of Clarendon County. One County, One Future.

3. District 2 priorities

What do you consider the three most pressing needs facing District 2 residents, and what specific steps would you take as a council member to address them?

The three most pressing needs facing District 2 residents are infrastructure and roads, economic development and jobs, and youth and adult recreation.

Studies are currently being conducted on the kinds of materials needed to

which causes me concern about how we will accomplish these necessary and important goals without additional taxes and with limited financial resources.

There is a need for our planning and zoning departments and county chamber of commerce to continue attracting businesses and industries to our county so they can provide opportunities for economic development and jobs.

Our county has a very nice recreation department that I would love to see expand to attract Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) participants. This county initiative would provide economic opportunities for our hospitality and food industries, as well as for children as they train for high school and collegiate sports opportunities and scholarships.

As our county grows, there is a rising need for adult recreation such as slow-pitch softball, basketball, volleyball, hunting, golf, pickleball and tennis, just to name a few.

4. County budget and spending priorities

Clarendon County Council approved a roughly \$45.8 million budget for fiscal year 2026-27, including employee raises and a slight reduction in millage. What do you believe the county is spending too much or too little on, and what specific changes, if any, would you make to the budget or the process used to develop it?

I believe our county has done a good job addressing important

maintain rural roads and provide drainage in these areas. Road maintenance is very expensive,

needs, but two areas that require close attention are employee health care costs and emergency services equipment.

While providing quality health care benefits is essential, I support the county's efforts to promote wellness and preventive health programs that help employees maintain healthier lifestyles and reduce insurance costs over time.

The county is also mindful of the increasing cost of large equipment needed by our emergency services departments. These purchases are necessary to keep our first responders safe and properly equipped, but they have become more expensive because there are fewer manufacturers and less competition in the marketplace.

Moving forward, I would like to see continued transparency in the budget process, greater public input and careful long-term planning. Taxpayers deserve to know how decisions are made, and county leaders should always look for ways to control costs while maintaining the quality services residents de-

pend on every day.

5. Data centers and battery energy storage systems

County Council recently approved a six-month moratorium on most new data center and battery energy storage system applications, with exceptions for certain industrially zoned properties. What regulations or safeguards do you believe the county should establish before considering additional projects, and how would you weigh potential economic benefits against concerns about infrastructure, public safety and neighboring properties?

Before making a commitment to allow data centers to locate in Clarendon County, we must know and understand the costs and risks involving our resources, such as electricity and water, as well as noise and other concerns, and develop clear, unified development codes.

We need our planning and zoning

See FRIERSON | 12

8 CLARENDON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 8

ELECT Jessie J. Cave

FOR CLARENDON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 8

1 LITERACY FIRST

2 PARTNER WITH PARENTS

3 SUPPORT TEACHERS

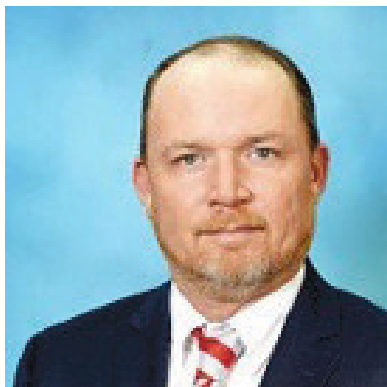
4 PREPARE EVERY STUDENT

Leadership that listens. Service that shows up.

CLARENDON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 8



COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT THREE



PAT COKER (R), INCUMBENT

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on Clarendon County Council. What experience would you bring to representing District 3?

I am a lifelong resident of Clarendon County, a farmer and a local business owner for over 25 years. I own and operate a used car lot, tire shop and wrecker service. These experiences have taught me the importance of hard work, financial responsibility and understanding the challenges facing our community.

For the past four years, I have had the privilege of representing District 3 on Clarendon County Council. I originally ran because I wanted to help our community, create more opportunities and make Clarendon County a better place for everyone.

During my time on council, I have worked on issues involving infrastructure, economic development and preserving our county's history. My experience in business, agriculture and public service has given me a practical understanding of our county's needs. Clarendon County is my home, and I remain committed to its future.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how

would you handle situations in which your party's position conflicts with what you believe is best for Clarendon County residents?

Although I am a Republican, I believe my responsibility as a County Council member is to represent the people of Clarendon County, regardless of political affiliation. My decisions should be based on what is best for our county and its residents, not simply on party lines.

One of my main priorities is finding ways to lower taxes and reduce unnecessary government spending while maintaining the essential services our citizens depend on. As a business owner and farmer, I understand the importance of managing expenses and making responsible financial decisions.

I believe every issue deserves careful consideration, an open mind and a willingness to listen to different viewpoints. At the end of the day, my goal is to make decisions that benefit Clarendon County as a whole, regardless of which political party supports them.

3. District 3 priorities

What do you consider the three most pressing needs facing District 3 residents, and what specific steps would you take as a council member to address them?

Two of my biggest priorities for District 3 are improving our roads and reducing the tax burden on our residents. As someone who has lived in Clarendon County my entire life, I understand how important safe, well-maintained roads are to our families, farmers and local businesses.

I believe we must continue working to address road conditions, improve drainage where needed and make sure District 3 receives fair consideration when infrastructure funding decisions are made.

I also recognize the financial challenges facing hardworking families, retirees, farmers and small business owners. I believe county government should carefully evaluate spending, eliminate unnecessary expenses and look for opportunities to lower taxes without sacrificing essential services.

benefit our community and Clarendon County as a whole.

4. County budget and spending priorities

Clarendon County Council approved a roughly \$45.8 million budget for fiscal year 2026-27, including employee raises and a slight reduction in millage. What do you believe the county is spending too much or too little on, and what specific changes, if any, would you make to the budget or the process used to develop it?

I believe one of the most important responsibilities of County Council is making sure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and responsibly. As a business owner for over 25 years, I understand the importance of managing a budget, controlling expenses and making financial decisions that provide long-term value.

My priority is to carefully review county spending, question unnecessary expenses and make sure our tax dollars are being used where they are needed most. I believe we should continually look for ways to operate more efficiently while maintaining essential services such as public safety, road maintenance and infrastructure.

I also recognize the financial burden taxes place on families, farmers, retirees and small business owners. I want to continue working toward lowering that burden while ensuring Clarendon County remains financially stable and prepared for the future.

5. Data centers and battery energy storage systems

County Council recently approved a six-month moratorium on most new data center and battery energy storage system applications, with exceptions for certain industrially zoned properties. What regulations or safeguards do you believe the county should establish before considering additional projects, and how would you weigh potential economic benefits against concerns about infrastructure, public safety and neighboring properties?

I am not automatically for or against data centers or battery storage facilities. My responsibility is to consider how

My goal is to see our tax dollars used responsibly while making meaningful improvements that

these projects affect Clarendon County residents, including public safety, infrastructure, neighboring properties and taxpayers.

I played an active role in advancing the moratorium because I believe the county needs time to establish appropriate regulations and safeguards before additional projects move forward.

The proposed project in the existing industrial park presented a different situation because, under the applicable rules, council did not have the authority to stop it. I understand residents' concerns and believe they deserve clear information about these decisions.

Economic development is important, but every proposal should be evaluated carefully, including its benefits, costs and potential impact on surrounding communities. My priority is protecting our residents' interests while ensuring future development is considered responsibly and within the county's legal authority.

6. Public safety and emergency services

Clarendon County's law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical services and coroner's office serve residents across a large rural area. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing these services, and what steps would you support to improve response capabilities, staffing and access to emergency assistance throughout the county?

I believe protecting the safety and well-being of our residents is one of the most important responsibilities of county government. Our law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel and other first responders provide essential services to Clarendon County, and they deserve the resources, equipment and support necessary to perform their jobs safely and effectively.

At the same time, I believe we must be responsible with taxpayer dollars. Every funding decision should be carefully evaluated to ensure we are meeting the needs of our emergency services while maintaining a financially responsible budget.

I also believe it is important to listen to the men and women working on the front lines to better understand their needs and challenges. My priority is to support reliable emergency services throughout Clarendon County while continuing to look for ways to operate

efficiently and reduce the financial burden on taxpayers.

7. Infrastructure and county facilities

County Council has moved forward with major facility projects and a vehicle replacement program intended to address aging county equipment. How would you determine which infrastructure, facility and equipment needs deserve priority, and how would you evaluate whether those investments are providing value to taxpayers?

Improving our roads and infrastructure is one of my top priorities for Clarendon County. As a lifelong resident, business owner and farmer, I understand firsthand how important safe, dependable roads and proper drainage are to our families, businesses and agricultural community.

I believe we must continue identifying roads that need attention, prioritizing necessary repairs and working with the appropriate state and local agencies to secure funding for improvements. Rural communities should receive fair consideration when decisions are made about infrastructure projects and funding.

I also believe we must be responsible with taxpayer dollars by planning carefully, maintaining existing infrastructure and making improvements that provide long-term value.

My goal is to see continued progress in road conditions and drainage throughout District 3 and Clarendon County while keeping taxes as low as possible and ensuring our residents' needs remain a priority.

8. Clarendon County Archives

The Clarendon County Archives collection has been relocated temporarily while the county considers how to address the condition of its longtime facility. What do you believe should be the county's long-term responsibility for preserving the collection, maintaining public access and funding a permanent solution?

Preserving Clarendon County's history is important to me because our historical records tell the story of the people, families and communities that helped build our county. These records deserve to be protected and preserved for future generations.

CLARENDON COUNTY AUDITOR



KIMBERLY HERBERT (R)

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your education, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving as Clarendon County auditor. What qualifications and experience would you bring to the office?

I am a wife and mother, a resident of Clarendon County, and a member of Summerton Baptist Church. Growing up in a local family-owned business has instilled in me the importance of good customer service skills, competence, time management, and accountability.

My formal education includes a high school diploma and college coursework. In addition to my education, I bring practical, hands-on experience from working in both the assessor's office and the DMV. Those experiences have given me valuable insight into the processes, documentation, and taxpayer concerns that are relevant to the auditor's office.

I believe qualifications are measured not only by education, but also by experience, work ethic, knowledge, and a willingness to serve the public. I am running because I believe Clarendon County taxpayers deserve an auditor who follows the law, works diligently, provides accurate information, and treats every person fairly.

I believe public service means showing up, doing the work, and taking responsibility for the job entrusted to you.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you ensure that your responsibilities as county auditor are carried out fairly and independently of political affiliation?

I am a Republican, but the responsibilities of the county auditor's office come before party politics. My responsibility is to the taxpayers of Clarendon County, regardless of their political affiliation, personal beliefs, or circumstances.

I believe in following the law, being accountable for public responsibilities, and treating people fairly. Those principles should guide my decisions in this office.

The auditor's job is not to favor one person over another or to make decisions based on political relationships. It is to administer the duties of the office correctly and consistently under South Carolina law. I will approach my responsibilities professionally, make decisions based on facts and applicable law, and work cooperatively with other county offices while maintaining the independence of the auditor's office.

Every taxpayer deserves the same fairness, accuracy, and respect.

3. Priorities for the office

What do you believe are the most important responsibilities of the county auditor, and what would be your top three priorities during the next four years?

My three primary priorities during the next four years would be:

First, accurate and lawful taxation. I want to ensure vehicle tax calculations are based on the correct information and applicable legal rates. Taxpayers should never have to wonder whether they are being charged correctly.

Second, accountability and dependable service. The office must be available to the public, perform its duties consistently, and take concerns seriously. I believe in showing up, doing the work, answering questions, and helping people resolve problems instead of leaving them

frustrated or confused.

Third, taxpayer education and assistance. People should be able to understand their tax bills, know which office to contact when questions arise,

and receive clear guidance about available exemptions, relief programs, and appeal procedures.

My overall goal is straightforward: a working auditor's office that serves taxpayers with fairness, accuracy, and accountability.

4. Property reassessment and tax accuracy

Clarendon County has postponed its property reassessment process by one year. Although reassessment is primarily the responsibility of the assessor's office, changes in property values can affect tax calculations and create confusion for residents. How would you work with other county offices to ensure accurate tax bills and help taxpayers understand how reassessment affects them?

I recognize that property reassessment is primarily the responsibility of the assessor's office, while the auditor's office has an important role in the tax calculation process. These offices must communicate and work together to help ensure that tax bills are calculated accurately.

My experience in the assessor's office gives me a practical understanding of why accurate property information and coordination between county departments matter. I would work with the assessor, treasurer, County Council, and other appropriate officials to help ensure that the information used in calculating taxes is correct and that applicable millage rates and exemptions are properly applied.

I would also make it a priority to help taxpayers understand which office handles each part of the process. When residents have questions about reassessment or their tax bills, they deserve clear answers and direction to the appropriate department.

5. Taxpayer assistance and dispute resolution

When residents believe their property tax bills are incorrect, they may not know which county office to contact or how to challenge the information. How would you help taxpayers understand the process for resolving errors or appealing assessments,

and what steps would you take to ensure their concerns are addressed promptly and fairly?

Taxpayers should not have to navigate a maze of county offices to find answers about their taxes. If elected, I would work to ensure that residents receive understandable information about their tax bills, know which office is responsible for addressing their concerns, and understand the proper steps for correcting errors or appealing assessments.

