P4P update: Admin building eyes Spring opening

If you’ve driven up North Harvin Street lately, you may have noticed an ongoing transformation of a key government building.

The Sumter County Administration building on East Canal Street has been undergoing a renovation that’s nearing the finish line.

“It’s an important project to better serve the public,” said Sumter County Administrator Gary Mixon. “Integral to the improvements of the Administration building are makeovers for the offices of the Treasurer, Auditor and Assessor to improve customer service. They’re very busy offices and we want to streamline the way we interact with the public.”

Another key aspect of the project will see the new look Administration building take architectural and aesthetic cues from the Sumter County Judicial Center right across the street. Generally referred to as the ‘Admin building,’ it was formerly a bank built in the 1970s before Sumter County acquired it in the 1980s.

When the project went before the Historic Preservation Design Review Committee nearly two years ago, Sumter City-County Senior Planner Jeff Derwort explained the first step in the process would be to demolish a two-story 1,300-square-foot building in front of the Admin building.

Once that structure was razed, construction began on a three-story addition to the existing Admin building. The addition will house a new elevator and new HVAC equipment. A new entrance will see access from the parking lot with sidewalks and a handicapped accessible walkway.

In addition to the first level offices being renovated, some changes will be made to the Purchasing Department and Finance Offices on the second floor. The third floor houses the Administration Department, Human Resources, the County Attorney, County Council Chambers and the office for the Clerk to Council.

“We’re updating our security and reconfiguring Council Chambers,” Mixon said. “Some council meetings attract a large crowd and we want to make sure we can accommodate members of the public in a safe and comfortable manner.”

Once work began in earnest on the Administration building, the Assessor, Auditor and Treasurer offices were temporarily relocated to Magnolia Place, known to many as the old Item building on North Magnolia Street.

The offices of Purchasing, Administration, Human Resources and Finance are currently housed in the Sumter County Courthouse, which also saw a large scale renovation as part of the Penny for Progress.

“Our Courthouse dates to 1907 and needed some work,” Mixon said. “Both of these projects were done with several goals in mind – improved customer service, refurbishing facilities that see a high volume of traffic and it all ties into the revitalization of Downtown Sumter.”

Sumter County Council meets at 6 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month in Council Chambers on the third floor of the Sumter County Courthouse at 141 N. Main St.
Dixon is ‘Dedicated and hardworking’ in Sumter County Treasurer’s Office

There are many moving parts in Sumter County Government, and the Treasurer’s Office is a constant hub of activity. Just ask Yolanda Brunson Dixon.

“It’s a little busy,” she said, with wry understatement and a laugh. “I stay occupied.”

As the Chief Deputy Treasurer, she stays quite engaged with ensuring taxes are collected properly and any funds disbursed are done so in a timely, correct and proficient manner.

Sumter County Treasurer Carolina Richardson said Dixon has been a very dedicated and hardworking employee.

“I can honestly say when I give her something to do, I can count on her to do it and do it right. She’s very dependable,” Richardson added.

Dixon is a Sumter native who graduated from Sumter High School in 1989 and attended Morris College for two years before starting a family. She worked with special needs children at Wilder Elementary for 13 years as a teacher’s assistant before coming aboard with Sumter County Government.

In March of 2004, Dixon landed a job in the Treasurer’s Office as a clerk, a position that involves interacting with the public, collecting payments and answering questions.

In Sumter County Government, the Treasurer’s Office handles collection and disbursement of revenue, shepherds investments and special purpose districts, and works closely with the offices of Auditor and Assessor.

After Dixon worked as a clerk for four years, she was promoted to bookkeeping, where her primary duty was dealing with Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable.

She decided to go back to school and earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Business Administration from Saint Leo University.

In July 2019 she was appointed as chief deputy treasurer and supervises seven employees.

“I enjoy working with everybody in this office. Mrs. Richardson, without her, I wouldn’t be here where I am today,” Dixon said. “She is very supportive and I appreciate her for giving me the opportunity for being the chief deputy treasurer.”

Dixon enjoys spending free time with her husband James, a supervisor in material management at Lexington Medical Center. They have two daughters, Brianna Green and Tierra Summerson, and three grandsons: Jayden, 9; D.J., 6; and Kyrie, 4. She and her husband enjoy dining out and shopping around town. Her sense of humor is firmly intact, but she’s always conscientious about doing the right thing at work.

Dixon is a member of the Mt. Zion Enrichment Center Board of Directors and an active member of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church. “I always keep my head up to be strong about everything I do,” she said. “Because I always put God first.”

Employee Spotlight

Yolanda B. Dixon, left, has worked for Sumter County Treasurer Carolina Richardson since 2004.

The offices of Assessor, Auditor and Treasurer are located at Magnolia Place, 20 North Magnolia Street, and like all offices of Sumter County Government, are open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Assessor: 803-436-2115
Auditor: 803-436-2136
Treasurer: 803-436-2213
www.sumtercountysc.org
Knit and Stitch group meets at Wesmark Library

Chicken scratch. A record snowfall in Newfoundland. UFOs.

Just a smattering of conversation overheard recently at the Wesmark Branch of the Sumter County Library shows that topics of discussion can vary widely.

“I brought some UFOs with me today,” said Leona Blaylock. “Unfinished objects.”

