

City Issues \$99 Million in Revenue Bonds

The proceeds from the new-money borrowing will be used to expand treatment capacity for the Florence Regional Wastewater Management Facility.

City Manager David Williams welcomed these sales results. "The combination of greater than expected savings resulting from the refunding and the lower than expected interest costs resulting from the BABs is a wonderful result for our utility system and its customers," said Williams. "It permits the City to accomplish necessary upgrades to our regional wastewater treatment facility, which will generate economic and environmental benefits for many years to come. Finally, the System's ratings of Aa2 and A+ by Moody's and Standard & Poor's are a strong recognition of the City's financial management, control and discipline, each of which is reflected in the very successful sale of these revenue bonds."

The City continues to seek federal grant funds to provide full funding for the project without additional rate adjustments.

"We are excited about moving forward with the new wastewater management facility," said Mayor Stephen Wukela. "With growth a constant in the Florence area, we want to make sure we provide the best possible wastewater services to our customers. In all, this plan for our water and wastewater utilities is a positive step forward for the City of Florence and the Pee Dee region."

Mayor Wukela and City Council are also pleased with the refinancing of these bonds, as it will benefit not only the City, but Florence-area residents.

NEW FIRE STATION ON TAP FOR CITY

In the very near future, Florence residents will have a new and improved fire station to help keep them secure in case of fire or other emergencies.

This new station, which will be approximately 8,000 square feet and house four firefighters per shift, will be located on Redbud Lane, near the intersection of Howe Springs Road and South Irby Street in South Florence.

The total cost associated with the construction of this station is estimated at \$1.2 million and an additional cost to fund fire engines and related equipment.

The station is being funded through the capital millage increase which was approved by City Council.

Construction of the new station is set to begin in August, with a completion date of March 2011. Currently in the design phase, the station's construction bid has been awarded to Mashburn Construction of Myrtle Beach.

"We are thrilled with the impending construction of the new fire station for the City," said Florence City Manager David Williams. "Security and safety is the City's top priority for residents and with this new station, our fire personnel will be better able to assist with any emergency-related issue that may arise."

RECENT FLORENCE HAPPENINGS

- Tree City USA Award – 30th year
- The City is required by the EPA to maintain a NPDES Phase II stormwater permit. The existing permit expires February 2011, and the City is required to submit its permit application to S.C. DHEC by December, 2010. With this new permit will come more stringent regulation requirements from the EPA and DHEC regarding stormwater. The City will be responsible for the enforcement of these new regulations, which take effect January, 2011.
- Awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada – 12th consecutive year
- City of Florence sponsored an employee team in the "Paint the Town" event on April 24, 2010 to help paint/refurbish a house in our community
- City sponsored the annual Great American Cleanup on March 27, 2010
- The City has successfully completed corrective measures to remove contaminated soil from the former Bush's Recycling Site and has received EPA and DHEC approval for the original Work Plan & Quality Assurance Project Plan.
- City crews completed all site preparation work for the new animal shelter and the contractor mobilized on site on June 28, 2010.
- The City of Florence Parks & Beautification Department is holding summer camps at four area community centers. There are a total of 180 children enrolled who are enjoying various day trips and activities. In addition, the City had four gold medal finishes in the State Track Meet, one of which was a new state record. These golds went to: Courtney Brown, Bantam Girls Shot Put; William Jones, Youth Boys Triple Jump; Andy Truman, Youth Boys 800 meters; and Steven Shake, Taylor Cagle, William Jones and Andy Truman, Youth Boys 4 x 800 relay (11:19.48 minutes, State Record).
- The City has recently completed a \$500,000 stormwater improvement project at Huntington Plaza and Second Loop Road. These improvements aid in the removal of surface flooding and have relieved some drainage issues in the Huntington and Damon Drive area.



The busy intersection near the Civic Center reflects Florence growth

FLORENCE CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

The City takes great pride in its citizens and to further recognize them, City Council has implemented a new "Citizen of the Month" award. Winners are chosen by Council and recognized during the monthly Council meetings. Recent citizens recognized include:

- October 2009 – Mr. John Johnson
- November 2009 – Mr. Mandeville Rogers
- December 2009 – Mrs. Emma J. Sellers
- January 2010 – Ms. Jeanne Downing
- February 2010 – Mr. Emmanuel A. Sipp
- March 2010 – Mr. Ralph Porter
- April 2010 – Mr. Sensei Kevin Smith
- May 2010 – Mr. Allie Brooks, Jr.
- June 2010 – Rev. Thomas C. Pietila
Mrs. Lindy N. Pietila
- July 2010 – Mr. George Scipio



FLORENCE - A CITY THAT STANDS ABOVE



The Florence Little Theatre represents the new cultural center of the Pee Dee region

What makes a city a desirable place in which to live? Is it the jobs available? Is it the festivals or events that are tied to the area? Could it be hospitals or quality of healthcare?