When a taxpayer believes something is wrong, the concern deserves to be taken seriously. I would want the office to review the information within its authority, explain the applicable procedures, and direct the resident to the appropriate department when the issue falls outside the auditor's responsibilities.

My goal is to help people get the right information and resolve problems as efficiently as possible, without unnecessary frustration or repeated trips to county offices.

6. Tax exemptions and relief programs

Some residents may qualify for property tax exemptions or other forms of relief but may not know what is available or how to apply. How would you ensure eligible residents, particularly seniors, veterans and people with disabilities, are informed about programs administered through the auditor's office?

Eligible taxpayers should not miss out on exemptions or relief programs simply because they do not know those programs exist or do not understand how to apply.

I would work to make information about applicable exemptions and relief programs more accessible, particularly for seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and other eligible residents. This could include clearer explanations at the counter, printed information, online resources, and coordination with the appropriate county and state agencies.

I would also work to ensure that staff can explain which programs fall under the auditor's office and which must be handled by another department or agency. It is important to understand that the auditor's office cannot independently grant exemptions outside the law or administer programs assigned to other agencies. However, we can help

taxpayers understand the requirements, identify the appropriate office, and learn what steps they need to take.

People deserve the opportunity to understand the benefits for which they may qualify and how to pursue them.

7. Transparency, technology and customer service

What improvements, if any, would you make to the auditor's office's technology, online services or day-to-day operations to improve efficiency, make tax information more accessible and help residents better understand their tax bills?

I believe the auditor's office should make information as clear and accessible as possible while protecting confidential taxpayer information.

I would review the office's day-to-day operations to identify opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce confusion, and provide better service. That includes evaluating whether existing technology and online resources give residents the information they need and whether common questions could be answered more clearly through improved materials or procedures.

I would also emphasize professional, courteous customer service. Technology is useful, but it does not replace the need for knowledgeable employees who are available to help people understand their tax bills and resolve questions.

My experience in the assessor's office and DMV gives me a practical perspective on the questions residents bring to public offices. I want to use that experience to help people get accurate answers the first time whenever possible.

8. County finances and accountability

The auditor works with County Council, the assessor, treasurer and other taxing authorities in administering property taxes. What role should the auditor play in helping county officials and residents understand property tax revenues and millage, and how would you maintain the independence and accountability of the office while working with other county departments?

The auditor's office has an important responsibility in the property taxation process, and it must carry out that responsibility accurately and independently.

★ CLARENDON COUNTY AUDITOR



PATRICIA PRINGLE (D),
INCUMBENT

1. Background and qualifications
Tell voters about yourself, including
your education, professional experience,

community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving as Clarendon County auditor. What qualifications and experience would you bring to the office?

A lifelong resident of Clarendon County, I am the daughter of the late Rev. J.H. Pringle and Lillie Mae Brunson Pringle, both strong community advocates.

I have served as Clarendon County auditor for more than 23 years. I am an honors graduate of Scott's Branch High School and earned a bachelor's degree in professional biology, with a minor in chemistry and an emphasis in mathematics, and a master's degree in biology, with an emphasis in education, from South Carolina State University.

Before becoming auditor, I worked as

a process development chemist and senior quality control analyst at Albemarle Corp. I currently chair the Auditor's Manual Committee for the South Carolina Association of Auditors, Treasurers and Tax Collectors. I previously chaired the Clarendon School District One Board of Trustees and have been active in church, Rotary and other civic organizations.

My continued focus is on providing accurate, efficient and professional service to Clarendon County residents.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you ensure that your responsibilities as county auditor are carried out fairly and independently of political affiliation?

With the responsibilities of county auditor offices in South Carolina, party affiliation has no role in carrying out the duties of the office. It is relevant only when running for election.

Every taxpayer must be treated equally, with respect and courtesy. Everyone receives a tax bill based on the assessment of their property, and exemptions are granted according to state law.

There is no room for partisanship in administering the office. Using government property for political purposes is also unethical and illegal.

3. Priorities for the office
What do you

believe are the most important responsibilities of the county auditor, and what would be your top three priorities during the next four years?

The auditor is responsible for maintaining accurate real and personal property tax records and ensuring that taxes are properly levied to meet the budget requirements of the county, municipalities, school district, fire and rescue district, EMS district and library.

My top three priorities are:
Accurately levying taxes to meet the budget needs of the county and other taxing entities.

Modernizing and streamlining software systems to serve taxpayers more efficiently and promptly.

Serving all citizens with courtesy, respect, dignity and accuracy.

It is also important to stay informed about legislative changes affecting local government and maintain strong working relationships with other agencies throughout the county and state.

4. Property reassessment and tax accuracy

Clarendon County has postponed its property reassessment process by one year. Although reassessment is primarily the responsibility of the assessor's office, changes in property values can affect tax calculations and create confusion for residents. How would you work with other county offices to ensure accurate tax bills and help taxpayers understand how reassessment affects them?

We currently work with other county offices by staying informed about changes and keeping those offices and the public aware of how changes may affect tax bills.

The assessor's office determines the assessed values of real property, including mobile homes. Our office uses information provided by the assessor and other agencies to prepare accurate tax bills.

When changes are made to property assessments or exemptions, our office makes the necessary adjustments to tax bills.

The auditor, treasurer and tax collector attend mandatory annual training provided by the South Carolina Department of Revenue. The assessor's office also participates in legislative updates with us each fall to help ensure we remain informed about changes in state law.

5. Taxpayer assistance and dispute resolution

When residents believe their property tax bills are incorrect, they may not know which county office to contact or how to challenge the information. How would you help taxpayers understand the process for resolving errors or appealing assessments, and what steps would you take to ensure their concerns are addressed promptly and fairly?

All real and personal property tax bills issued by our office include information about the appeal process as required by South Carolina law.

When taxpayers have questions or concerns that fall outside our office's responsibilities, we direct them to the appropriate county office or state agency.

Although our office issues tax bills, the information used to prepare them comes from the assessor's office and other agencies. When corrections are needed, we process the appropriate adjustments, including abatements and refunds, in a timely manner.

Our goal is to ensure taxpayers receive accurate information and are treated with courtesy and respect.

6. Tax exemptions and relief programs

Some residents may qualify for property tax exemptions or other forms of relief but may not know what is available or how to apply. How would you ensure eligible residents, particularly seniors, veterans and people with disabilities, are informed about programs administered through the auditor's office?

Each property tax bill we issue includes information about available exemptions, eligibility requirements and how to apply. This information is also available on the county's website.

We participate in career days at elementary and high schools, senior citizen programs such as OATS, and visits to churches and other community organizations to inform residents about exemptions and benefits available through our office.

We also assist eligible veterans and other individuals who qualify for exemptions with accurately filing their information with the South Carolina Department of Revenue and the audi-

VOTE

LINDA P. LEMON

CLARENDON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT 4

Committed to Student Achievement !

Advocate for Students

Fair

Honest

Knowledgeable

Strong Leadership



CCSD BOARD, DISTRICT FOUR



LINDA P. LEMON,
INCUMBENT

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on the Clarendon County School District Board of Trustees. What experience would you bring to representing your district?

My name is Linda P. Lemon, and I am proud to call Clarendon County home. Although I was raised in Queens, New York, my family has deep roots here. I have lived in Clarendon County for over 30 years. My children attended local schools, and my granddaughter is currently enrolled in a Clarendon County school.

I served as Clarendon County's human resources director for 20 years, working with adults and planning and delivering professional development. I have also mentored preteens, teenagers and young adults. Together, these experiences — as a parent, grandparent, mentor and school board member — have given me a broad understanding of our schools and the people they serve.

My decision to continue serving on the Clarendon County School District Board of Trustees is rooted in my commitment to public education and the future of our community. Serving on the board has given me an opportunity to participate in important decisions that affect students, families, teachers, staff and schools throughout Clarendon County.

I understand that effective school board service requires thoughtful decision-making, responsible oversight, collaboration and a willingness to listen to different perspectives. My experience as an incumbent trustee has strengthened my understanding of the responsibilities involved in district governance and financial accountability.

I have also received Level 2 Honors recognition through the South Carolina School Boards Association. I am seeking reelection because our students deserve continued advocacy, sound leadership and a school district focused on helping every child succeed.

2. Districtwide priorities

What do you believe are the three most pressing challenges facing Clarendon County School District, and what specific steps would you support to address them during your term?

I believe three of the most pressing challenges facing Clarendon County School District are improving academic achievement, recruiting and retaining qualified educators, and addressing student attendance and engagement.

First, we must continue strengthening reading, mathematics and other foundational skills while ensuring struggling students receive timely, effective support.

Second, we must create an environment where teachers and staff feel valued, supported and equipped with the resources needed to succeed.

Third, we must work with families and community partners to address barriers that prevent students from attending school consistently.

3. Individual district priorities

What are the most significant needs or concerns facing students, families and schools in District 4, and how would you ensure those concerns are represented in decisions affecting the school district as a whole?

As the representative for District 4, it is important to understand the specific concerns of the students, families, employees and communities within my district. Priorities should include strong academic programs, safe and well-maintained school environments, reliable

transportation, consistent communication and access to appropriate educational resources.

I will continue listening to residents, attending community discussions and encouraging families to share both their concerns and suggestions. When issues arise, I believe they should be communicated through the appropriate district channels and followed up whenever possible.

At the same time, I recognize that decisions made by the board affect the entire school district. My responsibility is to advocate for District 4 while considering the needs of all students and schools. Every community deserves a voice, and every student deserves an opportunity to succeed.

4. Academic performance and student achievement

The district's 2026 school report cards showed improvements at some schools, while others experienced declines. What do you believe the results reveal about the district's academic progress? How should the board evaluate the effectiveness of academic interventions, tutoring and other support programs, and what changes would you support to improve student achievement in areas where performance continues to lag?

The 2026 school report cards demonstrate why we must celebrate progress while remaining attentive to schools and student groups that continue to face academic challenges. Improve-

ments at some schools are encouraging, but declines elsewhere remind us that achievement must remain a districtwide priority.

The board should receive regular, understandable reports on student performance, growth, attendance and progress toward established academic goals. Tutoring, intervention programs and additional instructional support should be evaluated using measurable results rather than participation numbers alone.

We need to determine whether students are improving, which strategies are effective and where adjustments are necessary. I would support targeted assistance for struggling students, professional development for educators, early identification of learning gaps and stronger partnerships with families.

Our goal should be continuous improvement, with every school held accountable and every student given the support needed to reach their potential.

5. School safety, student behavior and attendance

Maintaining safe learning environments, addressing student behavior and improving attendance are important responsibilities for school districts. What do you see as the greatest challenges in these areas, and what specific policies, programs or resources would you support to ensure students and employees feel safe while keeping students engaged and in school?

Students and employees must feel safe, respected and supported in every Clarendon County School District school. Our greatest challenges include preventing violence and bullying, addressing disruptive behavior consistently and reducing chronic absenteeism.

I would support effective school safety procedures, regular emergency preparedness training, appropriate supervision and access to counseling and behavioral support services.

See LEMON | 12

YDCLC

YOUNG DEMOCRATS OF SUMTER - LEE - CLARENDON

— Endorses —

MICHELE DEMERY

DEMOCRAT NOMINEE
FOR HOUSE DISTRICT 64

— Endorses —

DELANIE KAY FRIERSON

CLARENDON COUNTY
COUNCIL DISTRICT 2

— Endorses —

BILLY RICHARDSON

FOR CLARENDON COUNTY
COUNCIL DISTRICT 1

— Endorses —

PATRICIA PRINGLE

FOR CLARENDON COUNTY
AUDITOR

YOUNG DEMOCRATS OF
SUMTER, LEE & CLARENDON

SHOW UP.
SPEAK UP.
STEP UP.



CCSD BOARD, DISTRICT FOUR



LEE MAHONEY

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on the Clarendon County School District Board of Trustees. What experience would you bring to representing your district?

I was born and raised here, and I am a proud graduate of our public school system, Manning High School Class of 2003. I'm married with two little girls. My wife is also a graduate of Manning High School, and both of my daughters attend our school system. My wife is also a teacher for the district.

I have a vested interest in the success of our school system from all standpoints, as a parent, taxpayer and a community member dependent on the workforce made of graduates from our school system.

I currently serve as deputy chief of operations with Clarendon County Fire Rescue and can bring that experience with me. The main areas of experience I plan to bring are fiscal responsibility, accountability and organization. Not to say that these aren't within our board now, but they are areas that I excel in.

2. Districtwide priorities

What do you believe are the three most pressing challenges facing Clarendon County School District, and what specific steps would you support to address them during your term?

My three priorities are improving academic achievement, retaining quality

teachers and ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly. Clarendon County has made progress, and we should build on what is working while honestly addressing areas that need improvement.

I would support measurable academic goals, early intervention for struggling students and regular reviews of district spending. We must prepare students for college, technical careers, military service or the workforce.

Every decision should be guided by student success, parental involvement and accountability, not politics.

3. Individual district priorities

What are the most significant needs or concerns facing students, families and schools in District 4, and how would you ensure those concerns are represented in decisions affecting the school district as a whole?

District 4 families deserve strong schools, safe learning environments, reliable transportation and responsible use of educational resources.

