



# ANNUAL REPORT 2016



**BEAUFORT, SC**  
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE





# THE ROLE OF THE **BEAUFORT REGIONAL** **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce stands as the unified voice of the business community. Every day since 1892, we have been promoting, protecting and improving business.

Our mission is to manage and build capacity for continual community growth by advocating for a pro-business environment and building quality workforce in order to enrich the region's quality of life.

In support of our mission we will continue our focus on tourism, military enhancement, business advocacy, economic development, as well as education, workforce and leadership development.

## THE BEAUFORT REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VISION

“TO BE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL  
ORGANIZATION IN THE REGION  
CREATING THE PREFERRED COMMUNITY  
TO INVEST, PROSPER AND ENJOY.”





At the outset of this year's annual report and presentation of Chamber business priorities, we want to thank you for your commitment to our organization and the difference you are making by the successful operation of your organization. 2015-16 was a stellar year for the Beaufort Region and our joint efforts all contributed to the success of our region's economy and overall prosperity.

Our shared opportunity in the upcoming year is to continue to contribute to the sustainability and prosperity of our region. Leveraging the assets and resources needed for our region's continued progress means that we need to work as one for economic development, tourism enhancement, business support and military advocacy.

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce exists to support our local business community. Through our combined efforts our voice is stronger and we are able to make a difference. I look forward to the opportunities ahead in 2016-17, and assured you we will continue working hard every day to help our members and the region prosper.

Thank you for your membership, support and high expectations. We look forward to serving you and advancing our region.

Blakely Williams,  
President & CEO *[Signature]*

Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce

# FROM LETTER THE PRESIDENT

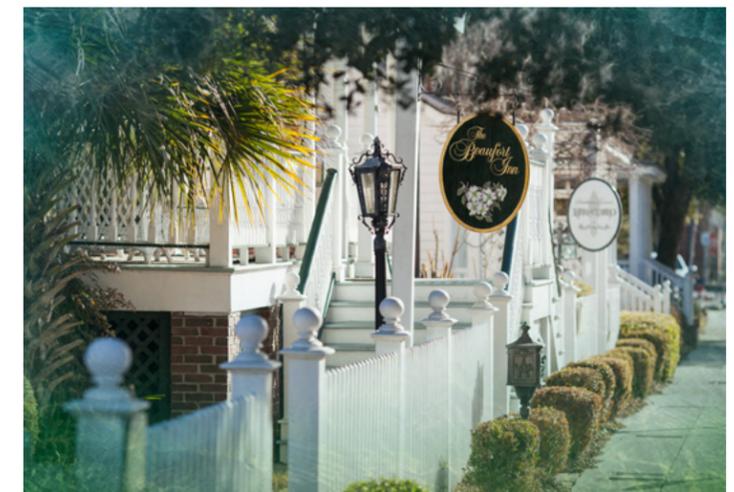
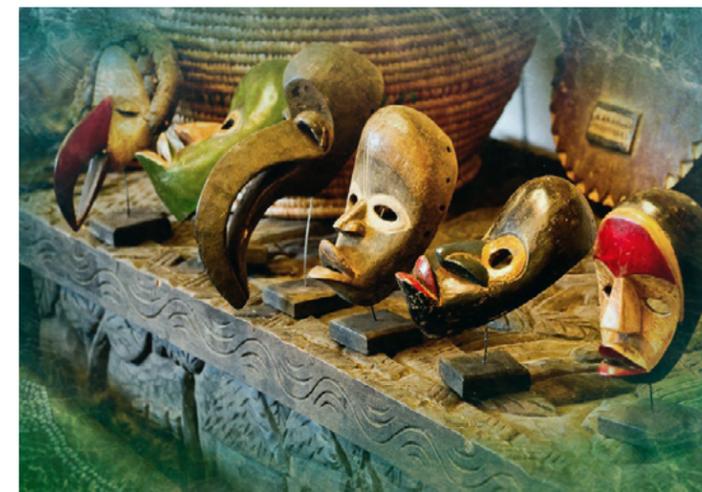
## MAIN STREET BEAUFORT, USA

2016 brought about the 'marriage' of Main Street Beaufort and the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce. We are finding the Main Street Beaufort, USA mission to support and promote a vibrant, cohesive mixed-use district that reflects Beaufort's historic small town, hometown values through economic development initiative is a natural complement to the activities of the Chamber and we are very excited to have added Main Street's LaNelle Fabian to our team.