There are several reputable websites and magazines that perform annual evaluations of the factors that contribute to high quality of life in American cities. Various factors are used in these rankings.

Forbes.com recently selected Houston as a model city based on innovation, job growth and immigration. In doing so, the Texas port city beat out normal frontrunners New York City and Boston. The model used by Forbes can also be applied to small cities like Florence. Other small cities that have been identified in reports such as this include: Asheville, N.C.; Augusta, Ga.; Pensacola, Fla.; and Greenville, S.C.

According to U.S. News and World Report, they selected their 2009 best by "taking a thrift-conscious approach: We looked for affordable communities that have strong economies and plenty of fun things to do."

Kiplinger chose its best cities in which to live by the numbers. These included: unemployment rate; income growth; and the percentage of the workforce in the "creative class". In addition their process was based on the work of Kevin Stolarick, of the Martin Prosperity Institute, a think tank that studies economic prosperity. He determined a formula that identifies cities with current and likely future growth in high-quality jobs and income. Kiplinger also weighed affordability and public-transit infrastructure.

Recognizing what makes a city desirable helps direct the City of Florence in its planning and development of activities and services for residents. These desirable traits are part of a thread that not only unites these different publications' lists, but also weaves Florence into the fabric of being a stellar city in which to live.

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CITY ISSUES \$99 MILLION IN REVENUE BONDS

Recently, the City of Florence issued \$99 million of refunding and new-money revenue bonds for the City's water and sewer system.

Of this amount, the bonds included \$31 million of refunding bonds and nearly \$68 million of new-money bonds. In total, bonds will save the City's utility system more than \$5.5 million by refinancing bonds originally issued in 1993 and 2000. The City received competitive bids for this offering rather than the more customary practice of selling the bonds on a negotiated basis to one underwriter. The City's approach worked well, as a total of 16 bids were received.

Of the bids received, 10 were received for the refunding bonds. UBS Financial Services of New York submitted the winning bid with the lowest interest cost of 3.27 percent. The refunding bonds will mature in years 2010 through 2024.

The new-money bonds reflect another innovation in addition to use of the competitive sale structure. Dealers had the option to bid on this offering as traditional tax-exempt bonds or as taxable Build America Bonds (BABs). The City received six bids as taxable BABs, with Ramirez and Company of New York submitting the winning bid, at an interest rate of 3.96 percent. These new money bonds mature in years 2025 through 2039.

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Florence City Council

Stephen J. Wukela,
Mayor

Billy D. Williams,
District 1

Edward Robinson,
District 2

Frank J. Brand, II,
District 3

William C. Bradham, Jr.,
Member-At-Large

Octavia Williams-Blake,
Member-At-Large

Steve Powers,
Member-At-Large

The Mayor and City Council serve four-year terms. City Council meets the second Monday of every month in Room 604 at the City-County Complex, 180 North Irby Street, Florence, SC.

www.cityofflorence.com



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Continued from front page story: "Florence - A City That Stands Above"



Construction of the new FMU Performing Arts Center, which is scheduled to be completed in Fall 2010

Florence has the innovation and job growth that cities such as those listed above are experiencing, it has the affordability and fun things to do as noted in U.S. News and it has the numbers as identified by Kiplinger. In fact, the City was recognized by Site Selection magazine as the fifth best area for its size for expansion and new business facilities in 2008.

But the "Magic City" has more than just the qualities listed above. Florence has ample greenspaces, a downtown that's being renovated to meet the area's previous prominence, one of the highest levels of healthcare available in the state, a superb road infrastructure including I-95 and I-20, investments in both police and fire prevention, improvements financed by the "one cent makes sense" tax, and most importantly, progressive leadership.

This progressive vision is reflected in numerous City projects that have been in the works since the early 2000's and is the backbone of what makes Florence a tremendous city in which to live.

Coupled with Florence's move toward a renaissance in culture, amenities and growth, this vision has helped to feed the growth and expansion that has taken place in Florence since the dawn of the new millennium.