I would make listening to parents, teachers, staff and taxpayers a priority so local concerns are not overlooked in districtwide decisions. I would advocate resources based on demonstrated needs and measurable results.

Rural communities have unique challenges, and those challenges deserve attention. My responsibility would be to represent District 4 while working with the full board to ensure every Clarendon County student receives a quality education.

4. Academic performance and student achievement

The district's 2026 school report cards showed improvements at some schools, while others experienced declines. What do you believe the results reveal about the district's academic progress? How should the board evaluate the effectiveness of academic interventions, tutoring and other support programs, and what changes would you support to improve student achievement in areas where performance continues to lag?

Clarendon County's reported academic progress is encouraging, but we

cannot become complacent. Improvements at some schools and declines at others mean we must look closely

at what is working and where students need more help.

I would support reviewing school report cards, student growth, tutoring outcomes and program costs. Interventions should have measurable goals and regular evaluations.

Successful programs should be strengthened, while ineffective ones should be changed or discontinued. We must focus on reading, math and core skills so students leave school prepared for real opportunities.

5. School safety, student behavior and attendance

Maintaining safe learning environments, addressing student behavior and improving attendance are important responsibilities for school districts. What do you see as the greatest challenges in these areas, and what specific policies, programs or resources would you support to ensure students and employees feel safe while keeping students engaged and in school?

Every student and employee deserves a safe school where learning can take place without constant disruption. I would support consistent discipline, prompt responses to threats and bullying, secure facilities and appropriate coordination with parents and law enforcement.

Chronic absenteeism must be addressed early by identifying causes and involving families. Students who need help should receive appropriate support, but support must come with accountability.

Teachers should be empowered to teach, and students who follow the rules should not have their education disrupted by repeated misconduct. Safety and learning must remain top priorities.

6. Teacher recruitment, retention and morale

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and staff remains an important issue for school districts, particularly in rural communities. What steps would you support to improve employee retention, strengthen morale and ensure students have access to qualified educators?

Good teachers need fair compensation, supportive leadership, safe classrooms and the freedom to focus on teaching.

I would listen directly to educators about why employees leave and what would encourage them to stay. I would support reducing unnecessary paperwork, strengthening classroom discipline, recognizing effective teaching and providing useful professional development.

We must also review compensation and benefits within a responsible budget. Recruiting teachers is important, but retaining experienced, qualified educators is just as critical.

Better working conditions and sound leadership can improve morale without simply throwing more money at every problem.

7. School district budget and financial oversight

The school board is responsible for developing and overseeing the district's budget while balancing academic needs, staffing, facilities and other operating expenses. What would be your spending priorities, and how would you ensure taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and transparently?

My priorities would be classroom instruction, qualified teachers, student safety, essential facility maintenance and proven academic programs.

Taxpayers deserve transparency and accountability for every dollar spent. I would support detailed budget reporting, competitive purchasing, regular reviews of administrative expenses and clear explanations for major expenditures.

Before approving new spending, I would ask what it accomplishes, how success will be measured and whether a more affordable option exists.

I support investing in students, but I will not support spending or automatic budget increases without evidence of need and results.

8. School facilities and resources

Clarendon County School District serves communities across a large geographic area, with schools facing differing facility and transportation needs. What do you believe are the district's most pressing infrastructure and transportation challenges, and what specific improvements would you prioritize to address them?

I would prioritize safe, well-maintained schools and reliable transportation throughout Clarendon County.

We should evaluate building conditions, deferred maintenance, bus reliability, route efficiency and student travel times before committing taxpayer money to major projects.

Preventive maintenance and careful planning can help avoid more expensive problems later. I would support a transparent facilities and transportation plan that ranks projects by safety, urgency, educational benefit and cost.

Every community deserves fair consideration, but spending must be based on documented needs.

9. Parental involvement and transparency

How would you improve communication between the school board, parents, employees and the public? What steps would you support to make board decisions more transparent and ensure residents have meaningful opportunities to raise concerns and receive responses?

Parents are a child's first and most important advocates, and they deserve a meaningful voice in their education.

I would support timely access to board agendas, meeting minutes, budget information and clear explanations of major decisions. Parents and employees should have practical opportunities to raise concerns and receive timely responses.

I would encourage direct communication between families, schools and district leadership before problems escalate. Open communication builds trust, even when people disagree.

I will listen respectfully, communicate honestly and support decisions that put students first while respecting parental rights and the public's right to know.

10. Board relationships and accountability

School board members may have differing opinions about district policies, spending and leadership decisions. How would you work with fellow board members when disagreements arise, and how would you balance supporting district leadership with holding the superintendent and administration accountable for results?

I would work professionally with fel-



CCSD BOARD, DISTRICT SIX



ROBERT "BOBBY" FLEMING, INCUMBENT

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on the Clarendon County School District Board of Trustees. What experience would you bring to representing your district?

I am Robert Bobby Fleming, and I have deep roots in Clarendon County. As a native, I understand our community's unique needs and values. My role as a senior funeral director has endowed me with invaluable skills in empathy and communication. These are essential for serving on the CCSD Board of Trustees, where making informed and compassionate decisions is critical.

I have also served on the board in Clarendon 2 and now CCSD for more than three decades. Additionally, my involvement in local organizations and my leadership training through Leadership South Carolina have equipped me with a broad perspective on community issues, enabling me to advocate effectively for our students and families.

2. Districtwide priorities

What do you believe are the three most

pressing challenges facing Clarendon County School District, and what specific steps would you support to address them during your term?

The three challenges include:

Mental health: Many students face increasing pressure. I propose increased funding to hire counselors and establish mental health resources in schools.

Infrastructure: Some facilities require urgent repairs to create safe learning environments. I will push for a comprehensive evaluation to prioritize these needs.

Technology access: The digital divide affects many students. I will continue to support initiatives for equitable technology access to enhance learning opportunities while also not negating the continued need for teacher-led instruction. Technology should be used to enhance learning, not to take the place of traditional learning. We want to ensure our students are a profile of the SC Graduate.

3. Individual district priorities

What are the most significant needs or concerns facing students, families and schools in District 6, and how would you ensure those concerns are represented in decisions affecting the school district as a whole?

In District 6, the most pressing concerns involve access to mental health services and academic support. I plan to establish a cross-district task force to ensure we address these effectively, gathering input from teachers, parents and students to reflect their needs in decision-making processes.

4. Academic performance and student achievement

The district's 2026 school report cards showed improvements at some schools, while others experienced declines. What

do you believe the results reveal about the district's academic progress? How should the board evaluate the effectiveness of academic interventions, tutoring and other support programs, and what changes would you support to improve student achievement in areas where performance continues to lag?

The mixed results from the 2026 report cards suggest that while some areas are improving and either are excellent or on the road to excellence, others need immediate intervention. As we strive to reach the state superintendent's goal of 75% of our students meeting standards, I believe we should continue to implement data-driven evaluations for tutoring programs, using metrics to assess their effectiveness.

Continuous feedback from teachers and students will be vital in adjusting these programs. Additionally, I would advocate for increased resources in classrooms with persistently low performance. We are well on our way, and I am very proud of our growth as a district.

5. School safety, student behavior and attendance

Maintaining safe learning environments, addressing student behavior and improving attendance are important responsibilities for school districts. What do you see as the greatest challenges in these areas, and what specific policies, programs or resources would you support to ensure students and employees feel safe while keeping students engaged and in school?

The greatest challenges include bullying, which affects student mental health, and absenteeism. I would support anti-bullying programs, integrating conflict resolution into the curriculum, and initiatives that recognize and reward good attendance. Implementing a positive behavioral intervention approach can foster engagement and safety.

6. Teacher recruitment, retention and morale

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and staff remains an important issue for school districts, particularly in rural communities. What steps would you support to improve employee retention, strengthen morale and ensure students have access to qualified educators?

To tackle recruitment challenges, I would propose partnerships with local universities to create a pipeline for new teachers, offering internships and job shadowing opportunities. Moreover, we should promote a positive school culture by recognizing teachers' efforts through incentives and support networks that provide mentorship.

7. School district budget and financial oversight

The school board is responsible for developing and overseeing the district's budget while balancing academic needs, staffing, facilities and other operating expenses. What would be your spending priorities, and how would you ensure taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and transparently?

My spending priorities would focus on enhancing student services, preserving instructional staff positions and upgrading facilities. To ensure transparency, I would support public budget workshops and regular updates on expenditures, inviting community input to align our financial decisions with the public's needs.

8. School facilities and resources

Clarendon County School District serves communities across a large geographic area, with schools facing differing facility and transportation needs. What do you believe are the district's most pressing infrastructure and transportation challenges, and what specific improvements would you prioritize to address them?

Infrastructure challenges are significant, particularly in terms of age and accessibility of facilities. I would

prioritize improvements to ensure all schools provide safe and conducive learning environments, pursuing state and federal grant options for funding these initiatives while conducting community assessments to better understand transportation needs.

9. Parental involvement and transparency

How would you improve communication between the school board, parents, employees and the public? What steps would you support to make board decisions more transparent and ensure residents have meaningful opportunities to raise concerns and receive responses?

To enhance communication, I would propose the creation of regular community advisory boards where parents can voice concerns and provide feedback. Additionally, utilizing digital platforms for updates and transparency in decision-making can keep families informed, making it easier for them to engage with the district's initiatives.

10. Board relationships and accountability

School board members may have differing opinions about district policies, spending and leadership decisions. How would you work with fellow board members when disagreements arise, and how would you balance supporting district leadership with holding the superintendent and administration accountable for results?

Working through disagreements will come down to respect and understanding. I believe in collaborative discussions where every board member feels heard. Establishing protocols for accountability will be crucial, providing clear metrics for evaluating the superintendent's effectiveness while ensuring the board operates in the best interests of the district.

These responses reflect my commitment to the community and focus on collaborative, data-driven solutions to foster the best educational environment for our students.

HERBERT
FROM PAGE 6

dently. That includes applying the appropriate information, exemptions, and tax rates as required by law.

I believe county officials and residents benefit

when tax calculations and the responsibilities of each department are explained clearly. Taxpayers should be able to understand how their bills are calculated and where to turn when they have questions.

The auditor must work cooperatively with the assessor, treasurer, County Council, and other taxing authorities because each has a distinct role in

the process. Cooperation, however, does not mean compromising the duties or independence of the auditor's office.

If elected, I would focus on accuracy, compliance with the law, responsible office management, and clear communication with taxpayers. When questions or discrepancies arise within the office's responsibilities, they should be addressed appropri-

ately and promptly.

Ultimately, public trust is built by doing the job correctly, treating taxpayers fairly, and being accountable for the responsibilities of the office.

CCSD BOARD, DISTRICT EIGHT



JESSIE J. CAVE

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what motivated you to seek or continue serving on the Clarendon County School District Board of Trustees. What experience would you bring to representing your district?

I am Jessie J. Cave, a proud 2014 graduate of East Clarendon Middle High School, a health care professional with over 12 years of experience, and a proud uncle to more than six nieces and nephews. Clarendon County raised me, and now I want to give back to the community that helped shape me.

My professional background includes health care administration, staffing coordination, human resources and social services. These roles have strengthened my skills in leadership, budgeting, employee relations, problem-solving and accountability. I am also actively involved in community service, civic engagement and youth leadership.

My greatest motivation is ensuring that my nieces, nephews and every child in Clarendon County have access to quality educational opportunities. I bring practical leadership experience, a commitment to service and a willingness to listen, ask difficult questions and put students first.

2. Districtwide priorities

What do you believe are the three most pressing challenges facing Clarendon County School District, and what specific steps would you support to address them during your term?

I believe Clarendon County School District faces three pressing challenges: academic achievement, teacher recruitment and retention, and preparing students for life after graduation.

First, we must prioritize literacy. Students who struggle with reading often face challenges across other subjects. I support early intervention, targeted tutoring and measurable academic improvement plans.

Second, we must support our teachers and staff. Competitive compensation, professional development, manageable workloads and stronger communication are essential to retaining qualified educators.

Third, we must expand opportunities beyond traditional academics. I support strengthening career and technical education, college readiness, apprenticeships and partnerships with local businesses and technical colleges.

Every student deserves a pathway to success, whether that leads to college, the military, a skilled trade or employment. Our responsibility is to ensure students graduate prepared, confident and equipped for their futures.

3. Individual district priorities

What are the most significant needs or concerns facing students, families and schools in District 8, and how would you ensure those concerns are represented in decisions affecting the school district as a whole?

District 8 is home to me. I attended Walker Gamble Elementary School and graduated from East Clarendon Middle High School. I understand the pride our communities have in their schools and the importance of ensuring rural families are not overlooked.

Our most significant needs include equitable educational resources, reliable transportation, stronger parent-school communication and expanded opportunities for students.

I believe families should have a voice in decisions affecting their children's education. As a board member, I would support community listening sessions, regular school visits and consistent communication with parents, educators and

residents.

I would also advocate for fair resource allocation across the district while recognizing the unique needs of District 8.

Representation means more than holding a seat. It means being present, listening carefully, following up on concerns and ensuring our communities are heard.

4. Academic performance and student achievement

The district's 2026 school report cards showed improvements at some schools, while others experienced declines. What do you believe the results reveal about the district's academic progress? How should the board evaluate the effectiveness of academic interventions, tutoring and other support programs, and what changes would you support to improve student achievement in areas where performance continues to lag?

