

BEAUFORT, SC

REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY

"The Chamber provides me with tools to grow my business through networking and marketing opportunities, and helps me and First Citizens operate more effectively by being an advocate for local businesses."

> Jay Lovell, VP/Retail Sales Manager, First Citizens Bank & Trust, Co.

"The Chamber provides small business owners a way to grow their business through educational workshops, networking events and opportunities to interact with other entrepreneurs. The Beaufort Regional Chamber is a cost efficient way to grow small businesses." Martin Goodman, USCB Regional Director, Small Business Development Center The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce has stood as the unified voice of the Beaufort Region's business community every day since 1892, promoting, protecting and improving business. The Chamber is a private, non-profit organization that works to help local businesses grow.

Our mission statement is: "The Beaufort Regional Chamber exists to manage and build capacity for continual community growth by advocating for a probusiness environment and building quality workforce development in order to enrich the region's quality of life."

To support our mission and vision, we will continue to focus our efforts in the five "pillars" of emphasis: tourism, military enhancement, member services and business advocacy, economic development, and 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."







BEAUFORT, SC

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT Port Royal & Sea Islands

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



the year, our community received many accolades from Smithsonian Magazine naming Beaufort one of its Best Small Towns to Coastal Living announcing us as the Happiest Seaside Town.

Blakely T. Williams

Chamber President & CEO

That's just a glimpse of the good news we all worked hard to bring home. Over the past year, the Chamber has made great strides in making this region the preferred community to invest, prosper and enjoy. With our members support, the Chamber advocated for probusiness legislation locally and nationally including business license reform with three of our recommendations being implemented to simplify the process. In addition, this summer we will be welcoming the first Joint Strike Fighter squadron and it's personnel. They'll begin settling up at MCAS Beaufort, helping us create a Center of Excellence for the F-35B training. Not only will these jets play a vital part in our nation's defense, but the new JSF squadron will bring pilots and their families from all over the world along with a healthy injection to our local economy.

"Thank you for the river and the stars and every house in Beaufort," the great Pat Conroy wrote in his book, "My Losing Season." I echo Conroy's sentiments of gratitude and thankfulness. We live in a unique corner of paradise made up of wonderful people. Throughout

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to supporting the local business community and through a unified voice we are able to make a difference. This next year promises to be an exciting and challenging time as we continue to grow as your Chamber of Commerce. We will be writing our GPS (Goals, Plans, and Strategies) to move our Chamber forward. We have a great 2014-2015 planned and we'll need your continued support to make it happen. I sincerely thank you for your investment in the Chamber and our community.

Your investment is crucial to our mission and I look forward to a great year ahead.

Beaufort named Happiest Seaside Town in 2013 by Coastal Living Cuthbert House and Rhett House Inn earned AAA Four Diamond Awards

City Loft Hotel / TripAdvisor's "Top 25 Small Hotels in the U.S.

#7 / Hunting Island's 2014 rating for "Top 25 U.S. Beaches

CHAMBER FACTOIDS

2013-2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephen Murrav Will Achurch Frankie Denmark Jan Malinowski Dr. Charlie Calvert Jon Rembold James W. Boozer Jerry Ashmore **Mike Bostwick** Leigh Copeland Mahesh Desai John Dickerson **Ben Duncan** Sally Germer Derek Gilbert Malcolm Goodridge Louise Hodges David Homyk Jack Kiessling Susan Sauer Jack Snider

Kazoobie Kazoos Chairman Wells Fargo Chair Elect Hargray Past Chair Palmetto State Bank Treasurer **USC** Beaufort **Tourism Advisory Chairman** Beaufort County Investor The Greenery YMCA of Beaufort County Technical College of the Lowcountry **Beaufort Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites** Sleep in History! CenturyLink **Red Door Rentals Gilbert Law Firm** Investor **Greenbug All Natural Pest Control Beaufort Memorial Hospital** Parker Hannifin Racor Division **Discover Tours** Marine Corps Community Services

Economic Development Chairman

BEAUFORT, S.C., STANDS ST AS A LIVING LANDMARK, HANDCRAFTED FROM THE STORIED HISTORY OF THE SOUTH. REDISCOVER THE LEGENDS OF THOSE WHO WALKED HERE GENERATIONS BEFORE YOU AND UNEARTH NEW TREASURES THAT WILL ENRICH YOUR LIFE FOREVER.