Regarding the City's greenspaces, in 2004 the City, through the Parks and Beautification Department, adopted a program to protect corridors of open space

and manage greenspaces for conservation, recreation and alternative transportation purposes. Over this period, the City of Florence has added more than 1,000 acres of protected land.

These greenspaces include the Florence Rail Trail, which opened National Trails Day on June 1, 2002. This walking/bicycle trail is located along an abandoned rail corridor with connections to a residential neighborhood, Veterans' Park, West Florence High School and Freedom Florence, and is one of only 12 in the state.

The renaissance taking place downtown began several years ago when the City initiated work toward redeveloping the area into the cultural and economic center of Florence and the entire Pee Dee region.

This redevelopment is anchored by the Florence Little Theatre's new 35,000 square foot building and the FMU Center for the Performing Arts, which has an estimated price tag of \$17 million and will be located on a nearly four-acre lot at the corner of Dargan and Palmetto Streets. In addition, \$1.6 million in new parking accesses and pedestrian walkways have been placed throughout the downtown area.

Healthcare in the Pee Dee is also centered in and around Florence. With both McLeod and Carolinas Regional Hospitals, there is a plethora of specialist doctors in our backyard, including some of the top heart and vascular practitioners in the state. These are key items when selecting a great place to live.

Florence is also a great place to live because of a great road infrastructure which allows for travel throughout the state and the Southeast with great ease. With I-20 beginning in Florence and I-95 running along the outskirts of town, Florence is a true travel hub.

One needs to look no further than the amount of growth that has occurred around the Civic Center to see how this infrastructure has also contributed to growth and the economy of the City.

These interstates have not only brought new restaurants and lodging choices, not to mention several big box stores and a new cinema, they have also given Florence a wealth of new industry and job opportunities. These include: Roche Carolina; Monster.com; Heinz Foods and Johnson Controls.

This industry has helped to become the driving force of opportunity, diversity and future growth for Florence, a model City, a City that stands above.

In addition to these things that make Florence great, the City continues to see moderate growth in the face of a nine percent reduction in accommodations tax allowance statewide.

This upward momentum stems from the continued growth in and around the I-95 and I-20 corridors of the City. Hotel, restaurant and attractions in this area are a boost to the economy and help greatly by providing an influx of tax appropriations for the City.

Other helpful factors include the proposed Tourism Product Development Concept for the Pee Dee Region plan and, in the face of reduction, an allocation of \$250,000 in state accommodations tax funding. A county advisory committee had made recommendations on how to spend the tax money, which included several entities that are within the City's domain, including: \$109,450 for the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau; \$55,000 for Florence Civic Center; \$25,000 for Freedom Florence; \$10,000 for the Florence Regional Arts Alliance; \$10,000 for the Darlington Car Hauler Parade, which begins at the civic center before the May NASCAR race; and \$10,000 for the Frontage Road Association.

It is the goal of the Tourism Product Development Concept for the Pee Dee Region plan to: increase and spread the economic benefits of tourism through the creation of new attractions targeted to those traveling I-95; further promote these new attractions; and capitalize on Florence's proximity to the tourist destinations of Myrtle Beach and Charleston.

"We are excited about all of the things happening in and around Florence and the Pee Dee region," said Florence City Manager David Williams. "From the growth in the downtown sector to expansion of jobs to the proposed tourism concepts, it is a thrilling time to be a part of the Magic City. On the whole, we are looking forward to the next decade and all of the positives that will surely be associated with it."

LITTER CAMPAIGN BEAUTIFIES CITY STREETS AND PROTECTS LOCAL WATERWAYS

Florence residents may have noticed an increase in litter cleanup crews around the City throughout the spring.

This was due to the Special Litter Campaign which was initiated in February 2010 and ran through the Great American Clean-up, and concluded on April 30. This litter campaign ended prior to the City's mowing season. The campaign was undertaken in an effort to help preserve the beauty of Florence's landscape and to help protect city waters from harmful litter and contamination.

In this effort, the City formed five special litter crews which consisted of 12 staff and handled the disposal costs of the

debris picked up. Targeted areas for the cleanup were chosen through factors including: streets within close proximity to waterways; traffic flows; and citizen requests. A byproduct of this cleanup is that the City feels by targeting litter elimination, citizens will also become more aware of how litter affects the City's stormwater system.

In total, this project collected an estimated 1.7 tons of refuse, including 129 tires and one appliance.



