



Darlington County
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Quarterly Update

IN THE NEWS



Broadband plan could plug in entire Pee Dee

by Bobby Bryant, *Darlington News & Press*, November 25, 2020

"DARLINGTON, S.C. -Coming to you soon from Pee Dee Electric Co-Op and other S.C. cooperatives: Broadband Internet access? It might happen, thanks to a new law that S.C. Gov. Henry McMaster came to Darlington last week to applaud and promote. The legislation will allow co-ops to step into expanding broadband access in rural areas of the state - to offer customers data as well as electricity. "This is going to have ramifications for years," McMaster said of the plan during a ceremonial re-signing of the legislation at the headquarters of Pee Dee Electric Co-Op in Darlington last Thursday. " ... In our state, we all work together so well anyway. This is just going to make it a little bit closer, in terms of education, in terms of medicine, in terms of business - this is going to open things up." S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas of Hartsville said: "I can think of nowhere where this bill will have a greater impact than the Pee Dee." Flanked by a crowd of lawmakers and industry executives, McMaster signed, once more, the Broadband Accessibility Act. The governor originally signed this legislation into law Sept. 29. The legislation "set(s) forth the broadband authority of electric cooperatives and ... the manner in which broadband networks are constructed." The bill, however, doesn't give any electric utility an "express grant of authority" to provide broadband services. It's intended to encourage electric co-ops to start down the path to being broadband providers as well. McMaster's visit last week featured an array of guest speakers. William Fleming Jr., president and CEO of Pee Dee Electric Cooperative and Marlboro Electric Cooperative, introduced Mike Couic, president and CEO of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, an association representing all the state's co-ops. "Over the past year and a half," Couic said, "we've talked about broadband, and we've talked about the two South Carolinas. There's a South Carolina where you can work from home and where your kids can go to school from home ... You cannot do that in a lot of places in South Carolina." Couic introduced the governor

In This Issue

In the News
Progress Membership
DCEDP Resources
Reminder

PROGRESS MEMBERS

March Virtual
Board Meeting
on March 4, 2021 at noon
via Zoom
due to Covid-19

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and saluted his "vision" as shown in the broadband bill. "A lot of people have been left out" of the information economy, McMaster said. "They're out of the flow of those things."

[Read more here](#)



Hartsville's 'Vision 2030' plans for growth

by Samantha Lyles, *Darlington News & Press*, November 22, 2020

"HARTSVILLE, S.C. At their Nov. 10 regular meeting, Hartsville City Council approved first reading of a new comprehensive plan that lays out growth strategies for the city's next decade. The Vision 2030 plan is the result of almost three years of monthly meetings involving approximately 100 team members, including the Planning and Zoning Commission, city staff and elected officials. "Unlike other cities, Hartsville did the plan on its own, without the assistance of an expensive consultant, so congratulations to our staff for doing that," said Nancy McGee, Planning Commission chairperson. The plan aims to establish Hartsville as a local economic engine by qualifying and filling industrial sites, promoting educational institutions such as Coker University and the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, leaning into the idea of becoming a "bedroom community" for those working in Florence, and becoming a regional tourist attraction by playing up unique assets like Neptune Island Water Park, Kalmia Gardens, and the Byerly Park athletic complex. Vision 2030 updates the city's last comprehensive plan, which was completed in 2010. Pending City Council's final approval next month, elements of the plan will be realized over the next decade through policy changes, budgeting, grant applications, and economic development decisions. It will serve as a blueprint for promoting the city as an "attractive alternative to crowded big cities." McGee described the plan as "a living document," flexible enough to be altered as new needs or challenges arise. A public hearing and final reading for Vision 2030 is set for City Council's Dec. 8 regular meeting."

[Read more here](#)



Inland Port Dillon sees continued growth heading into the holiday season

by Carlos Flores at *WPDE*, November 18, 2020

"Dillon County, S.C. (WPDE) - The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to do most, if not all of our holiday shopping online this year. Despite tons of online orders, officials with the South Carolina Ports Authority said they are expecting no delays heading into the holiday season.

Director of National Accounts, Bryon Miller said that all of their ports have actually seen significant growth in production and revenue in 2020.

"Online ordering is way up and that's driven port volumes as well within Dillon and in Charleston," said Miller.

The Inland Port Dillon specifically has seen a huge jump in production.

The Inland Port Dillon primarily moves furniture, machinery (i.e. Tools), and tons of local crops. According to the port's manager, Michael Elmore, they moved over 3,500 containers for October. This is a record-breaking 40% increase compared to previous years.

One reason behind this increase, Elmore says is a national shortage of truck drivers. He's noted the port has been able to fill those gaps and allow products to keep moving.

As for daily operations, Miller said the pandemic hasn't affected them like other industries.

"I think given we made as a state serious investments in our facilities that gave us the ability to cope with it. We had an inland port network, including Dillon. We have a new terminal built here in Charleston and other expansions that really put us in a place to be ready for this," said Miller.

Since coming to Dillon three years ago, Elmore emphasized the impact the port has had on the Pee Dee.

"The inland port here in Dillon has been a tremendous asset to this region. We're seeing a lot of industries growing. We've seen a lot of industries coming to Dillon. We've seen a lot of mom and pop business growing. A lot of new businesses are being developed because of the inland port," said Elmore.

[Read more here](#)



Darlington Raceway to hold NASCAR truck series event on May 7, 2021

by Chris Sparks, WBTW News, November 19, 2020

"DARLINGTON, SC - As part of NASCAR's announcement of the 2021 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series schedule, Darlington Raceway is scheduled to host a series race on May 7, 2021. This will be the first time The Lady in Black has been announced on the NASCAR schedule to host a NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race since 2011.

Darlington will host the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series for the second consecutive season on Friday night, May 7, 2021. Ben Rhodes won the series' return to the track Too Tough To Tame in the South Carolina Education Lottery 200 this season. The track hosted a NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race this year as part of NASCAR's revised schedule on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. Darlington previously hosted NASCAR Camping World Truck Series races from 2001-2004 and 2010-2011.

[Read more here](#)

Darlington County Progress Membership Drive for 2021

The 2021 Progress membership drive is underway! Join now to keep receiving great benefits like this newsletter to stay up to date on the happenings in the Darlington County business community.

Dues can be paid [online](#) or you may mail your tax-deductible contribution to:

Darlington County Progress
C/O Hill & Jordan CPA's LLC
P.O. Box 1590
Hartsville, SC 29551.

Happy Holidays!

DCEDP Resources for Businesses:

The DCEDP office is available if you have any questions or need help finding resources to help your business. Even though we aren't able to visit in person as we used to, you can still call or email us your concerns, and we will get right back to you.

- Frank Willis

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