The 2026 school report cards, showing improvements at some schools and declines at others, remind us that academic progress must be evaluated school by school. We should celebrate improvement while remaining honest about areas needing additional attention.

I believe literacy must remain a priority because reading proficiency directly influences success across subjects. I support early intervention, targeted tutoring and additional instructional support for struggling students.

The board should evaluate programs through measurable outcomes, including student growth, reading and mathematics proficiency, attendance and graduation readiness.

We must also identify successful strategies at improving schools and determine whether they can benefit others.

Our goal should never be simply implementing more programs. It should be ensuring existing programs produce meaningful results. Every child deserves an opportunity to succeed academically, regardless of which school they attend.

5. School safety, student behavior and attendance

Maintaining safe learning environments, addressing student behavior and improving attendance are important responsibilities for school districts. What do you see as the greatest challenges in these

areas, and what specific policies, programs or resources would you support to ensure students and employees feel safe while keeping students engaged and in school?

Every student and employee deserves a safe, respectful learning environment. I believe our greatest challenge is maintaining accountability while understanding the underlying causes of student behavior and absenteeism.

Not every behavioral issue is simply defiance. Students may be experiencing academic frustration, bullying, emotional challenges or difficulties at home.

I support consistent disciplinary policies, stronger anti-bullying initiatives, access to counselors and mentorship programs connecting students with positive role models.

I also believe alternatives to repeated out-of-school suspensions should be considered when appropriate, allowing students to remain engaged academically while addressing behavioral concerns.

Improving attendance requires identifying barriers early, strengthening communication with families and providing appropriate interventions.

Safety, discipline and compassion can coexist. Our responsibility is to protect students and employees while creating an environment where children feel supported, valued and motivated to attend school.

6. Teacher recruitment, retention and morale

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and staff remains an important issue for school districts, particularly in rural communities. What steps would you support to improve employee retention, strengthen morale and ensure students have access to qualified educators?

My experience in health care staffing and human resources has taught me that employee retention begins with respect, communication and a supportive workplace culture.

Teachers and support staff are the foundation of student success. When employees feel undervalued, overwhelmed or unsupported, morale and retention suffer.

I would advocate for competitive compensation within available resources, meaningful professional development, mentorship for new teachers and opportunities for employees to provide feedback.

I also support partnerships with colleges and universities to recruit future educators, particularly local graduates interested in returning to serve their communities.

We must recognize that bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, instructional assistants and administrative staff are equally important to school operations.

If we want students to succeed, we must invest in the people responsible for educating, transporting, feeding and supporting them every day.

7. School district budget and financial oversight

The school board is responsible for developing and overseeing the district's budget while balancing academic needs, staffing, facilities and other operating expenses. What would be your spending priorities, and how would you ensure taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and transparently?

I believe every taxpayer dollar should be spent responsibly, transparently and with student success as the priority.

My spending priorities would include classroom instruction, literacy programs, teacher and staff retention, student safety, reliable transportation and maintaining safe school facilities.

My health care administration experience has taught me the importance of balancing limited resources while maintaining quality services. Before approving major expenditures, I would ask how the investment benefits students, whether alternatives exist and how results will be measured.

I support regular financial reporting, independent audits, accessible budget presentations and clear explanations of major spending decisions.

I would also encourage pursuing grants and outside funding opportunities that align with district priorities.

Fiscal responsibility does not mean avoiding necessary investments. It means ensuring expenditures are justified, resources are distributed fairly and the public understands how its money is being used.

8. School facilities and resources

Clarendon County School District serves communities across a large geographic area,

LEMON

FROM PAGE 8

Student discipline should be fair, consistent and focused on maintaining safe learning environments while helping students and parents understand the consequences of their actions.

Attendance also requires a proactive approach. Guidelines for attendance should be established at the beginning of the school year. Schools should identify patterns of absences early, communicate with parents and guardians, and connect families with available resources when transportation, family circumstances or other barriers interfere with attendance.

The board should regularly review safety and attendance data to assess progress. Every student deserves a safe school, meaningful instruction and the opportunity to learn every day. Every school must provide and ensure that the highest level of learning is attained.

6. Teacher recruitment, retention and morale

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and staff remains an important issue for school districts, particularly in rural communities. What steps would you support to improve employee retention, strengthen morale and ensure students have access to qualified educators?

Qualified teachers and dedicated support staff are essential to student achievement. Recruiting educators is important, but retaining them requires a district culture where employees feel respected, supported and equipped to do their jobs effectively.

I would support reviewing employee feedback, examining turnover trends and identifying the reasons teachers and staff choose to leave, then using the findings to make recommended adjustments.

Competitive compensation, meaningful professional development, effective school leadership, manageable workloads and adequate classroom resources should remain important considerations.

I also believe recognition matters. Employees who consistently serve students and strengthen their school communities should know that their

contributions are valued.

The board should work with district leadership to identify practical retention strategies and evaluate whether they are producing results. We must also consider the unique challenges of recruiting qualified professionals to rural communities.

Investing in our educators is an investment in our students and the long-term success of Clarendon County schools.

7. School district budget and financial oversight

The school board is responsible for developing and overseeing the district's budget while balancing academic needs, staffing, facilities and other operating expenses. What would be your spending priorities, and how would you ensure taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and transparently?

My approach to the district budget would center on student needs, responsible spending, transparency and accountability. Academic instruction, qualified personnel, student support services, safe facilities, transportation and essential instructional resources should receive careful consideration when funding decisions are made.

I believe every proposed expenditure should be evaluated according to its purpose, expected benefit and alignment with district priorities.

The board should receive clear financial reports, monitor budget performance throughout the year and ask questions about spending patterns or unexpected costs requiring additional explanation.

I would also support regular reviews of contracts, purchasing practices and program effectiveness to identify opportunities for greater efficiency without compromising educational quality.

Taxpayers deserve confidence that public funds are managed responsibly. Our responsibility is not simply to approve a budget, but to provide meaningful oversight and ensure that available resources support the district's educational mission.

8. School facilities and resources

Clarendon County School District serves communities across a large geographic area, with schools facing differing facility and transportation needs. What do you believe are the district's most pressing

CLARENDON VOTES

infrastructure and transportation challenges, and what specific improvements would you prioritize to address them?

Clarendon County School District serves communities with diverse needs, and facilities and transportation decisions must reflect those differences.

I believe the district should regularly assess building conditions, maintenance requirements, classroom resources, accessibility and the reliability and safety of school buses. Preventive maintenance is especially important because addressing problems early can help avoid more expensive repairs later.

I would support a prioritized facilities improvement plan based on documented needs, safety concerns, building conditions and available funding.

Transportation planning should also consider bus conditions, route efficiency, staffing and the time students spend traveling to and from school.

Decisions should be guided by accurate information rather than assumptions or isolated complaints. The board should receive regular updates on maintenance projects, transportation performance and spending.

Our goal must be to provide safe, functional and supportive learning environments for students and employees across the entire district.

9. Parental involvement and transparency

How would you improve communication between the school board, parents, employees and the public? What steps would you support to make board decisions more transparent and ensure residents have meaningful opportunities to raise concerns and receive responses?

Strong schools depend on meaningful partnerships among the board, parents, employees and the community.

I believe communication should be consistent, accessible, respectful and easy for families to understand. I would support using multiple communication channels, including the district website, public meetings, school communications and community forums, to share valuable information and explain board decisions.

Residents should have clear opportunities to ask questions, express concerns and understand how their feedback is addressed.

Board agendas, meeting materials,

approved minutes, budget information and policy decisions should be made available in accordance with applicable laws and district procedures.

I also believe listening is essential. Community input may not always result in the outcome everyone prefers, but it deserves thoughtful consideration.

Transparency builds trust, and trust strengthens public education. As a trustee, I would continue encouraging open communication while respecting confidentiality requirements and the established responsibilities of district leadership.

10. Board relationships and accountability

School board members may have differing opinions about district policies, spending and leadership decisions. How would you work with fellow board members when disagreements arise, and how would you balance supporting district leadership with holding the superintendent and administration accountable for results?

Effective school board service requires professionalism, mutual respect, collaboration and a shared commitment to students.

Board members will not always agree on every policy, budget decision or leadership recommendation, but disagreements should be managed constructively and focused on the issues rather than personalities.

I believe trustees should ask informed questions, consider different viewpoints, review available evidence and make decisions in the best interest of the district.

Supporting the superintendent and administration does not mean abandoning accountability. The board must establish clear expectations, monitor district performance, evaluate progress toward established goals and address concerns through appropriate governance procedures.

At the same time, trustees must respect the distinction between oversight and day-to-day administration.

I would work to maintain productive relationships with fellow board members and district leadership while remaining committed to transparency, responsible decision-making and measurable results.

Ultimately, our responsibility is to the students, families, employees and taxpayers we serve.

FRIERSON

FROM PAGE 4

commission to continue to be

diligent in this study. As we become more aware of the need to preserve our natural resources, we can reflect on past industries that became part of our county and what we are now learning about their effects on our community.

I am grateful that this moratorium was put in place to allow us to make the best possible decision to protect the residents of Clarendon County.

6. Public safety and emergency services

Clarendon County's law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical services and coroner's office serve residents across a large rural area. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing these services, and what steps would you support to improve response capabilities, staffing and access to emergency assistance throughout the county?

Our emergency services personnel need competitive salaries that match surrounding counties so we can retain employees who are willing to stay in Clarendon County and serve the people who live here or visit our county.

I believe that by improving employees' quality of life through competitive pay, we will be able to serve the people of Clarendon County more efficiently.

7. Infrastructure and county facilities

County Council has moved forward with major facility projects and a vehicle replacement program intended to address aging county equipment. How would you determine which infrastructure, facility and equipment needs deserve priority, and how would you evaluate whether those investments are providing value to taxpayers?

Providing services that protect the citizens of Clarendon County is most important. Our family has received emergency services, and the thought of a lack of working vehicles or personnel being the reason someone does not receive help in a crisis is unthinkable and unacceptable.

As a member of Clarendon County Council, I am pleased with the vehicle replacement program. There is a progression system for replacing vehicles, recognizing that equipment has a service life and ex-

FRIERSON
FROM PAGE 12

placement plan will assist in relieving pressure on the county's budget. Being proactive about the maintenance and replacement of county equipment serves the best interests of taxpayers and everyone who enters our county. Excellence without excuses!

8. Clarendon County Archives

The Clarendon County Archives collection has been relocated temporarily while the county considers how to address the condition of its longtime facility. What do you believe should be the county's long-term responsibility for preserving the collection, maintaining public access and funding a permanent solution?

My desire for preserving the collec-

periences wear and tear.

A re-

tion, maintaining public access and funding a permanent solution for our county's archives is to have our local legislative delegation assist the county by providing funds to upgrade and restore the present facilities.

Marketing the archives and explaining the importance of this valuable resource are also needed so that county residents, historians and others can explore and research the rich history and contributions of the past for present and future generations.

I would also like to see a strong partnership between the South Carolina Department of Archives and History Foundation, the South Carolina Historical Society and Clarendon County Archives to ensure the protection and preservation of documents, greater public awareness, and the use of the archives for family history and educational research.

9. Transparency and public partici-

pation

County Council has faced questions about public access to financial information, the timing of development announcements and opportunities for residents to provide input before major decisions are made. What changes, if any, would you support to improve transparency, public participation and communication between council members and the communities they represent?

As a member of County Council, I believe in transparency and public participation. I also respect policies and procedures.

The people of Clarendon County are encouraged to attend our monthly meetings, review the published agenda and make public comments. We have a county administrator, finance director and council chairman who make reports monthly. On occasion, as deemed appropriate, other members may have comments.

We are always making adjustments to the process of communication with the people of Clarendon County so that transparency will be evident. Everyone's voice is important.

10. Bridging political divides

Clarendon County has a history of closely contested elections, with residents holding differing political views. What steps have you taken, or would you take, to bring people together across party lines? What issues do you believe residents can find common ground on, regardless of political affiliation, and how would you work to build consensus around solutions?

One County. One Future. This reflects how I believe we should govern.

One County, One Future reflects my belief that regardless of political party, race, age or background, the people of Clarendon County want the same things: safe communities, good jobs, strong schools, reliable infrastructure and opportunities for their children and grandchildren to succeed.

Throughout my life, I have worked with people from different backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives. I have learned that progress happens when we listen to one another with respect and focus on solving problems rather than scoring political points.

As a County Council member, I make myself accessible to all residents, not just those who agree with me. I believe we can find common ground on issues such as economic development, public safety, road improvements, workforce development and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

My approach would be to bring people together, encourage open dialogue and focus on practical solutions that benefit the entire county.

At the end of the day, we are all neighbors. If we keep our focus on what unites us instead of what divides us, we can build One County, One Future together.

ONE COUNTY.
ONE FUTURE.

A Voice
FOR THE
People.

RUNNING FOR
★ DISTRICT 2 ★
SERVING ALL OF
CLARENDON COUNTY

Delaney Kay
FRIERSON

BETTER
INFRASTRUCTURE

RECREATION
FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS

ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY

LET'S MOVE CLARENDON FORWARD — TOGETHER.