To continue the Main Street Beaufort's Four-Point Approach of Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring the Chamber has established a standing Main Street Beaufort Merchant Committee which will consist of business owners and stakeholders from within

the Downtown Core district to help maintain focus on downtown vitality,

We look forward to great things ahead for Downtown Beaufort as we grow together and the many years ahead of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce continuing the Main Street Beaufort tenets and traditions of Shrimp Festival, A Night on the Town, A Taste of Beaufort, and Downtown Trick or Treat – just to name a few.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2015-16:

**Jim Wegmann, Chairman of the Board**  
(Weidner, Wegmann & Harper Law Firm)

**Leigh Copeland, Chair Elect**  
(Technical College of the Lowcountry)

**Edward Dukes, Tourism Advisory Chairman**  
(Lowcountry Real Estate)

**Whitney McDaniel, Treasurer**  
(Wells Fargo Advisors)

**Cliff Mrkvicka, Director at Large**  
(Lockheed Martin)

**Chip Dinkins** (Plums, Inc.)

**Ben Duncan** (Hargray)

**John Dickerson** (Sleep in History!)

**Kevin Dukes** (Harvey & Battey, PA)

**Tina Gentry** (United Way of the Lowcountry)

**Karen Gilbert** (Beaufort County School District)

**Malcolm Goodridge** (Investor)

**Terrance Green** (Coldwell Bankers Realty)

**Christian Kata** (Ameris Bank)

**Frank Lesesne** (Anchorage 1770 Inn)

**Susan Sauer** (Discover Tours)

**Jay Taylor** (Kingham Insurance Agency of Beaufort)

**Mary Ann Thomas** (Cuthbert House Inn)

**Charlie Williams** (Investor)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-17:

**Leigh Copeland, Chair of the Board**  
(Technical College of the Lowcountry)

**Jim Wegmann, Past Chairman of the Board**  
(Weidner, Wegmann & Harper Law Firm)

**Cliff Mrkvicka, Chair Elect**  
(Lockheed Martin)

**Kevin Dukes, Director at Large**  
(Harvey & Battey, PA)

**Edward Dukes, Tourism Advisory Chairman**  
(Lowcountry Real Estate)

**Whitney McDaniel, Treasurer**  
(Wells Fargo Advisors)

**Chip Dinkins** (Plums, Inc.)

**Ben Duncan** (Hargray)

**John Dickerson** (Sleep In History!)

**Pamela Flasch** (Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority)

**Tina Gentry** (United Way of the Lowcountry)

**Karen Gilbert** (Beaufort County School District)

**Malcolm Goodridge** (Investor)

**Terrance Green** (Coldwell Bankers Realty)

**Christian Kata** (Ameris Bank)

**Andy Klosterman** (Andrews Engineering)

**Frank Lesesne** (Anchorage 1770 Inn)

**Susan Sauer** (Discover Tours)

**Mark Stokes** (Bay Street Jewelers)

**Jay Taylor** (Kingham Insurance Agency of Beaufort)

**Mary Ann Thomas** (Cuthbert House Inn)

**Charlie Williams** (Investor)



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Something to chew on.