MAKE YOUR FIRST VISIT TO BEAUFORT, S.C., NOW AT WWW.BEAUFORTSC.ORG/WD OR CALL 1-800-525-8500.

2014-15 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Will Achurch Stephen Murray Jan Malinowski Dr. Charlie Calvert Jerry Ashmore Mike Bostwick Leigh Copeland Frankie Denmark Mahesh Desai John Dickerson Ben Duncan Derek Gilbert Malcolm Goodridge **Terrance Green** Louise Hodges David Homyk Jack Kiessling John Marshall Holly McKown Jon Rembold Susan Sauer Col. Jack Snider Jay Taylor Jim Wegmann

Wells Fargo Kazoobie Kazoos Palmetto State Bank Treasurer **USC-Beaufort** The Greenery, Inc. YMCA of Beaufort County Technical College of the Lowcountry Hargray **Beaufort Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites** Sleep In History! CenturyLink **Gilbert Law Firm** Investor **Coldwell Banker Realty Greenbug All Natural Pest Control Beaufort Memorial Hospital** Parker Hannifin Racor Division **Old Bull Tavern** Grayco, Inc. **Beaufort County Discover Tours** Marine Corps Community Services Kinghorn Insurance Agency of Beaufort Mikell, Weidner, Wegmann & Harper

Chairman Past Chairman **Tourism Advisory Chair**

BEAUFORT, SC

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR



May 2014 Stephen D. Murray, III

It has been a great honor to serve as your Board Chairman this past year. It has been a fast year, and I am proud of the work that we have accomplished as an organization. I want to sincerely thank those of you who continue to contribute and participate in Chamber activities, as your generous gift of time and resources makes what we do possible. It has been a year of challenges as we continue to look for and implement policies and procedures to serve you, our membership, better. A few stand out accomplishments this year:

Our tourism operation is second to none, and continues to keep Beaufort in the national spotlight. Division Executive Robb Wells and the Tourism Advisory Committee led by Dr. Charlie Calvert are doing an amazing job leveraging what is a relatively small pot of marketing money to generate millions of dollars in exposure for one of our most critical industries.

The Beaufort History Museum is coming home! After almost a year of negotiations we have a signed an agreement with the museum board, and we expect to celebrate with a grand opening in early summer. The museum will not only provide visitors with a comprehensive look at our area's amazing history, but create a more full-service experience to the guests who come to the Visitor Center.

I'm a small business guy and believe our Chamber should be the strongest voice in the room when it comes to advocating for the business community. So I hope you've noticed that we've been speaking up. City of Beaufort sign ordinance, Bay Street paving, County business license reform, economic development initiatives, and the list goes on. Your board and staff have been working diligently to influence policy makers at both the local and state level to represent your interests.

These are just a few items that I am most proud of this year, and I want to thank my colleagues on the board for their commitment to our chamber. We are fortunate to have such a committed group of business professionals that help guide us forward, and I am lucky to call many of them friends. And that is what makes our chamber so special. Our board, staff, ambassadors, and members all come from competing industries, different religious or political backgrounds, and various socio-economic groups, but we all come together under the chamber umbrella to work toward a common cause.



BUSINESS ADVOCACY, LEGISLATIVE AGENDA and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS AND PROMOTING A STRONGER CLIMATE FOR OUR SMALL BUSINESSES IS ONE OF OUR FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITIES.