PRINGLE
FROM PAGE 7

tor's office in a timely manner.

7. Transparency, technology and customer service

What improvements, if any, would you make to the auditor's office's technology, online services or day-to-day operations to improve efficiency, make tax information more accessible and help residents better understand their tax bills?

One of my priorities is to modernize and streamline our software systems to improve efficiency and provide more timely service to taxpayers.

It is also important to maintain a professionally trained and properly equipped staff capable of meeting the demands of the office and assisting residents with their needs.

Transparency and openness

are essential to public service.

Our office works to keep residents informed through education, community outreach and civic engagement.

As Clarendon County continues to grow, we must be prepared to meet increasing demands rather than play catch-up. My focus is on maintaining an office that provides accurate, efficient and professional service to every resident.

8. County finances and accountability

The auditor works with County Council, the assessor, treasurer and other taxing authorities in administering property taxes. What role should the auditor play in helping county officials and residents understand property tax revenues and millage, and how would you maintain the independence and accountability of the office while working with other county departments?

The county tax offices have

separate responsibilities, but their work is closely connected. What happens in one office often affects the work of another.

For example, the assessor's office appraises real property, including mobile homes. If a taxpayer applies for a legal residence or agricultural exemption and the assessor approves it, our office must adjust the tax bill.

If the bill has not been paid, we process an abatement. If it has already been paid, a refund is processed through the treasurer's office.

Our office does not handle money. The auditor's office issues tax bills, while the treasurer's office collects payments and issues refunds.

Maintaining accurate records, understanding the budget needs of the county and other taxing entities, and working with the appropriate agencies are essential to carrying out our responsibilities.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 64



DR. MICHELE DEMERY

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what has motivated you to seek or continue serving in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

My name is Dr. Michele Johnson Demery, and I am a lifelong resident of Clarendon County who has dedicated my professional career and personal life to serving others, especially children, families, and the communities of South Carolina.

For 27 years, I served in Clarendon County School District, where I worked to support students, strengthen educational opportunities, and help prepare young people for the future. I currently serve as a fifth-grade special education teacher in Berkeley County School District. My experience in education has given me firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing our schools, the importance of supporting teachers, and the need to ensure that every child — regardless of background or ability — has access to a quality education. I hold a Ph.D. in leadership and supervision from Capella University, which has strengthened my commitment to leadership, accountability, and service.

My commitment to community service extends beyond the classroom. I serve on various boards and organizations at my church. Through these roles, I have remained connected to the needs of individuals and families and have seen how access to resources, strong community relationships, and compassionate leadership can make a meaningful difference. I am also a wife to my husband, Daniel, and a proud mother and grandmother. My family is an important source of inspiration and reminds

me why it is essential to build a better future for the next generation.

My decision to seek a seat in the South Carolina House of Representatives is rooted in my belief that the voices and concerns of our communities deserve to be heard and represented. I want to use my professional experience, educational background, and commitment to service to help address the issues that affect our daily lives, including public education, affordable health care, economic opportunity, infrastructure, and the rising cost of living.

My motivation is simple: to turn a lifetime of service into meaningful public service. I want to help create opportunities for our children, support working families, strengthen our communities, and ensure that residents have a voice in the decisions that shape their future. I would approach service in the South Carolina House with integrity, compassion, accountability, and a commitment to listening to the people I represent.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you handle situations in which your party's position conflicts with what you believe is best for the residents of District 64?

I affiliated with the Democratic Party because I believe government should expand opportunity, protect people's rights, and help ensure that everyone — regardless of income, background, or ZIP code — has a fair chance to succeed.

No party has every issue exactly right. I may disagree with particular proposals or believe they need a different approach, especially when the practical effects on local families, small businesses, or taxpayers have not been fully considered. I would listen to residents, review the evidence, consult people affected by the decision, and work toward solutions that reflect District 64's needs.

My party affiliation is important, but it does not replace my responsibility to the people I represent. If the party's position conflicts with what I believe is best for District 64, I would explain my reasoning openly, stand by my judgment, and advocate for the district — even when that means disagreeing with my party.

3. Legislative priorities

What are the three most important issues facing residents of House District 64, and what specific legislation, funding priorities or other actions would you pursue to address them?

The three most important issues I would prioritize for the residents of House District 64 are quality public education, economic opportunity and affordability, and access to affordable health care. These issues affect our families, our workforce, and the long-term future of our communities. I would pursue practical legislation, responsible state funding, and partnerships that address the needs of residents in both Clarendon and Sumter counties.

1. Quality public education and workforce development

I would advocate for equitable school funding that reflects the needs of rural districts, stronger early literacy and mathematics programs, and expanded tutoring and academic intervention for struggling students. I would also support legislation and funding incentives to recruit and retain qualified teachers, improve access to career and technical education, and strengthen partnerships between schools, technical colleges, and local employers. Our students deserve the opportunity to graduate prepared for college, careers, military service, or entrepreneurship, regardless of their ZIP code.

2. Economic opportunity, jobs, and the cost of living

I would work to attract and retain businesses that provide stable, well-paying jobs while helping existing small businesses grow. My priorities would include supporting workforce training, expanding access to affordable housing, improving roads and broadband infrastructure, and promoting responsible economic development in underserved communities. I would also advocate for reviewing the tax and fee burdens on working families, seniors, and people on fixed incomes. State economic development incentives should be transparent, accountable to taxpayers, and tied to measurable outcomes such as local hiring, job quality, and long-term community benefits.

3. Affordable health care and rural access to care

I would advocate for policies that strengthen rural hospitals and health care facilities, recruit and retain health care professionals, and expand access to primary care, maternal health, mental health services, and preventive care. I would support funding for community-based clinics, telehealth services, and workforce development programs that encourage qualified health care professionals to serve rural communities. I would also work to identify opportunities to use available state and federal funding to reduce barriers to care, particularly for seniors, children, low-income families, and residents who must travel long distances to receive medical services.

My commitment is to listen to the people of House District 64 and turn their concerns into measurable legislative action. I would work collaboratively with residents, educators, health care providers, local governments, businesses, and

fellow legislators to develop practical solutions. I would also advocate for transparent budgeting and regular reporting on whether funded programs are delivering results. Our communities deserve a representative who understands local challenges, uses public resources responsibly, and works to expand opportunities for every resident.

4. Public education and academic performance

Recent South Carolina school report cards have highlighted both improvements and continuing academic challenges. What changes, if any, would you support in state education funding, accountability or academic intervention to improve student outcomes, particularly in rural districts such as Clarendon County?

South Carolina's public education system must ensure that every student, regardless of where they live, has access to a quality education and the resources needed to succeed. In rural communities such as Clarendon County, we must address the challenges that can affect student achievement, including teacher recruitment and retention, access to academic support, limited resources, and differences in educational opportunities.

I support a comprehensive approach that connects equitable state funding, meaningful accountability, and early academic intervention. State education funding should take into account student needs, poverty levels, transportation costs, special education services, and the additional challenges faced by rural school districts. Every child deserves a strong educational foundation, and a student's opportunities should not be determined by their ZIP code.

5. Teacher recruitment and retention

South Carolina has introduced new student loan refinancing and forgiveness opportunities for eligible public school teachers. Beyond these programs, what steps should the General Assembly take to recruit and retain qualified teachers, particularly in rural and underserved districts?

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers requires more than student loan forgiveness. We must make teaching a profession that people want to enter and a career they want to continue. South Carolina's 2025 START task force identified career advancement, compensation, recruitment pathways, and teacher support as important areas for action. I would prioritize the following legislative and funding initiatives:

- Provide competitive salaries and rural service incentives.
- Strengthen teacher preparation, mentoring, and career advancement.
- Improve working conditions and respect the teaching profession.

Accountability and implementation

I would advocate for transparent reporting

on teacher vacancies, retention rates, subject-area shortages, and the effectiveness of state-funded incentives. Rural districts should receive resources based on demonstrated need and limited local fiscal capacity, rather than being expected to compete on equal terms with wealthier districts that have greater resources.

My goal would be to work with educators, school administrators, parents, and fellow legislators to develop practical solutions that help every school recruit and retain qualified teachers. For Clarendon County and other rural communities, keeping excellent teachers in the classroom is an investment in student achievement, stronger schools, and the future of our communities.

6. Clarendon County Archives

The future of the Clarendon County Archives has raised questions about building conditions, preservation, public access and funding responsibilities. What role should the state play in helping preserve the county's historical records, and what approach would you support to ensure the collection remains protected and accessible?

The Clarendon County Archives is more than a building; it is the keeper of our community's history, identity, and legacy. Its collection preserves records, photographs, family histories, school records, and other materials that help residents understand where we came from and how our communities developed. Protecting these records is a responsibility we must take seriously.

I believe the state should serve as a partner with Clarendon County by providing technical assistance, helping identify available funding, and supporting appropriate preservation efforts. As a legislator, I would work with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, county officials, historical organizations, and community stakeholders to identify state appropriations, historic preservation grants, and other public or private funding opportunities. I would also advocate for a transparent assessment of the building's condition, realistic restoration costs, and the long-term resources needed to maintain the collection.

My approach would focus on three priorities:

- Protect the collection immediately.
- Develop a sustainable preservation

and funding plan.

Preserve public access for future generations.

The public deserves regular updates about the collection's location, preservation status, funding, and plans for reopening. Decisions about the archives should involve meaningful community input and recognize the historical significance of the collection to all Clarendon County residents.

Our history cannot be replaced once it is lost. I would work to bring the appropriate state and local partners to the table, pursue responsible funding solutions, and help ensure that Clarendon County's historical records remain protected, preserved, and accessible for generations to come.

7. Economic development and emerging industries

Clarendon County has seen proposals involving data centers and battery energy storage systems, raising questions about economic benefits, infrastructure demands and local oversight. What role should state government play in regulating or supporting these developments, and how should the interests of local communities be protected?

Economic development can create opportunities for Clarendon County, but it must be pursued responsibly, transparently, and with the interests of local residents in mind. Data centers and battery energy storage systems may attract private investment, generate tax revenue, and support infrastructure improvements. However, these projects can also raise legitimate concerns about electricity demand, water consumption, environmental impacts, fire safety, noise, and the potential costs to utility customers.

As a member of the General Assembly, I would support a clear statewide regulatory framework that establishes consistent safety and environmental standards while respecting the authority of local governments to make land-use and zoning decisions. Developers should demonstrate that adequate utilities, roads, emergency services, and other infrastructure are available to support their projects without unfairly burdening existing residents.

My priorities would include:

- Protecting local voices and decision-making.

Protecting taxpayers and utility customers.

Establishing strong safety and environmental safeguards.

Ensuring measurable economic benefits.

Supporting informed, responsible planning.

I recognize that these developments can offer economic opportunities while also presenting challenges that deserve careful consideration. Each proposal would be evaluated on its individual merits, require appropriate protections, and ensure that local residents have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their lives.

Clarendon County's future should be shaped by responsible growth, public accountability, and respect for the people who call this community home. Economic development should improve the quality of life for residents, protect our natural resources, and provide lasting benefits — not simply bring investment to the area without sufficient consideration of its costs.

8. Cost of living and access to health care

Residents of rural communities face challenges involving household expenses, access to health care and the availability of essential services. What specific state-level policies would you support to address affordability and improve access to medical care in District 64?

Residents of rural communities deserve the opportunity to live healthy, productive lives without being overwhelmed by the cost of basic necessities or having to travel long distances for medical care. In Clarendon and Sumter counties, I would focus on practical state-level policies that help families manage everyday expenses, strengthen rural health care, and ensure public investments produce measurable results.

1. Reduce the financial burden on working families and seniors. I would support targeted property tax relief for eligible seniors and families, initiatives to expand affordable housing, and efforts to improve access to utility assistance and reliable broadband. I would also advocate for workforce development programs that prepare residents for good-paying jobs and support small businesses that create opportunities close to home. Any tax relief proposals should

be carefully evaluated to ensure they help households without undermining funding for schools, emergency services, and other essential public services.

2. Strengthen rural hospitals and expand access to medical care. I would advocate for sustainable funding for rural hospitals, community health centers, and primary care providers. I would support incentives to recruit and retain physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals in underserved areas, along with investments in modern medical equipment and technology. I would also work to expand access to preventive care, maternal health, mental health services, and chronic disease management so residents can receive more care close to home.

3. Bring health services directly to underserved communities. I would support expanding telehealth, mobile health clinics, community health workers, and transportation assistance for residents who have difficulty reaching medical appointments.

4. Maximize available state and federal resources. South Carolina has already awarded approximately \$167.3 million through its Rural Health Transformation Program to support rural health care access, workforce development, facility improvements, and technology upgrades. I would work to ensure eligible providers and communities in District 64 can pursue available funding and that investments are directed toward documented needs.

5. Promote accountability and community input. I would work with residents, local governments, employers, and health care providers to identify the most urgent needs and measure whether funded programs are improving affordability and access. I would support transparent reporting on how public funds are spent, whether health care workforce shortages are improving, and whether residents are gaining better access to essential services.

My commitment is to pursue practical policies that help families keep more of their hard-earned income while ensuring that quality health care is accessible to rural residents. By combining responsible fiscal decisions, targeted assistance, stronger health care infrastructure, and community partnerships, we can work toward a healthier and more

economically secure future for House District 64.