What a year! I still cannot believe a year has passed. Your Chamber has been very busy. The Chamber Staff, simply put, is phenomenal and I cannot sing their praises enough or thank them enough privately and/or publicly for their efforts. What the Board asks them to accomplish on a yearly basis is unbelievable. Through their herculean efforts, they have planned, organized and executed over 80+ events this past year from Business After Hours, Coffee with Colleagues, Legislative Luncheon, Business Expo, and Civitas, just to name a few. Additionally, this year the Chamber and Main

Street Beaufort combined forces under the Chamber umbrella. This move allowed Main Street to continue to coordinate and host our local community events like “Taste of Beaufort” and the “Shrimp Festival,” while allowing the Chamber to ensure that all our marketing efforts and travel and tourism efforts are strategically aligned and maximized. The Staff encouraged the combination of the two organizations and valiantly took on the additional responsibilities without hesitation. Again, to the Staff, on behalf of the Board and the membership, thank you for all your combined efforts.

To my fellow Board members, thank you for your support. I think it is important to note that every Board member who was eligible to request another two (2) year term on the Board, made the request to serve again, and will be returning to the Board. Their continued commitment to assisting the Chamber Staff in the accomplishment of the mission is truly commendable and it has been a pleasure to assist them in setting the policies, goals and direction of the Chamber for the Staff to execute.

To all our members, a personal thank you for your continued support of the Chamber and all of its many and varied programs. Without our members, the Chamber would not exist. Your continued commitment to our local community is what makes Beaufort, Port Royal, and the Sea Islands the ideal community to live, work and play. I leave you as Chair with the same message I at this time last year when I became Chair, “I very much value your membership and want to encourage you to stay involved.”

Semper Fi!  
Jim Wegmann

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Wegmann', written over a faint circular watermark or background.

# BUSINESS ADVOCACY, LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## ADVOCACY/LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

In 2015-2016:

- Produced the annual Legislative Luncheon in January, highlighting its 2016 legislative agenda and featuring U.S. Senator Tim Scott and the Lowcountry Delegation featuring S.C. Senator Tom Davis with Representatives, Shannon Erickson, Bill Bowers, Kenneth Hodges and Jeff Bradley
- Hosted the State of the Schools Breakfast, featuring leaders from the University of South Carolina Beaufort, the Technical College of the Lowcountry and Beaufort County School District
- Organized the Candidates Forum for the Town of Port Royal's mayoral and Town Council races.
- Created a community forum to discuss the potential Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) vs. Capital Projects Sales Tax.
- Recognized by the Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (CACCE) as a 2015 recipient of the Accredited Chamber designation as well as the CACCE's Outstanding Communications Award

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Since September 2015, the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce served as the Economic Development entity for Beaufort County, managing the collective relationship with the Department of Commerce and directing the process of assisting potential primary business prospects that are looking at establishing a presence in the county or one of our four municipalities.

Since assuming this role, key members of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce's professional staff have participated in over 80 hours of continuing education conducted by the South Carolina Department of Commerce. In addition to this Blakely Williams and Jason Ruhf are also currently enrolled in and working towards Economic Development certification in the 2016 class of 'The Institute' which is conducted each year by the South Carolina Economic Development Association in conjunction with the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

To date the Chamber has directed over twenty-five economic development projects across the county, each having the potential to bring quality primary jobs to our municipalities and to Beaufort County. In this time the Chamber also worked with stakeholders at all levels to direct and successfully complete a major business retention project for a company that was contemplating departure from Beaufort County.

In addition to this, in early 2016 the Chamber initiated a partnership with the City of Beaufort Redevelopment Commission to attain the Palmetto Site designation for the Beaufort Commerce Park. The Palmetto Site designation is a new program awarded to Industrial Sites by the South Carolina Department of Commerce through an involved aggregation of site related data which ensures economic development prospects of the sites viability as a place to do business. Chamber staff has submitted and passed the first review of the eighty-three page document by engineering firm McCallum Sweeney. We expect the process to be completed and announcement made that the Beaufort Commerce Park is among the first in the state to have completed the program in mid 2016.