Federal agents clad all in black likely won’t come calling anytime soon as Blaylock’s UFOs are just works in progress. Among the 50 or so she’s currently working on are a light blue baby blanket which grew a little bigger due to her skilled handiwork.

Blaylock is one of several members of the ‘Knit and Stitch’ group that meets every third Tuesday to share patterns, enjoy each other’s company, and talk about sewing, cross stitch, crocheting, the weather, grandchildren or whatever else they can think of.

A native of St. John’s Newfoundland, a Canadian island in the North Atlantic Ocean, Blaylock recounted the snow drifts of her childhood and how a recent snowfall blanketed the island in several feet of the fluffy white stuff we don’t usually see down here.

“That’s not for me,” said Carolyn Anderson, shaking her head at the thought of being snowed in.

Anderson, who was busy adorning a decorative towel with a blue jay, said she’s dabbled in a little bit of everything when it comes to arts and crafts. At a young age, she used her skills to fashion a functioning bow and arrow.

“We thought we were the stuff then,” she said, chuckling.

In addition to the fellowship and conversation, she comes to ‘Knit and Stitch’ to share patterns.

“Things our grandmothers did,” she said.

Like many of her fellow knitters and stitchers, Cynthia Dangerfield has been at it “for years and years and years,” she said.

Whether crocheting, knitting or embroidery, “you make all kinds of things,” she said.

“I just enjoy doing it,” said Moses, a Sumter native. “I enjoy the group – the friendship and getting together.”

Atlanta transplant Trish Brooke was happy to explain that chicken scratch is a classic technique that earned its moniker because it resembles chicken scratch. She jokes that she’s been cross stitching, quilting and working in crafts “forever.”

She also knows about UFOs and was working on a Christmas quilt for a grandbaby.

“I do king quilts is my problem,” she said.

She’s had some arthritis issues but keeps forging ahead, and has worked with flower arrangements, basket weaving, jewelry making and stained glass, among other pursuits.

“I told God he couldn’t take me until my quilts are done,” she said, laughing.

The ‘Knit and Stitch’ group will meet again from 10 a.m. to noon on Feb. 18 at the Wesmark Branch of the Sumter County Library, 180 W. Wesmark Blvd. For more information, call (803) 469-8110.
The Census Bureau’s goal for 2020 is to count every person once in the right place, he said, and ensuring every resident of Sumter County is counted is important to our state and community.

Census results will be used to determine how many representatives each state gets in Congress, he said, and thus how many votes we get in the Electoral College. Data is used to inform redistricting at the state and local levels based on population shifts. Governments and businesses make decisions based on Census data, he said.

Understanding where population growth is occurring leads to building or expanding roads and emergency services and businesses decide where to open new places to shop, dine and manufacture, he said.

The distribution of between $675 and $900 billion in federal assistance that lands in local communities each year is based on Census data.

“And that assistance comes through programs like Medicare, Medicaid, highway planning or construction, Title 1 grants to schools, school lunch programs, Section 8 housing programs,” and many others he said, which are likely important to someone you know.

A study conducted by George Washington University showed that in South Carolina, each person counted in the Census equaled about $1,500 per person counted each year.

This is the first Census in which folks will be able to respond online or by phone, he said, and in mid-March, each household will receive an invitation to respond to the Census. Respondents will be encouraged to go online and there will also be a phone number if assistance is needed. A paper copy is also possible.

Regarding confidentiality of the information given, each response is safe, secure and protected by federal law. Identifiable information can’t be released for 72 years and the data is collected for statistical purposes, he said.

“And finally, responding to the Census is your civic duty,” he said. “It’s a way to participate in our democracy, it’s a way to say ‘I count,’ and it’s a way to say ‘I care about my community.’”

In Sumter, a Complete Count Committee was formed and includes over 100 volunteers that have helped spread the word in our community, he said.

“But we want to step it up over the next 90 days and use as many Census ambassadors as possible to reach every corner of our community,” he said.

County Council Chairman James T. McCain asked about Census jobs, and Stoddard explained the Census Bureau has to hire 751 temporary Census takers. The target number has been hit, but not everyone will work out, so temporary workers are still needed and the pay is $14.50/hour.

To learn more about Census 2020, visit https://www.sumtercensus.com/
FESTIVAL ON THE AVENUE

2020

THURSDAY
April
16

An Evening of Elegance
Remembering the Past

Mt. Zion Family Life Center
325 West Fulton Street • Sumter, SC
7:00 PM

FRIDAY
April
17

9th Annual Golf Tournament
Location: Crystal Lakes Golf Course.
Tee Time: 7:30 AM / Shotgun 8:00 AM.
Format: 4-Man Captain's Choice

Taste of Soul on the Avenue
Location: South Sumter Farmer's Market next to the
South Sumter Resource Center.
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

SATURDAY
April
18

Food, Music and Family Fun
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Location: Manning Avenue

Festival on the Avenue Parade
10:00 AM on the corner of
South Main & Bartlette Street.

For More Information Contact Us At: 803.262.6595 • www.festivalontheave.org

Statement of Non-Discrimination: Assurance is hereby given by the Festival on the Avenue that no person shall, upon the grounds of race, creed, color or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which this organization is responsible.