9. State funding and local needs

District 64 includes communities in Clarendon and Sumter counties with differing infrastructure and economic needs. How would you determine which local projects and services to prioritize when seeking state funding, and how would you ensure residents understand how those decisions are made?

My responsibility would be to listen to residents in both counties, evaluate local needs objectively, and advocate for state funding that delivers measurable benefits to the people we serve. Every community deserves to be heard, and funding decisions should be based on documented needs, public benefit, and responsible use of taxpayer dollars — not political favoritism.

Establish priorities based on community needs.

Use clear and consistent funding criteria.

Ensure fair representation for both counties.

Make the decision-making process transparent.

Measure results and maintain accountability.

My commitment is to be accessible, fair, and accountable to every community in House District 64. I would approach state funding as a public responsibility, using clear criteria and open communication to ensure that decisions reflect the needs of the people rather than political considerations. By listening carefully, setting measurable priorities, and reporting results honestly, we can build trust and make responsible investments in the future of both Clarendon and Sumter counties.

10. Bridging political divides

Clarendon County has a history of closely contested elections, with residents holding differing political views. What steps have you taken, or would you take, to bring people together across party lines? What issues do you believe residents can find common ground on, regardless of political affiliation, and how would you work to build consensus around solutions?

I believe effective leadership begins with listening, respect, and a willing-



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 64



FAWN PEDALINO (R), INCUMBENT

1. Background and qualifications

Tell voters about yourself, including your background, professional experience, community involvement and what has motivated you to seek or continue serving in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Before serving in the South Carolina House of Representatives, my experience as an EMT and business owner gave me firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing families and small businesses, shaping my belief that government should work for the people.

As representative for House District 64 and chair of the Clarendon County Legislative Delegation, I have focused on improving education, supporting small businesses, reducing government regulations, protecting individual freedoms, and addressing local concerns.

One of the most rewarding parts of serving is helping constituents navigate government agencies, resolve problems, and find answers when they feel unheard. I believe representation means more than casting votes in Columbia. It means being accessible, accountable, and willing to stand up for those you serve.

I am motivated to continue serving because I love our communities and care deeply about the future we leave our children. I remain committed to putting people before politics, protecting taxpay-

ers, strengthening schools, and giving our communities a voice.

2. Party affiliation and independent judgment

What values or principles led you to affiliate with your political party? Are there positions within your party's platform that you disagree with or would approach differently? If so, what are they, and how would you handle situations in which your party's position conflicts with what you believe is best for the residents of District 64?

I am a Republican because I believe in limited government, fiscal responsibility, individual liberty, personal accountability, parental rights, and protecting the constitutional rights of every citizen. I believe government should respect taxpayers, support families and small businesses, and protect the rights of parents to make decisions regarding their children's upbringing and education.

I am also committed to protecting women's sports by opposing biological males competing in female athletic categories, and I oppose gender-transition surgeries for minors.

My responsibility is first and foremost to the people of District 64, not party leadership or political interests. When disagreements arise, I will listen to my constituents, examine the facts, and make decisions based on my principles and what I believe best serves Clarendon and Sumter counties. I was elected to represent people, not a political party.

3. Legislative priorities

What are the three most important issues facing residents of House District 64, and what specific legislation, funding priorities or other actions would you pursue to address them?

Clean, reliable water and sewer is the most urgent issue. Residents should not face failing town systems, boil-water notices, or local governments that drag their feet. I filed H. 4747 for a path to countywide service, secured a budget proviso for an independent audit of the

town of Summerton's finances, and led the effort that got the county a grant to fully assess the Summerton water

system so we know exactly what it takes and costs to fix it. The county is still dragging its feet. I will keep demanding results.

Second is schools that serve children and teachers. I support the expanded Teacher Loan Program for districts like Clarendon and Sumter and will fight for real accountability on every dollar — ending waste and making school boards answer to parents and taxpayers.

Third is roads and jobs. I voted for the SCDOT Modernization Act to cut bureaucracy, increase accountability to the governor and people, and speed projects by letting the state handle federal environmental reviews that have delayed work for years. That helps finish the I-95 bridges over Lake Marion. Since 2023, Clarendon County has seen about \$300 million in investment and 628 jobs. I want more and will oppose anything that drives business away.

4. Public education and academic performance

Recent South Carolina school report cards have highlighted both improvements and continuing academic challenges. What changes, if any, would you support in state education funding, accountability or academic intervention to improve student outcomes, particularly in rural districts such as Clarendon County?

I support stronger accountability tied to real student proficiency, not just "Average" ratings or high graduation rates that mask gaps. In rural districts like Clarendon, we are still well short of the state's 2030 goal of 75% of students at or above grade level, especially in math and high school end-of-course subjects.

I already passed the Grade Floor Bill to stop unearned grades from hiding problems. We should expand that approach: link more state funding to demonstrated academic growth and require earlier, data-driven interventions when students fall behind. Rural districts need flexible, targeted support for literacy and math — not one-size-fits-all programs — and clearer consequences when local leadership fails to deliver results despite

heavy local property tax investment.

Teachers are not the problem; administration and board priorities are. Better use of benchmark and common assessments, which Clarendon has improved, can help prevent students from being tested on material they haven't been taught. Taxpayers and parents deserve better outcomes for the dollars we already spend.

5. Teacher recruitment and retention

South Carolina has introduced new student loan refinancing and forgiveness opportunities for eligible public school teachers. Beyond these programs, what steps should the General Assembly take to recruit and retain qualified teachers, particularly in rural and underserved districts?

Recruiting a good teacher is hard. Keeping one is harder. I supported expanding the Teacher Loan Program, which uses up to \$10 million of the program's existing funds, including \$5 million for forgiveness. Teachers can refinance up to \$27,500 at 2%, with 20% forgiven each year they teach in a critical district. Clarendon and Sumter both qualify.

Beyond that, teachers tell me they leave because of how they're treated, not only because of pay. I believe change in local school district administration, including at the superintendent level, would help us keep good teachers.

At the state level, I'd support keeping teacher pay competitive, cutting paperwork and testing that takes time away from teaching, backing teachers on classroom discipline and creating easier pathways for local people, including career changers and veterans, to become teachers and stay in their hometowns.

6. Clarendon County Archives

The future of the Clarendon County Archives has raised questions about building conditions, preservation, public access and funding responsibilities. What role should the state play in helping preserve the county's historical records, and what approach would you support to ensure the collection remains protected and accessible?

Clarendon County's history matters well beyond our borders. Briggs v. Elliott began right here in Summerton and became part of Brown v. Board of Education. Records like ours cannot be replaced once they're lost to water, mold, or neglect.

Keeping and funding the archives is first a county responsibility. The state can support that effort without taking ownership of the collection. I have already submitted an appropriation request to help the county with building repairs. Any further state involvement should be tied to a clear, costed plan that protects the records long-term, keeps them in Clarendon County, and improves public access, including digitizing the most important materials so people can use them without risking the originals.

As delegation chair, I will continue pressing the county and local partners for a concrete path forward that puts preservation and access ahead of delay. Our history belongs here, and it should stay protected and open to the public.

7. Economic development and emerging industries

Clarendon County has seen proposals involving data centers and battery energy storage systems, raising questions about economic benefits, infrastructure demands and local oversight. What role should state government play in regulating or supporting these developments, and how should the interests of local communities be protected?

I want good jobs in Clarendon County, and we're getting them. Since 2023, Homanit, Latitude, 84 Lumber and Quality Enclosures have announced about \$300 million in investment and 628 jobs here. But new industries like data centers and battery storage have to work for the people who live next to them.

The state should set clear baseline rules for safety, fire protection, water use and decommissioning, and make sure residential power customers don't end up paying for infrastructure built for big users. Decisions about where these projects go belong at the local level.

Most of all, residents deserve a voice. When County Council moved a data center moratorium forward without a public hearing, I asked a simple question: Why not just let the public speak? Every major project should come with open hearings, honest numbers on jobs and tax revenue, and real protections for neighbors and farmland.

8. Cost of living and access to health care

Residents of rural communities face

challenges involving household expenses, access to health care and the availability of essential services. What specific state-level policies would you support to address affordability and improve access to medical care in District 64?

As a former EMT, I've seen what distance means in an emergency. In rural communities, the time it takes to reach care can change the outcome.

On affordability, I'll keep working to let families keep more of what they earn. That means keeping eliminate state income taxes, protecting homeowners from runaway property tax bills and keeping a close eye on fees and utility bills, which have hit some of our families hard.

On health care, I support strong funding and staffing for rural EMS, expanding telehealth and the broadband it depends on, and loan repayment and other incentives that bring doctors, nurses and mental health providers to rural areas. I also supported cutting red tape so clinics and providers can open and grow where

people need them. Families in Clarendon and Sumter shouldn't have to drive an hour for basic care.

9. State funding and local needs

District 64 includes communities in Clarendon and Sumter counties with differing infrastructure and economic needs. How would you determine which local projects and services to prioritize when seeking state funding, and how would you ensure residents understand how those decisions are made?

I start with need and safety. Clean water, safe roads and bridges, public safety and drainage come before anything else, whether the project is in Clarendon or Sumter County. I also look at whether a project has local support, a clear plan, matching dollars and a local government ready to manage it well.

Clearing Newman Branch Swamp, for example, came from real drainage and flooding needs, and I secured \$950,000 for that work.

Residents should never have to guess

where their money goes. Member funding requests are public, and when someone asks, I share the records. I explain my priorities on my social media, at town halls and directly to my constituents when they call. I also expect every dollar to be tracked, which is why I've pushed for audits and line-item accounting. If I'm asking for your money, you deserve to know why.

10. Bridging political divides

Clarendon County has a history of closely contested elections, with residents holding differing political views. What steps have you taken, or would you take, to bring people together across party lines? What issues do you believe residents can find common ground on, regardless of political affiliation, and how would you work to build consensus around solutions?

Water, roads, schools and safety don't have a party label. When Summerton residents raised concerns about discolored water, billing errors and sewer backups, I hosted a town hall in July 2025 so

every resident could be heard, whatever their politics.

My office helps anyone who calls, and I never ask how someone votes before helping them with a pothole or a state agency.

I believe most people in Clarendon County want the same things: clean water, good schools, safe roads, honest elections, fair taxes and a government that listens. I'd build consensus the way I always have, by showing up, listening first, sharing the facts openly and keeping public meetings open to the public. We may not agree on everything, but we can agree on our neighbors, and that's where good solutions start.

COKER

FROM PAGE 5

During my time on County Council, I have been involved in discussions and efforts to find a solution for the Clarendon County Archives, including working with other elected officials to explore options for protecting the records and addressing the building's condition.

I believe our immediate priority should be ensuring these valuable records are safe from further damage while developing a financially responsible, long-term plan for the facility. We should explore available funding opportunities and carefully evaluate costs before making decisions.

Preserving our history and being responsible with taxpayer money should go hand in hand. I believe we can work toward accomplishing both.

9. Transparency and public participation

County Council has faced questions about public access to financial information, the timing of development announcements and opportunities for residents to provide input before major decisions are made. What changes, if any, would you support to improve transparency, public participation and communication between council members and the communities they represent?

I believe transparency and accountability are essential responsibilities of county government. The citizens of Clarendon County deserve to know how their taxpayer dollars are being spent, why important decisions are being made and how those decisions affect their communities.

During my four years on County Council, I have recognized the importance of listening to residents and understanding their concerns. I believe

every citizen deserves to be heard and treated with respect, whether we agree or disagree on a particular issue.

I also believe county officials should be willing to answer questions, explain spending decisions and remain accountable to the people they represent. Open communication helps build trust between local government and the community.

My goal is to continue supporting responsible spending, honest communication and decisions that reflect the needs of Clarendon County residents, not personal or political interests.

10. Bridging political divides

Clarendon County has a history of closely contested elections, with residents holding differing political views. What steps have you taken, or would you take, to bring people together across party lines? What issues do you believe residents can find common ground on, regardless of political affiliation, and how would you work to build consensus around solutions?

I believe Clarendon County is strongest when we work together, regardless of our political beliefs, backgrounds or differences of opinion. As a lifelong resident, business owner, farmer and County Council member, I understand that we may not always agree on every issue, but we all share a common interest in the future of our county.

I believe elected officials have a responsibility to listen, treat others with respect and make decisions based on what is best for the entire community rather than personal interests or political differences.

My focus has always been on helping our residents, creating opportunities, improving our roads and infrastructure, and making sure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly.

At the end of the day, Clarendon County is home to all of us. I believe working together and keeping our community's needs first is how we make lasting progress.