As a county, we have well developed tourism and military economic pillars. For our long-term economic health we must balance our over dependency on these with recruitment of traditional, technical and light manufacturing jobs to the area. Our hope in the coming year is to continue the work we have started in Economic Development and foster productive, cooperative relationships between the county, municipalities, and the South Carolina Department of Commerce who are all working towards the common end of making Beaufort County the best place to live and work.



## MEC MEMBERS:

Chair: Jim Wegmann

Ed Saxon

Vice Chair: Frankie Denmark

Merritt Patterson

Treasurer: Jimmy Boozer

Teri Maude

Warren Parker

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO SKEET VON HARTEN FOR HIS YEARS OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE FOR THE MILITARY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE.**

# MEC / MILITARY

The Military Enhancement Committee works closely with local, state and federal leaders to enhance the quality and value of the three military installations of Beaufort County and to lay the framework to defend them with regard to any threats. The Chamber works to support military families and improve their quality of life as well as retain jobs associated with our military bases. The MEC and the Chamber also work to expand the Tri-Command's \$1.498 billion economic impact by advocating for the maintenance and growth of our military installations and for their protection from encroachment.

During 2015-2016, the Chamber worked tirelessly to support and promote our vibrant military community. Highlights include:

- Hosted the State of the Bases Breakfast, which featured the commanding officers and leadership from MCRD Parris Island, MCAS Beaufort and Naval Hospital Beaufort. This year, we were proud to showcase the Parris Island Band and provided our members and the community with important updates from all of our local military installations
- Honored military families with the Military Family of the Quarter Award, presented during the State of the Bases Breakfast and Military Quarterly Briefings
- Facilitated panel discussions and participated in the Association of Defense Community Conference in Charleston, SC, and organized a tour to Parris Island & MCAS Beaufort with leadership from bases across the U.S.
- Produced another successful Military Appreciation Day celebration in Laurel Bay for military families in the Tri-Command
- Presented a military briefing for residents of Sun City featuring leaders of our local military installations
- Advocates for a military retirement income tax exemption
- Celebrated with MCRD Parris Island in acknowledging 100 years of Making Marines.
- Updated Governor Nikki Haley at her annual Military Commanders Briefing in Columbia, SC through the Military Base Task Force



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A quick Google search defines a “Chamber of Commerce” as “a local association to promote and protect the interests of the business community in a particular place.” It doesn’t take long to realize the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce is the quintessential definition.

As the 2016-2017 Board Chair, it is my honor to be a part of such an important and influential organization. My fellow board members and I are privileged to serve alongside the Chamber staff, who diligently work to attract and retain a growing number of visitors, businesses and residents to Beaufort. We all benefit

from their focus, determination and leadership.

A strong Chamber, though, is simply a reflection of a strong community. That strength is reflected in many ways but is most evident in the work of members like you. Membership is the heart of this organization and our number one priority. Whether it’s through our efforts in tourism, business advocacy, military enhancement, or education and workforce development, we exist to support and enhance your success.

Of course there is always room to make Beaufort even better. For example, the need is real for economic diversification, historic preservation, and business retention. In addition, I encourage each of you to become more involved and to take full advantage of the vast resources of the Chamber and its membership. With your help, I believe Beaufort will continue to be the preferred place to invest, prosper and enjoy.

It’s this love of the Lowcountry that unites us, and together we exemplify the definition of a Chamber of Commerce.

Again, it is my privilege to serve you this year, and I look forward to a future full of Lowcountry living at its finest.