DURING 2013-14, WE OFFERED TRAINING SESSIONS, NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES AND MORE TO OUR MEMBERS. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE HIGHLIGHTS:

- Advocated for recommendations to make the business license process in Beaufort County more business friendly. Three of our recommendations have been implemented to simplify the process.
- Earned three Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives awards including best website (www.BeaufortSC.org); best eNewsletter; and best membership collateral
- Our ever-popular Business After Hours continues to be booked a year ahead with a waiting list for hosts. These monthly networking meetings averaged 125 attendees at each event.
- Successfully lobbied for a sign ordinance to be enforced in Historic Downtown Beaufort, allowing exposure for businesses while maintaining the beautiful aesthetics of our downtown.
- Launched Small Business Saturday in partnership with American Express. In addition, we worked with our neighbor chambers and The Beaufort Gazette to promote and encourage a Shop & Dine local campaign during the busy holiday season.
- Supported the City of Beaufort in the successful passage of the Civic Master Plan
- Hosted Paving Parties to help merchants share the word when Bay Street was re-paved
- Welcomed our American Idol winner Candice Glover home for the highway sign dedication and debut album release and signing
- Participated in Governor Haley's Regulatory Reform panel on making South Carolina more business friendly
- Worked with Beaufort County School District in the formation of the Economic Competitiveness Committee
- Hosted SC Alliance to Fix Our Roads and took a position to support H.3412 dedicated to advocating for critical highway funding.
- Held Candidate Forums for the Town of Port Royal

- Hosted 11 grand openings for new businesses
- Strategic planning and marketing retreat with the Lowcountry Economic Alliance
- Researched a Business Retention & Expansion program for our retail and tourism based businesses.



New Benefits for Chamber members:

- Implemented a new program called 12@12, designed to meet with 12 businesses at noon and learn more about the opportunities the business community faces
- Introduced the Business of the Week, highlighting a member business each week with a video interview, coverage in the newsletter and Chamber Corner in "The Island News"
- Hosted a mini-expo highlighting emergency preparedness with keynotes encouraging businesses to implement hurricane evacuation plans
- Launched a Job Postings Board for member businesses to recruit the best talent and job seekers to know of opportunities in our region
- Created a Relocation Guide and Membership Directory
 - Established a Member 2 Member Discount Program to encourage commerce between Chamber members at discounted rates.

Our top three areas of legislative concern are ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE; and the COST OF DOING BUSINESS.

WE USE **FOUR** GUIDING PRINCIPLES WHEN SETTING OUR LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:

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

OUR TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2014

Streamline the permitting processes to reduce the cost of doing business and to eliminate uncertainty that stifles business growth and development

Support efforts to recruit industry with higher paying jobs Support comprehensive tax reform at the state level

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013-14 INCLUDED:

- Advocated for one-stop shopping for Business License Fees
- Hosted Don Ryan Center for Innovation leadership to discuss how to help a diverse and sustainable regional economy through assisting fledgling technology companies
- Hosted Lewis Gossett of the SC Manufacturer's Alliance to kick off the Manufacturer's Round Table forums
- Strategic planning and marketing retreat with Lowcountry Economic Alliance.



650 member businesses

36,000 Facebook Friends on Visit Beaufort

27 travel writers to our Area

35 networking events impacting approximately 2,225 people

EDUCATION - WORKFORCE - LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The mission of our work in Education Workforce Development is to bridge the gap between education and business, ensuring a more qualified, ready-to-work employee base. Your Chamber recognizes the need to provide a quality workforce for our business community.

We help Beaufort County achieve this by supporting various efforts in education, workforce development and leadership initiatives including the Early Grade Reading Initiative at St. Helena Elementary.