VOTE KIMBERLY

HERBERT

FOR CLARENDON

COUNTY

AUDITOR

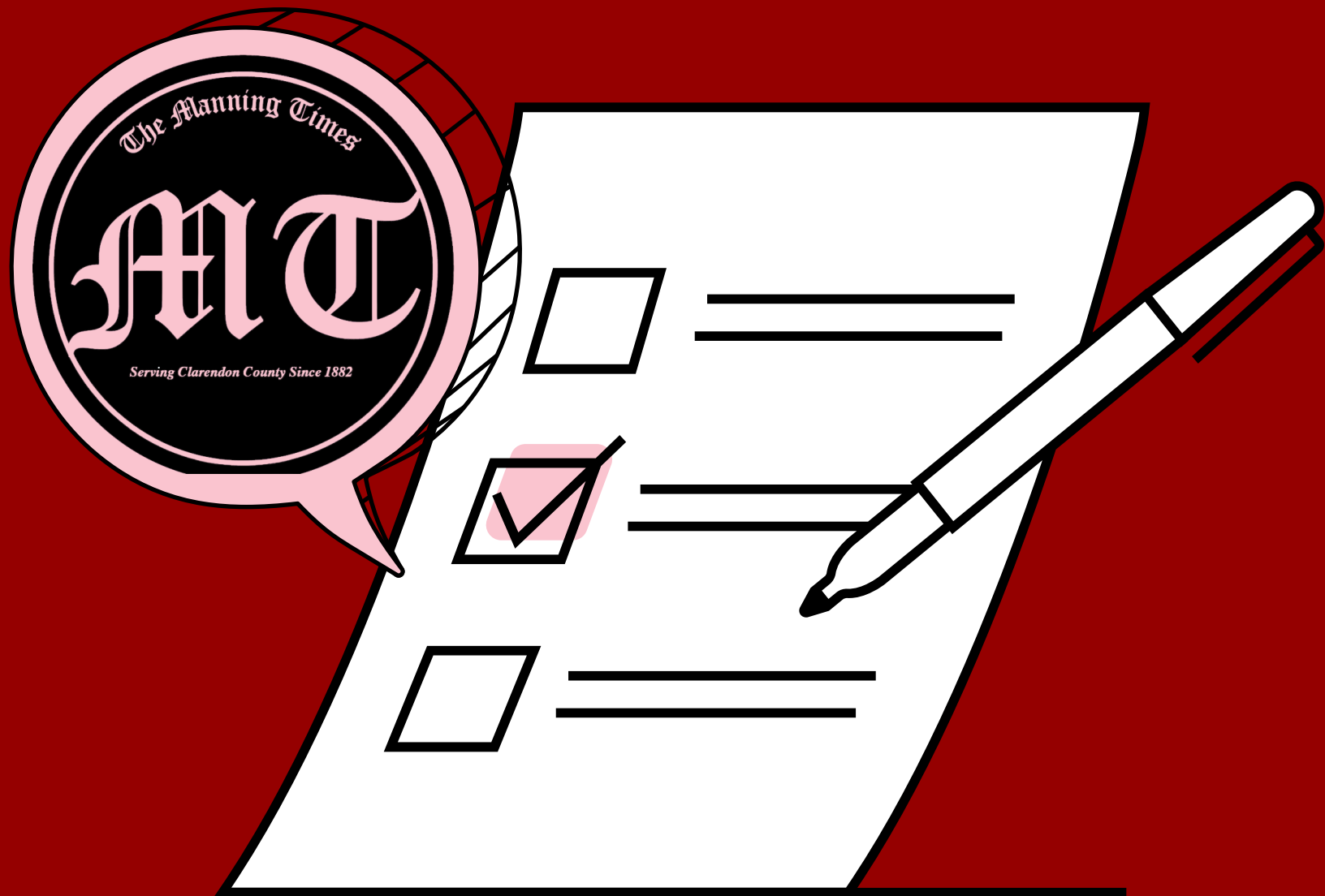
WORKING WITH YOU,

FOR A CHANGE



Election Day is Nov. 3!

Know the candidates. Make your plan. Cast your ballot.



VOTES ARE IN. WHAT'S NEXT?

Follow The Manning Times on Facebook for live Election Night updates, local race results and coverage from across Clarendon County.

facebook.com/manningsctimes

How does voting-by-mail work?



STAFF REPORT

Each Election Day, Americans vote and thus take part in a fundamental principle of democracy. Elections take place on various levels, from local governments to presidential elections.

Until recently, in order to cast a ballot for a particular election, most voters had to physically appear at their respective polling locations and submit their votes in person. Mail-in voting, also known as absentee voting, was frowned upon and not widely available. It first arose during the Civil War, when soldiers were given the opportunity to cast ballots from the battlefield. Absentee voting later became an issue during World War II, when Congress passed laws in 1942 and 1944 enabling soldiers stationed overseas to participate in elections. More recently, during the 1980s, more states made absentee voting available, and it is no longer uncommon for voters to be mailed ballots and submit them before Election Day. According to MIT, the movement to vote-by-mail reached new levels with the 2020 elections, which occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some attest that mail-in-voting enables many individuals who would not normally be able to physically make it to the polls on Election Day to cast votes. Mail-in balloting works in different ways. The United States has universal vote-by-mail and absentee balloting. With the former, ballots are mailed to all voters. In the latter, voters must

request an absentee ballot.

In terms of a requested absentee ballot, a voter must write, call or request a ballot online. Upon receipt, the voter will make his or her choice, and then place the sealed ballot in a security envelope provided with the ballot. The voter signs the outside of the second envelope to certify that he or she is a registered voter. When the election authority receives the ballot, it certifies the registration of the voter and that the address matches the one on record with the election authority. On Election Day, the mail ballots are added into the results of the votes with those from people who visited the polls in person.

According to the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. that works to improve policy and governance at local, national and global levels, there is no partisan advantage to either party related to voting by mail. Also, absentee ballots benefit senior citizens as well as low-income people and those without access to transportation.

Despite some news stories in recent years that may lead people to believe mail-in votes come with risk, the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University says there is no evidence that mail balloting increases electoral fraud, as there are several anti-fraud protections built into the process.

Mail-in voting is an option for many people across the U.S. It is secure and convenient for many voters.



A TIMELINE OF VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

February, 1870: The U.S. Congress passes and the states ratify the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting African-American men the right to vote.

1890: Wyoming becomes the first state to grant women the right to vote, followed by Colorado in 1893.

October 23, 1915: 25,000 women marched in New York City demanding the right to vote.

August, 1920: The Nineteenth Amendment was adopted, granting women from every state the right to vote. It was nicknamed the “Anthony” amendment in recognition of the lobbying efforts of suffragette Susan B. Anthony. The amendment was adopted just in time for the 1920 presidential election.

March 29, 1961: Ratification of the 23rd amendment to the Constitution gave residents of Washington, D.C., the right to vote in presidential elections.

August, 1965: President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act to outlaw states’ discriminatory voting practices, especially in regards to those targeting African-Americans in the South.

July, 1971: The 26th Amendment reduced the voting age in the United States from 21 to 18 years of age. The first 18-year-olds voted in the 1972 elections.

March, 1993: The “motor-voter” bill was signed by President Bill Clinton, allowing citizens to register to vote when applying for a driver’s license and ease voter registration.

Source: america250.org

How voters can prepare for Election Day

STAFF REPORT

The right to vote is one of the foundations of democracy. Exercising that right is vital to creating a nation where everyone feels as though their voice has been heard.

Given the significance of voting and all that the right to vote symbolizes for so many people, Election Day is an incredibly important day on the American calendar. In recognition of that significance, voters can consider these tips to prepare for Election Day so they can exercise their right to vote as efficiently as possible.

· Make sure you're registered to vote. With the exception of North Dakota, each state has its own voter registration deadlines, and voters must register prior to those deadlines in order to vote on Election Day. Voters can visit the US Vote Foundation at usvotefoundation.org to view the election dates and deadlines in their states and U.S. territories. Voters who know they are not registered can visit Vote.gov to begin the registration process.

· Find your polling place. Voters cannot simply vote at any polling place. Each voter is assigned a polling place, and that place is generally within close proximity to a voter's home. Local schools or churches often serve as polling locations, but

the official guide to government information and services USA.gov urges voters to contact their state or territorial election office in advance of Election Day to determine their designated polling place. Voters who received sample ballots in the mail also can check those ballots to see if their polling place is listed.

· Know the ID requirements. Voter ID requirements vary from state to state, so voters are urged to determine what is required to vote at their local polling place. The National Conference of State Legislatures has a detailed, state-by-state list of voter identification requirements that can be accessed for free at ncsl.org. Voters who are uncertain about the ID requirements at their local polling place are urged to visit the site in advance of Election Day so they know what to expect and can meet all ID requirements when they show up to vote.

· Study your sample ballot. Sample ballots can help voters familiarize themselves with candidates in local and national elections. Studying these ballots in advance and learning what each candidate stands for can help voters make the most informed voting decision.

Individuals who still have questions about what to expect on Election Day can visit USA.gov/election-day to speak with a live USA.gov agent.



DEMERY
FROM PAGE 9

ness to work with people whose opinions may differ from our own. In a community like District 64, where residents may have different political affiliations and perspectives, we must remember that we share many of the same concerns about our families, our schools, our jobs, our health care, and the future of our communities.

My approach would be to focus on the needs of the people rather than party labels. I would make myself accessible to residents from all political backgrounds, listen to their concerns without prejudice, and create opportunities for open, respectful dialogue. I would also work collaboratively with local officials, community organizations, business leaders, educators, faith-based organizations, and fellow legislators to identify shared priorities and develop practical solutions.

I believe we can disagree

without being disagreeable. Representing House District 64 means representing all constituents — not only those who voted for me or share my political views. My commitment would be to build relationships across party lines, pursue common-sense solutions, and measure success by the positive difference we make in people's lives. Our community is stronger when we work together, respect one another, and remember that our shared future is more important than our political differences.



Clarendon County polling places

General Election — Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026

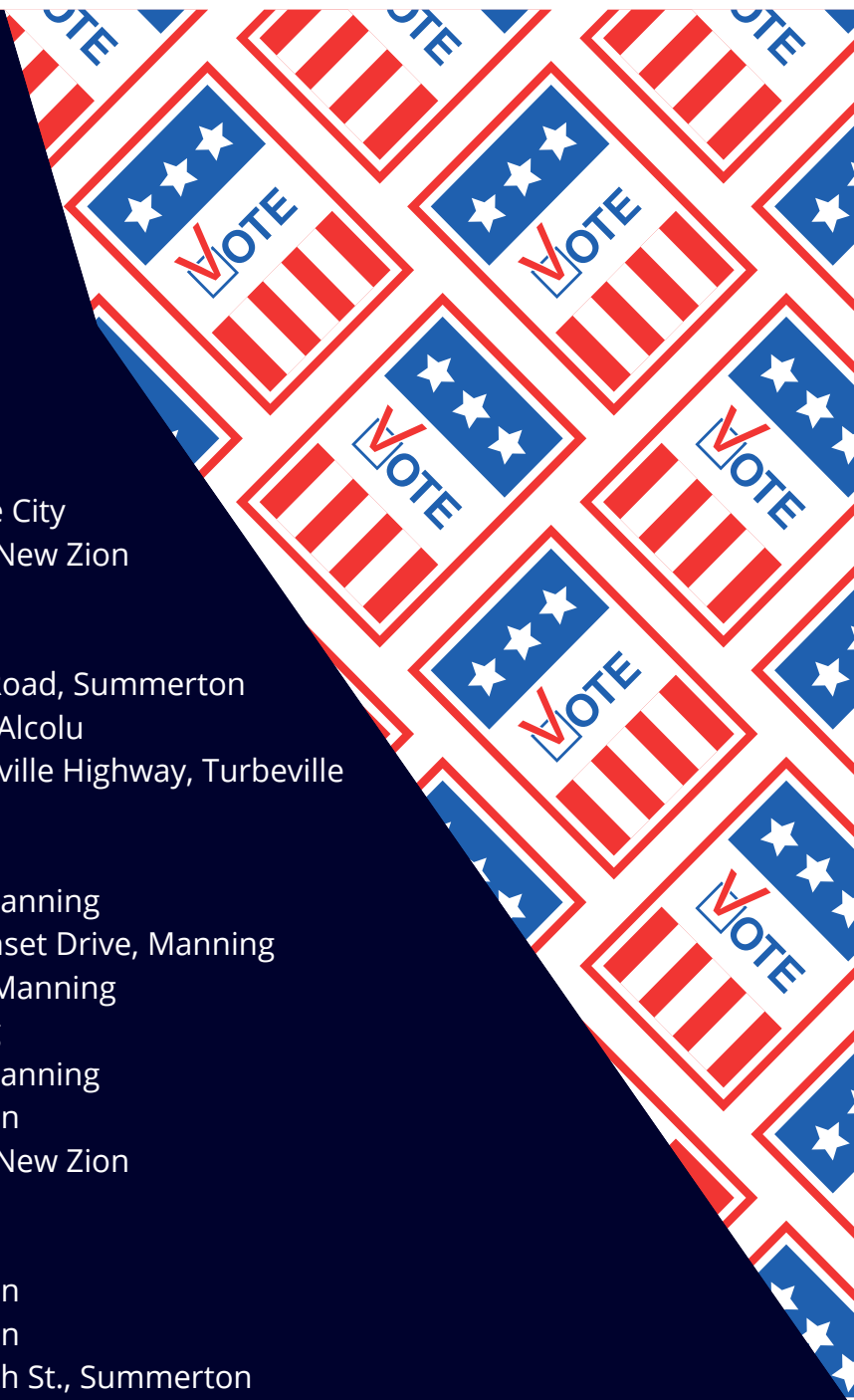
Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Locations serving multiple precincts are marked with an asterisk (*).