Sincerely,  
Leigh Copeland *Leigh Copeland*



## AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

- Beaufort’s annual Water Festival named a “**Top 20 Event/Festival of the Year**” by the Southeast Tourism Society
- Named to Good Housekeeping’s list of “**The 50 Most Beautiful Small Towns in America**”
- Topped Southeastern Traveler’s list of the “**Top 5 Beaches in South Carolina**”
- Topped Travel Channel’s list of “**Best Retirement Getaways for 2015.**”
- Hunting Island ranked #12 on TripAdvisor’s list of “**Top 25 U.S. Beaches**”
- Hunting Island – **Road trip USA: 50 states, 50 scenic views** – USA Today
- Vogue Magazine Names Beaufort: **One of South Carolina’s Most Charming Small Towns**
- Expedia ViewFinder – Lists Beaufort, SC (#3) on **Top 30 Most Beautiful Towns in America**
- Upscale Magazine Features Beaufort, SC for **Black History Month Venture**
- FlipKey list Beaufort on its **Best 8 off the beaten path places to spend Valentine’s Day**
- Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executive 2016
- Communication Excellence Award – Publication Category 2016 Legislative Agenda





# YOUR CHAMBER'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2016

**THE FOLLOWING ARE STANDING POSITIONS TAKEN THROUGH THE CHAMBER'S BUSINESS ADVOCACY PROCESS. ALL POSITIONS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**



## BUSINESS CREATION, RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & EXPANSION

We support legislation that helps the region attract quality business, industry and jobs and that helps expand existing businesses. The Chamber advocates for streamlining the permitting process to reduce the costs of doing business and to eliminate uncertainty that stifles business growth and development. We support utility, Internet and infrastructure improvements to ensure economic development sites are prepared for new business.

## MILITARY BASES SUPPORT, RETENTION & EXPANSION

The Military Enhancement Committee works closely with local, state and federal leaders to retain jobs associated with the region's military installations and to expand the Tri-Command's \$1.498 billion economic impact by lobbying to maintain and grow our military installations and protect them from encroachment. The Chamber works to support military families and improve their quality of life.

## TOURISM

The continued vitality of the visitor industry is critical to support the \$1.2 billion-plus economic impact the tourism industry provides for our economy. The Chamber supports dedicated funding for tourism-destination marketing, as well as the Gullah-Geechee Corridor and heritage tourism initiatives in Beaufort County.

## EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber advocates for the changes necessary in early childhood, K-12 and higher education to prepare all

students for the careers of the future. We help provide a skilled workforce to support the region's employers by encouraging vocational training and programs for transitioning military personnel to the local workforce.

## ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

The Chamber advocates for beach revitalization at Hunting Island State Park, as well as supports alternative energy exploration and recycling initiatives for businesses.

## PORT DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber supports the sale and redevelopment of the Port of Port Royal and the creation of the Jasper Ocean Terminal.

## ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Chamber advocates for statewide comprehensive roads and infrastructure reform. South Carolina's infrastructure is vital to the future of our economy and our quality of life. Modern infrastructure must be maintained for the region to compete effectively in the global marketplace.

## TOURISM

### YTD STAT REPORT

- July 1, 2015- May 11, 2016
- PR Value: \$7,018,912.99
- Impressions: 760,993,664

### TOP MEDIA OUTLETS INCLUDED:

- ABC News
- Knoxville New Sentinel
- Conde Nast Traveler
- USA Today
- Goodhousekeeping.com
- Southern Living
- The New York Times
- Vogue
- Bloomberg
- Business Insider

**FACEBOOK:** The "Visit Beaufort, SC" Facebook page grew by 14,787 fans, totaling 75,175 fans.

There were a total 217,312 stories were created on Facebook. This is the amount of content created by people's actions including liking, commenting and sharing Visit, Beaufort SC content.

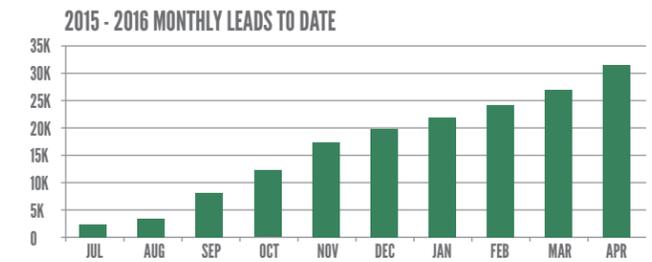
There were a total of 5,037,239 impressions on Facebook. This is the total number of times any Facebook user saw content associated with Visit Beaufort, SC in their News Feed or by visits to the page directly.