A City employee collects litter

CITY ATHLETICS KEEPING FLORENCE FIT FOR THE FUTURE



A coach gives instruction at City-sponsored baseball game

The City of Florence prides itself on providing a strong core of athletic-based programs for all City residents and is able to do this through the Parks and Beautification Department, which includes all City athletics staff. These staff members include the athletic coordinator, two athletic specialists, gymnastics coordinator, and 50 part-time staff members, all of whom receive general supervision from the Parks and Beautification Department Manager and the Leisure Services Supervisor.

The Parks and Beautification Department serves youth between the ages of five and 19 in the following sports: baseball; softball; basketball; football; cheerleading; track and field; cross country; tennis; and gymnastics. In total, the department serves nearly 3,000 youth, with around 1,000 participants in baseball and softball, 300 in basketball, 800 in football and cheerleading, 60 in track and field, 40 in cross country, 300 in tennis and 400 in gymnastics.

Surveys of youth athletics show that children both play and need sports for many reasons: to have fun, improve skills, learn new skills, be with friends, make new friends, experience success, and to become physically fit. Department staff and volunteers work to meet these needs through effective educational programs. These programs emphasize the benefits of participation in youth athletics, including physical, mental, personal and social benefits.

Through the department, the City also provides many athletic outlets for Florence adults, including softball, basketball, tennis and flag football. All sports, with the exception of tennis, are team signups, with team numbers varying per year.

Since 2007, the City has experienced a 100 percent participation increase in the Florence Youth Basketball League and nearly a 62 percent participation increase in the Florence Junior Football League.

In addition to the staff employed by the City for athletics, a strong base of volunteers helps to make these programs the best in the Pee Dee region. All volunteers, including coaches, board members and team mothers/fathers, are City-certified.

This certification is through the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) certification program, which involves a two-part training session and interactive clinic series. The City chose NAYS due to the fact it "promotes the value and importance

of sports and physical activities in the emotional, physical, social and mental development of youth." Much like the City, NAYS also believes that participation in sports and activities develops important character traits and lifelong values. In addition, all returning coaches are required to maintain their NAYS certification on a yearly basis, while attending a return coach clinic.

"The City believes that athletics serves as an immeasurable tool in the quality of life for all youth in the Florence community," said David Williams, Florence City Manager. "The Parks and Beautification Department does a phenomenal job of training coaches and league volunteers so that youth athletics can help to keep children healthy in both mind and body."



Youth baseball is managed by the City Rec Department

HARVEST HOPE RECEIVES ASSISTANCE FROM CITY

This past holiday season proved to be bountiful for Harvest Hope Food Bank, thanks in part to donations from the City, City employees and City residents.

Over a seven week period leading up to Thanksgiving, the City held a food drive for Harvest Hope Food Bank, with a goal of raising 3,300 pounds of food for the organization. However, City employees helped to beat this goal by raising more than 3,400 pounds of canned goods and other non-perishable items for those in need.

In addition to the food donation, the City also presented Harvest Hope with a check for \$2,185 to help in their efforts for the less fortunate in Florence and surrounding areas. These funds were collected at the annual Pecan Festival, a City-sponsored turkey shoot and from employees, who went the extra mile by donating the cash value of their annual holiday turkey, which is given to each City employee, to Harvest Hope.

Moving forward, the City continues to partner with Harvest Hope. A second food drive was held at the City's Wellness Walk and Picnic to benefit the organization.

"Harvest Hope Food Bank is a tremendous charitable organization whose efforts are concentrated in helping those right here in Florence and the Pee Dee region," said Florence City Manager David Williams. "We are thankful to all City employees and residents who helped contribute to exceeding our original goal for Harvest Hope and helping our neighbors who are in need."

The Florence/Pee Dee branch distributes food throughout eight of the 20 counties served by Harvest Hope Food Bank. Those counties are Chesterfield (13 agencies), Clarendon (12 agencies), Darlington (19 agencies), Dillon (10 agencies), Florence (63 agencies), Lee (9 agencies), Marion (8 agencies) and Marlboro (13 agencies).

Harvest Hope Food Bank is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Beginning in 1981 as an emergency food box program, Harvest Hope is now a regional distribution program that collects, stores and distributes food and related items to more than 400 qualified agencies engaged in feeding needy, elderly and ill families and children throughout central South Carolina.

As a member of Feeding America, the national network of over 200 food banks, Harvest Hope is a powerful agent in the war against hunger. On average, Harvest Hope distributes more than 19 million pounds of food per year.

To learn more about Harvest Hope Food Bank or to make a donation, visit www.harvesthope.org.