Effective Communications

S.C. Association of Counties

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Moderator: **Anna Berger**, *Director of Research and Training*
S.C. Association of Counties

Panelists:

**Jackie R. Broach-Akers**, *Public Information Officer*
Georgetown County

**Jim T. McCain Jr.**, *Council Chairman*
Sumter County

**Gary M. Mixon**, *Administrator*
Sumter County

**Katherine O’Neill**, *Chief Operating Officer*
The Palladian Group

**Charles Weathers**, *President*
The Weathers Group
Who is telling our story?

We are a team, right?

Be honest – are we using technology as much as we can?

Media, friend or foe?

Is our trip mapped out?

Do we look like we mean it?

What is missing? (A trained facilitator)

Uh oh.... what do we do now?

Dear younger me...
▪ How often should we tell our story?
▪ When is a good time to deliver a “not-so-good” message?
▪ Does the messenger matter? Why?
▪ How do we keep council, the administrator, leadership team and front-line staff on the same page?
▪ Pros/Cons of Town Hall vs. Public Hearing.
▪ What tools/techniques are available to help council members convey the messages?
▪ Should we ask council members to carry around folders of reports?
▪ How can the website be used in this area?

Who is telling our story?
- How do we ensure decisions are made that are consistent with our vision, mission and values?
- Can people with different personal/political interests buy into the same vision, mission and values?
- Who are our community partners and how do we collaborate on goals?
- How do the values serve a guard rails to keep us on track?
▪ When does the Chairman communicate on behalf of Council?
▪ How does the Chairman communicate with Council?
▪ How do committee chairs communicate with Council and the administrator?
▪ When do individual members communicate for themselves?
▪ How do we keep the team intact when there is disagreement?
▪ What happens when county employees are the last to know?
Are people really watching how council members and other leaders are responding during meetings?

Do leaders set the tone through their non-verbal cues?

How do we walk the talk?
Media – Friend or Foe?

- Are media our friend or foe?
- Is it wise to be proactive or to lay low?
- Is there such a thing as “off the record” or embargoed stories?
- How can you help the county team get on the same page during a slow news day?
How do you use the media to rebroadcast your story on the county website?

Is social media worth the time and effort?

How close can you get to continuous uninterrupted service through your website?

Who are your website visitors?
▪ How do you respond when advised to say “no comment”?
▪ How can we help council members when they want to say something, but they can’t?
▪ What is the best way to balance the tension between following prudent legal advice and being there for the people in the community?
▪ How transparent can/should you be?
What is missing?

- Why is having a neutral 3rd party beneficial?
- How does a facilitator create a safe space for brave conversations?
- What are the challenges of administrators or council members self-facilitating strategy and visioning sessions?
- How can everyone play a role in building the agenda?
- What work takes place in advance with Council members?

(A trained facilitator)
Dear younger me...

- Looking back, what advice would you as an experienced council chair or county administrator, give to your younger self?