**INSTAGRAM:** Visit Beaufort, SC's Instagram grew by 5,037 followers, totaling 7,237.

**TWITTER:** The Twitter page grew to a total of 1,969 followers (396 new).

**PINTEREST:** The Visit Beaufort, SC Pinterest page grew to a total of 846 followers.

Print Cost per Lead (CPL) = \$5  
 Online Cost per Lead (CPL) = \$2  
 Total Cost per Lead (CPL) = \$4



## LEADERSHIP IN 2015-2016:

- Leadership Beaufort celebrated its 30-year anniversary.
- We were proud to host Beaufort County Senior Leadership classes.

## OUR FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES WHEN CREATING OUR LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- Maintain and grow opportunities for Beaufort County businesses
- Reduce the cost of doing business
- Manage growth and support infrastructure improvements so that the marketability of the area is not threatened
- Increase the qualified workforce



# SPECIAL RECOGNITION

## ELITE PARTNER



## PREMIER PARTNERS



## PATRON PARTNERS

CenturyLink  
First Citizens Bank  
Lockheed Martin  
Marine Federal Credit Union  
Palmetto State Bank  
SCE&G  
SERVPRO of Beaufort County  
Wells Fargo  
Media Premier Partner  
Adams Outdoor Advertising  
Apex Broadcasting  
The Island News – WJCL ABC  
Media Supporting Partner  
The Beaufort Gazette – Bluffton Today  
Lowcountry Weekly

## TOP INVESTORS

Beaufort Jasper Water & Sewer Authority  
Carolina Realty of the Lowcountry, LLC  
Century Link  
City of Beaufort  
Dataw Island Club  
Fripp Island Resort  
Hargray  
Lockheed Martin  
Lowcountry Real Estate  
Pinckney Retreat  
SCE&G  
South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation  
and Tourism  
Tanger Outlet Center Hilton Head  
University of Phoenix  
University of South Carolina Beaufort  
Wells Fargo

## REGIONAL LEADERS

Regional Leaders  
Beaufort County  
Beaufort Hilton Garden Inn  
Beaufort Memorial Hospital  
Branch Banking and Trust Co. of SC (BB&T)  
CBC National Bank  
CenturyLink  
CPM Federal Credit Union  
First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. of SC  
Flint Group North America  
Hargray  
John Paul II Catholic School  
Lockheed Martin  
Marine Federal Credit Union  
Merrill Lynch Bank of America Corporation  
Palmetto State Bank  
Regions Bank  
SCE&G  
SERVPRO of Beaufort County  
South State Bank  
University of South Carolina Beaufort  
Technical College of the Lowcountry  
Walgreens #11252

## STAFF

Blakely Williams, President & CEO  
Meg Barnes, Account Executive  
Joan Byrnes, Visitor Services  
Myrna Cruz, Accounting Manager  
LaNelle Fabian, Member Services & Special Events  
Manager  
Jason Ruhf, Business Development Manager  
Robb Wells, Vice President, Tourism

## VISITOR SERVICES

Greta Newcomb  
Jannie Allen  
Mary Legree  
Jennifer Rhodes  
Trudy Stevens





## BEAUFORT, SC REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce  
843-525-8500 [chamber@beaufortsc.org](mailto:chamber@beaufortsc.org) [www.beaufortchamber.org](http://www.beaufortchamber.org)

CHAMBER ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
701 Craven Street Carnegie Building

TOURISM MARKETING OFFICES AND VISITOR CENTER  
713 Craven Street, Historic Arsenal  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 910, Beaufort, SC 29901-0910

