

NEWS

Citizens watchdog group accuses County Council of wasteful spending

BY JOHN HUIETT
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

The group We the People of Richland County announced on Sept. 13 intentions to work toward the removal of County Council members from office for allegedly misusing tax revenues.

About 15 members of the nonpartisan, local government watchdog group gathered at the southeast branch of the Richland County Public Library on Garners Ferry Road for their fall general meeting, where chairman Vernon Kirkpatrick called for the ousting of Council members who they say are spending money recklessly and ignoring the group's collective voice.

Kirkpatrick emphasized the group's opposition to a recently passed land-use ordinance that limits rural expansion in the county. According to Kirkpatrick, the ordinance will have serious financial repercussions for taxpayers.

"It prevents us from getting maximum dollars and maximum use of our property," Kirkpatrick said.

Kirkpatrick accused the council of wasting \$450,000 in taxes to enact the Town and Country Vision plan that, implemented with the ordinance, would ensure that rural areas of the county remain undeveloped.

He also said the council wasted an additional \$220,000 hiring consultants to interpret the plan because they weren't able to understand it on their own.

"Council unanimously passed the plan ... without telling us what the economic impact of the plan would be," Kirkpatrick said. "No one on County Council knows. They also don't know how the plan has to be put into effect."

Because some group members suspect the ordinance and plan were passed illegally, Kirkpatrick said a lawsuit has been filed.

Kirkpatrick also criticized school districts for being on a runaway-spending program and said no more than what is absolutely necessary should be given to the districts.

"Council needs to tell [the districts] to tighten your belts and live within your budget," Kirkpatrick said, adding that districts should be given only a 3 percent inflation increase over what they received the previous year.

"We need to be using our tax dollars very prudently," Kirkpatrick said.

The chairman urged the group to vote out certain council members in the 2000 election. He said they are responsible for frivolous spending and refuse to acknowledge We the People's concerns.

"It's time we looked at these candidates and decide who we want out, and who out there will do what we want them to do," Kirkpatrick said.

Former President Leone Castles, who served 12 years on County Council, agreed with Kirkpatrick, but also

called for an investigation into what she said is the county's misuse of tax revenue.

"Every dollar for schools and improvement for the Vista goes to the city of Columbia," Castles said. "It's costing us additional tax dollars."

Although group members agreed with Castles, no specifics of an investigation were discussed.

Instead, Kirkpatrick lamented the state of local government and warned members that government must change if it is to be trusted.

"Most of us feel county government, big brother, is going to take care of us," Kirkpatrick said. "That's not true. It's not happening."

Although Kirkpatrick advocated governmental change, he said that because of We the People's resolution to remain a non-partisan group, no officer or board member would seek a County Council seat in 2000.

We the People of Richland County, and the group's Lexington County counterpart, formed in 1994 after a 20 percent property tax was imposed on both counties.

Each group is composed of private citizens and focuses almost exclusively on the tax-related financial dealings of their respective county governments. The next general meetings are tentatively scheduled for early 2000.

SEPT. 13

• Assault and battery, Blossom Street garage. Complainant said someone struck him on the top of the head with an unknown object. Complainant refused medical attention and didn't press charges.

USCPD Crime Report



compiled by John Huett

SEPT. 14

• Malicious injury to personal property, Blossom Street garage. Complainant told police that unknown persons damaged her vehicle by spraying red paint on her rear bumper and license plate. Investigation continues. Estimated value: \$370.

SEPT. 15

• DUI, Pickens and Rice streets. An officer on routine patrol pulled over a man operating his motorcycle in an erratic manner. Officer watched him almost fall several times while trying to get off the bike. Subject was given three sobriety tests and failed all three. He was taken to Forest Acres Police Department for a breath test, which he refused. The subject was then advised his driver's license would be suspended.

SEPT. 16

• Housing violation, Douglas. While conducting a health and welfare check, the RA discovered a cat and a large sword. The RA took the sword for safekeeping and left a receipt for the property in the room. Housing was notified.

SEPT. 17

• Larceny, Russell House Bookstore. Complainant said suspect matched description of an individual who had taken textbooks from book store. When arresting officer arrived, suspect said she had stolen two books from the store and had sold the same books to Addam's University Bookstore. Estimated value: \$181.

SEPT. 18

• Possession of alcohol by minor, Williams-Brice Stadium. Officer observed subject who was apparently mixing an alcoholic beverage and appeared intoxicated. Subject admitted he was in possession of alcohol and was underage. One minibottle of Early Time whiskey was found and the subject was arrested.

PSIS students discuss East Timor situation

BY GRAY STEVENSON
STAFF WRITER

At the Professional Society of International Studies meeting last Tuesday, students discussed the independence of East Timor.

The PSIS meeting was an informal gathering of 20 students ranging from freshmen to seniors, computer science majors to international studies majors, all of whom had an interest in the situation in East Timor. Introductions were made and Secretary Gillian Mabrey gave a brief history of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor.

East Timor is a small island between Australia and Indonesia with a population of 800,000 and has been occupied by the Indonesian militia since 1975. President Habibie of Indonesia recently approved peacekeeping intervention to help control the massacring of East Timor's population by the militia. This vicious attack on the population began when 80 percent of the people in East Timor voted for independence from Indonesia. One-fourth of the population has fled to refugee camps, and an Australian peacekeeping force has been formed and can be in East Timor within 72 hours. Some of the main con-

cerns for the United Nations are the issues of a common commander between the militia and potential peacekeepers, and the ultimate effectiveness of the intervention.

The first question was whether the United States should be involved with peacekeeping on the island. Sven Gerzer, an international studies senior and president of PSIS, said intervention is our responsibility. Others said it's East Timor's population that is being murdered, and therefore, it is East Timor's responsibility to solve the problem.

Allison Smith, a senior GINT major,

asked, "How do we pick and choose our battles?" Freshman Danny Miller, a computer science major, said that this situation has been a "time bomb ticking in our faces" since 1975.

Economic gains became another topic explored. Australia wants to control the oil fields in the oceans that surround East Timor and, therefore, supports the freedom of the island. On the other hand, the selling of weapons by the United States to Indonesia could prove lucrative and would therefore require the opposite solution, the continued Indonesian occupa-

PSIS SEE PAGE 4

71%

MOST USC STUDENTS HAVE

0 TO 4

DRINKS WHEN THEY PARTY

(1 drink = the alcohol content of 12 ozs. beer OR 4 ozs. wine OR 1 oz. distilled spirits)

Based on survey data collected by the Health Office of a random sample of USC students in November 1998.

Funding by SC DAODAS Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Project

Students, Faculty & Staff!!
September 20-24, 1999 is

Today!

USC Wellness Week

Join us for...

Health Expo '99
Lots of GIVEAWAYS, SCREENINGS & DEMONSTRATIONS
Wednesday, September 22
10:00am - 3:00pm
Russell House Patio

"Health of the Spirit"
Featuring... **Brian Luke Seaward, Ph.D.**
Reflections on Stress and Human Spirituality
Wednesday, September 22, 7pm
Russell House Ballroom

For Questions About Wellness Week Activities, call 777-8248

Student Health Services • Department of Student Development • Division of Student and Alumni Services