PRECINCTS	POLLING PLACE AND ADDRESS
Alcolu	Alcolu Fire Station, 1612 Main St., Alcolu
Barrier Free	Voter Registration Office, 3 S. Church St., Manning
Barrineau	Barrineau Fire Station, 3803 Saint James Road, Lake City
Barrows Mill*	Union Oakdale Fire Station, 1757 Fire Tower Road, New Zion
Bloomville	Liberty Fire Station, 5119 Brewer Road, Manning
Calvary*	Panola Fire Station, 1984 Elliott Road, Pinewood
Davis Station	Davis Station Fire Station, 4261 M.W. Rickenbaker Road, Summerton
Harmony	Harmony Presbyterian Church, 8629 Highway 301, Alcolu
Hicks	Pine Dale Pentecostal Holiness Church, 4450 Turbeville Highway, Turbeville
Home Branch*	Paxville Fire Station, 2151 Conyers Road, Manning
Jordan	Wyboo Fire Station, 9699 Highway 260, Manning
Manning No. 1*	Clarendon Community Center gym, 10 Maple St., Manning
Manning No. 2	Clarendon County Administration Building, 411 Sunset Drive, Manning
Manning No. 3	Manning High School gym, 2155 Paxville Highway, Manning
Manning No. 4	Manning City Fire Station, 42 W. Boyce St., Manning
Manning No. 5*	Clarendon Community Center gym, 10 Maple St., Manning
New Zion*	New Zion Fire Station, 15677 Highway 301, New Zion
Oakdale*	Union Oakdale Fire Station, 1757 Fire Tower Road, New Zion
Panola*	Panola Fire Station, 1984 Elliott Road, Pinewood
Paxville*	Paxville Fire Station, 2151 Conyers Road, Manning
Sardinia-Gable	New Zion Fire Station, 15677 Highway 301, New Zion
Summerton No. 1	Summerton Fire Station, 6 N. Cantey St., Summerton
Summerton No. 2*	Summerton Community Resource Gym, 1154 Fourth St., Summerton
Summerton No. 3*	Summerton Community Resource Gym, 1154 Fourth St., Summerton
Summerton No. 4	North Santee Fire Station, 1023 Palmer Road, Summerton
Turbeville	Pine Grove Methodist Church Annex, 1090 Morgan St., Turbeville
Wilson-Foreston	Wilson-Foreston Fire Station, 1015 N. Brewington Road, Manning

Shared polling locations: Barrows Mill/Oakdale, Calvary/Panola, Home Branch/Paxville, Manning No. 1/Manning No. 5, New Zion/Sardinia-Gable and Summerton No. 2/Summerton No. 3.

Early voting: Oct. 19-31, Monday through Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., at the Clarendon County Voter Registration and Elections Office, 3 S. Church St., Manning. Closed Sundays.

Voters are encouraged to confirm their assigned precinct and polling location at [SCVotes.gov](https://scvotes.gov) before Election Day.



CHAPMAN FROM PAGE 3

way to create more opportunities for our people at home.

We have also seen what meaningful

economic development can look like. Homanit's new Alcolu manufacturing operation represents an announced investment of approximately \$250 million and 300 new jobs. I want more investments that produce measurable benefits like jobs, wages and tax-base growth.

Economic development should work for Clarendon County and not the other way around.

Before supporting major incentives or developments, I want answers to basic questions: How many permanent jobs will be created? What will those jobs pay? How much will the project contribute to our tax base? What infrastructure will taxpayers have to provide? What is the long-term return for Clarendon County?

3. Responsible growth while protecting agriculture, natural resources and private-property rights

Clarendon County is being asked to make increasingly important decisions involving industrial development, solar farms, data centers and other large-scale land uses.

Agriculture and timberland are not simply open spaces waiting to be developed. They are businesses, family assets and part of Clarendon County's identity.

We can grow Clarendon County without giving away what makes Clarendon County worth calling home.

4. County budget and spending priorities

Clarendon County Council approved a roughly \$45.8 million budget for fiscal year 2026-27, including employee raises and a slight reduction in millage. What do you believe the county is spending too much or too little on, and what specific changes, if any, would you make to the budget or the process used to develop it?

That would require a deep dive into the budget numbers. I will not recklessly throw out numbers before I know the facts. I touched on some of this in Question 3.

5. Data centers and battery energy storage systems

County Council recently approved a six-month moratorium on most new data center and battery energy storage system applications, with exceptions for certain industrially zoned properties. What regulations or safeguards do you believe the county should establish before considering additional projects, and how would you weigh potential economic benefits against concerns about infrastructure, public safety and neighboring properties?

We have recently seen significant public discussion surrounding a potential data center project and County Council's consideration of a temporary moratorium on data center development. These projects can bring investment, but they can also create significant demands involving electricity, water, roads and other infrastructure.

I support economic development, but every project must stand on its own merits.

Before approving large developments, council should know their projected water and power requirements, infrastructure costs, permanent job creation, tax benefits and effects on neighboring landowners and agricultural property.

Citizens should also receive meaningful notice and an opportunity to be heard before decisions are made that could permanently change their communities.

6. Public safety and emergency services

Clarendon County's law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical services and coroner's office serve residents across a large rural area. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing these services, and what steps would you support to improve response capabilities, staffing and access to emergency assistance throughout the county?

I was a volunteer firefighter for nearly 10 years and an emergency response coordinator on different levels throughout my career. Communication is key to any emergency response. All emergency services need to be in contact with each other and pull the rope in the same direction. A look at how each department is notified and dispatched would be a good start to how they communicate and work together to provide a quick and efficient response in any emergency.

7. Infrastructure and county facilities

County Council has moved forward with major facility projects and a vehicle replacement program intended to address aging county equipment. How would you determine which infrastructure, facility and equipment needs deserve priority, and how would you evaluate whether those investments are providing value to taxpayers?

All infrastructure and equipment have to be maintained. When looking at replacing either of these, doing the math will show you where the tipping point is between investing money in what you currently have versus replacement. Fortunately, there are programs and consultants available to show background data to help make these decisions.

8. Clarendon County Archives

The Clarendon County Archives collection has been relocated temporarily while the county considers how to address the condition of its long-time facility. What do you believe should be the county's long-term responsibility for preserving the collection, maintaining public access and funding a

permanent solution?

I have heard and seen some of the problems and temporary solutions concerning this issue. Preservation of history, historical documents and relics is important to me and for our community. We should probably put together a committee made up of stakeholders in this area and determine the best course of action on this issue.

9. Transparency and public participation

County Council has faced questions about public access to financial information, the timing of development announcements and opportunities for residents to provide input before major decisions are made. What changes, if any, would you support to improve transparency, public participation and communication between council members and the communities they represent?

The County Council is a government entity and works for the people. Residents need to do their part by being involved and showing up for meetings. Transparency is something that I have campaigned on from the start. I value other people's opinions and welcome any valuable input that can be given.

10. Bridging political divides

Clarendon County has a history of closely contested elections, with residents holding differing political views. What steps have you taken, or would you take, to bring people together across party lines? What issues do you believe residents can find common ground on, regardless of political affiliation, and how would you work to build consensus around solutions?

This has been a priority of mine not only in the political arena but in life itself. I believe there is common ground in respect, morals and caring for your neighbor as yourself. There is no need to judge a person based on their political affiliation but on their character and willingness to help bridge the divide. We are all God's people and have a moral responsibility to treat people equally.



**GOVERNMENT SHOULD
WORK FOR THE PEOPLE —
NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.**

**I'm running for County Council because I want to be
a voice for responsible government, fiscal discipline,
and the taxpayers who deserve to be heard.**

**ROGER
JOWERS**

FOR CLARENDON COUNTY COUNCIL

**DISTRICT 1
REPUBLICAN**

★ NOVEMBER 3, 2026 ★

JOWERS
FROM PAGE 2

place for these protections.

6. Public safety and emergency services

Clarendon

County's law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical services and coroner's office serve residents across a large rural area. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing these services, and what steps would you support to improve response capabilities, staffing and access to emergency assistance throughout the county?

Once again, let's have that roundtable discussion with our law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency medical service personnel, along with the community they serve, and find out if there are any inadequacies or problems that need to be addressed. If there are, let's address those problems and find solutions to resolve them.

7. Infrastructure and county facilities

County Council has moved forward with major

facility projects and a vehicle replacement program intended to address aging county equipment. How would you determine which infrastructure, facility and equipment needs deserve priority, and how would you evaluate whether those investments are providing value to taxpayers?

Without knowing the exact projects and why prior decisions would be questioned, it would be inappropriate for me to make any judgmental response.

8. Clarendon County Archives

The Clarendon County Archives collection has been relocated temporarily while the county considers how to address the condition of its longtime facility. What do you believe should be the county's long-term responsibility for preserving the collection, maintaining public access and funding a permanent solution?

The county's long-term responsibility for preserving and maintaining the County Archives is an issue that can and must be resolved so that the archives are preserved and always available for public access. How this will be accomplished is a matter

that will take much discussion and investigation to come to a solution that may not be exactly what everyone wants but, with compromise on all sides, brings peace and harmony that everyone can agree on.

9. Transparency and public participation

County Council has faced questions about public access to financial information, the timing of development announcements and opportunities for residents to provide input before major decisions are made. What changes, if any, would you support to improve transparency, public participation and communication between council members and the communities they represent?

Transparency and public participation, or a better term, accountability, is what I have based my campaign on. Council must have all meetings in public, including a public meeting to completely explain each item on the agenda. Having a link attached to each item where there is an in-depth narrative explaining why the item is on the agenda, why it is important, and how it will affect, either

adversely or positively, the residents of the county would be helpful. Each item should have a representative from the county department who would be able to fully explain and answer any questions from council or the public. To make this partnership work, county residents will have to show up and be a vital part of the process. Participation is the key.

10. Bridging political divides

Clarendon County has a history of closely contested elections, with residents holding differing political views. What steps have you taken, or would you take, to bring people together across party lines? What issues do you believe residents can find common ground on, regardless of political affiliation, and how would you work to build consensus around solutions?

The term representative knows no bias or affiliation but instead means being a voice for all. You are there to do a job for the citizens of Clarendon County, and that means working together whether you are Republican or Democrat.

CAVE
FROM PAGE 11

with

student safety.

Transportation is equally important. Long bus routes, vehicle reliability and driver availability can affect attendance and students' daily experiences.

I would advocate for reviewing transportation efficiency, bus maintenance, staffing needs and communication procedures when delays occur.

Infrastructure improvements should be based on documented needs, safety concerns and available funding rather than political influence.

Our schools should reflect the value we place on education. Every student deserves a learning environment that is safe, dependable and equipped to support academic success.

9. Parental involvement and transparency

How would you improve communication between the school board, parents, employees and the public? What steps would you support to make board decisions more transparent and ensure residents have

meaningful opportunities to raise concerns and receive responses?

One of my campaign priorities is partnering with parents because families should be active participants in their children's education.

I believe communication between the school board, parents, employees and community members must be consistent, accessible and transparent.

I would support timely publication of board agendas, clear explanations of major decisions, accessible meeting information and regular opportunities for public input.

I also believe community listening sessions should be held throughout the district, allowing rural families to participate without unnecessary travel barriers.

Parents and employees deserve a clear process for raising concerns and receiving appropriate follow-up while respecting confidentiality and established procedures.

Transparency builds trust, and trust strengthens our schools.

My campaign motto is "Leadership That Listens. Service That Shows Up." I intend to demonstrate those principles by remaining accessible, listening respectfully and ensuring community voices are considered in district decisions.

10. Board relationships and accountability

School board members may have differing opinions about district policies, spending and leadership decisions. How would you work with fellow board members when disagreements arise, and how would you balance supporting district leadership with holding the superintendent and administration accountable for results?

Effective school board leadership requires professionalism, collaboration and accountability. I understand that board members will not always agree, but disagreements should never distract from our responsibility to students.

My professional experience has taught me to work with individuals who have different perspectives while remaining focused on shared goals.

I would approach disagreements respectfully, examine available facts and make decisions based on student outcomes rather than personalities or politics.

I believe the superintendent should have the support and resources necessary to lead effectively, while the board maintains appropriate oversight.

That includes establishing measurable goals, reviewing academic and financial performance, and conducting meaningful superintendent evaluations.

Accountability should be fair, consistent and focused on improvement.

A successful board does not require unanimous opinions. It requires members willing to listen, ask difficult questions, work together and put students first.



MAHONEY
FROM PAGE 9

low board members, listen to differing viewpoints and base decisions on facts, student outcomes and

responsible spending.

Disagreement is not a problem when handled respectfully and focused on doing what is best for

students. At the same time, cooperation must never mean abandoning oversight.

I would expect district leadership to establish clear goals, report measurable results, manage funds responsibly and explain shortcomings honestly.

My responsibility is to the students, families, employees and taxpayers of Clarendon County. I will support good leadership, ask tough questions when necessary and put accountability first.

A STRONG COMMUNITY DESERVES A STRONG LEADER

HOMEGROWN LEADERSHIP FOR SC HOUSE
MICHELE DEMERY



PAID FOR BY DEMERY CAMPAIGN FOR SC HOUSE DISTRICT 64

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