



lege branch campus tuition-free and is helping remove many economic barriers for county residents.”

Pickens County

In the category for counties with populations between 50,000 to 150,000, Pickens County won an Honorable Mention for enhancing the quality of life by transforming the county’s animal control facility to a “no kill” pet adoption program.

“Prior to 2017, Pickens County was unable to offer animal adoptions,” Tomes said. “As a result of county council’s leader-

ship and staff’s commitment, more than 90 percent of animals have been saved through pet adoption and other programs, such as Service Dogs for Veterans and the Barn Cat program. Pickens County’s special needs population and animals benefitting from the county’s partnership with the county’s Board of Disabilities and Special Needs is another successful aspect of the program.”

Berkeley County

In the category for counties with populations greater than (See SCAC Awards, P. 4)

Redistricting: Just When You Think It’s Safe to Go Back to a Normal Council Meeting ...

By Victor Frontroth and Frank Rainwater,
SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

In 1978, the tagline to the movie sequel “Jaws 2” was, “Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water” Today, as we approach the end of 2020 and hopefully a lessening of the challenges posed by COVID-19, the prospect of returning to a normal council meeting in 2021 might seem like a peaceful option. But, lurking below the surface, waiting to spring onto an agenda is the issue of redistricting. With the proper planning, however, this does not have to be an intimidating prospect.



Redistricting is the process whereby elected bodies must adjust their election districts to maintain the constitutional requirement of “one person one vote.” S.C. Code of Laws §4-9-90 requires counties to implement redistricting of the county council within a reasonable time prior to the next scheduled general election. This process officially begins when the decennial count of our population is released, which traditionally occurs in the spring.

For some local governments the next election will be in 2021, though for many the next election will be 2022. So, time may be a factor. Not every local government, however, may need to redistrict or adjust their districts as much as another. The need will be determined by a formula and will depend on how much the population changes have impacted the equal allocation of population within the jurisdiction.

The S.C. Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA) has assisted local governments and the federal courts with redistricting services since the 1970s and is able to assist local governments with this process again in 2021. We have started our list of customers as a few local governments have already contacted us.

In addition to our experience, RFA is further positioned to provide this service for other unique reasons too. We are the official state contact for the Census and have worked with the Bureau in preparing data files and address lists for the population count. Furthermore, our office is responsible for maintaining the official precinct maps for the state and work with the S.C. General Assembly to update those records and maps, so we are already acquainted with your local areas.

Finally, we received training this year on the latest issues and court decisions regarding constitutional issues and federal law such as the Voting Rights Act.

In planning for redistricting, here are some key points to remember:

- Before the Census data is released, look at your election cycle and work on a timeline;
- Again, before the data is released, contact us or another service provider to make sure everyone is prepared in advanced. Some of these advanced planning items are:
 - Make sure maps of the current council districts are the most recent and accurate; and
 - Have the correct addresses for current council members to avoid unnecessarily placing members in the same district.
- After you have contacted us and once the Census data is released, we will present a “benchmark plan” to reflect the current districts with the new populations and show where the required adjustments are needed. Included in this presentation is an explanation of traditional redistricting principles;
- Plan to have a public hearing with the council and citizens to explain the benchmark plan, principles and requirements, and receive feedback; and
- After these meetings and discussions, we will present a redistricting plan to the council for adoption.

Redistricting is an integral part of our democratic process and our office is willing to assist your county. Please contact Victor Frontroth at victor.frontroth@rfa.sc.gov or (803) 734-0969 for further information.