Top Legislative Priorities for Education/Workforce Development::

- Support business involvement with local schools
- Support continuing STEM-related programs in our schools such as engineering, robotics, aerospace engineering
- Support modifying the allocation formula for public education funding from one based on a school system's ability to raise revenues through property tax to a system where all students receive equitable funding
- Support funding for higher education, specifically Parity Funding for University of South Carolina Beaufort

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce proudly graduated the 29th class of Leadership Beaufort. For a list of these graduates, see www.beaufortchamber.org/pages/LeadershipPrograms

As a new member, and many times as a new business, it can be challenging to keep up with all the Chamber does for you. Our Ambassadors help new members take advantage of the many membership services. Chamber Ambassadors for 2013-14 include:

April Appleby	Corriveau Insurance Agency, Inc State Farm
Lundy Baker	The Lollipop Shop
Valerie Beere	River Oaks Assisted Living
Kathleen Brady-Lacey	The Tasty Basket
Liz Brown	Ameris Bank
Levon Byrd	LegalShield
Derek Clement	Kellasuna Advertising
Candace Fritz	United Hospice of Beaufort, Inc.
Ellier Gervero	New York Life Insurance Company
Brandi Good	Hampton Inn Beaufort
Stephanie Greene	River Oaks Assisted Living
Beth Hardin	Callawassie Island Club
Nikki Hardison	The Island News
Janet Harter	Ameris Bank
Joel lacopelli	Capstone Insurance
Elizabeth Klosterman	Palmetto State Bank
Lynn McCartney	Marine Federal Credit Union
John Rhodes	Harbour Health Insurance Solutions, LLC
Bill Severns	Going Places Travel
Vicky Sweat	Regions Bank
Lou Vellia	Harvard Risk Management Corporation
Kyle Warren	Rapid Refill/Rapid Ink and Toner # 361
Beth Woodring	Palmetto State Bank

Thank you to Captured Moments Photography and Wollwerth Images for many of the photos used in this report.

F-35 fly-in at MCAS

Established a MEC subcommittee to explore an Outlying Landing Field for F-35B training

HIGHLIGHTS

Launched Community MEC meetings to bring together military and community leaders

MEC hosted Sen. Lindsey Graham for a Washington Update with military and local leaders

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MILITARY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

In keeping with its mission to enhance the quality and value of the military installations of Beaufort County, the MEC has worked tirelessly to recruit the F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters, expected to arrive this year at Fightertown. These will be the first of ultimately two training squadrons and three operational/combat squadrons of this high-tech stealth fighter designed especially for our Marines. This Center of Excellence for Marine Aviation provides endless opportunities for this region as it will bring pilots from around the world to train.

For ongoing updates on the MEC's work, visit www.beaufortchamber.org.

Members of the Military Enhancement Committee:

Jim Wegmann, Chair Appointed by S.C. Military Base Task Force

Frankie Denmark, Vice-Chair Appointed by the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce

James W. Boozer, Treasurer Appointed by Town of Port Royal

Lt. Col. W.R. "Skeet" Von Harten USMC (Retired) Appointed by Beaufort County

Teri Maude Appointed by City of Beaufort

Merritt Patterson Appointed by the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce 2 million / number of Marine recruits trained at Parris Island MCRD

50% / number of local tourists with military connections

\$1.46 billion / economic impact of Beaufort/Port Royal's three military facilities

MCAS Beaufort / The Marine Corps' only training center for the new F-35B jets

OUR MILITARY

Whether it's high-tech jets crisscrossing our Lowcountry skies, the sound of rifle-fire at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, or sailors providing healthcare to active duty and retired military at Naval Hospital Beaufort – the military is a huge presence in Beaufort, Port Royal and the Sea Islands. Not only do these service men and women enrich our community and protect our nation, but their presence represents a \$1.46 billion economic impact.

The Chamber's goal is to maintain, grow and support our three military installations. Additionally, the Chamber works with groups committed to the quality of life for the families of those service members living in our community such as Marine Corps Community Services, Atlantic Marine Corps Communities at Tri Command, and our own Military Affairs Committee and Military Enhancement Committee.

Every September, the Chamber hosts Military Appreciation Day where local service members and their families are recognized for their service to our country. The all-day festival typically is attended by more than 1,000 local military, their families and community supporters.

Highlights of the Chamber's military support in 2013-14 include:

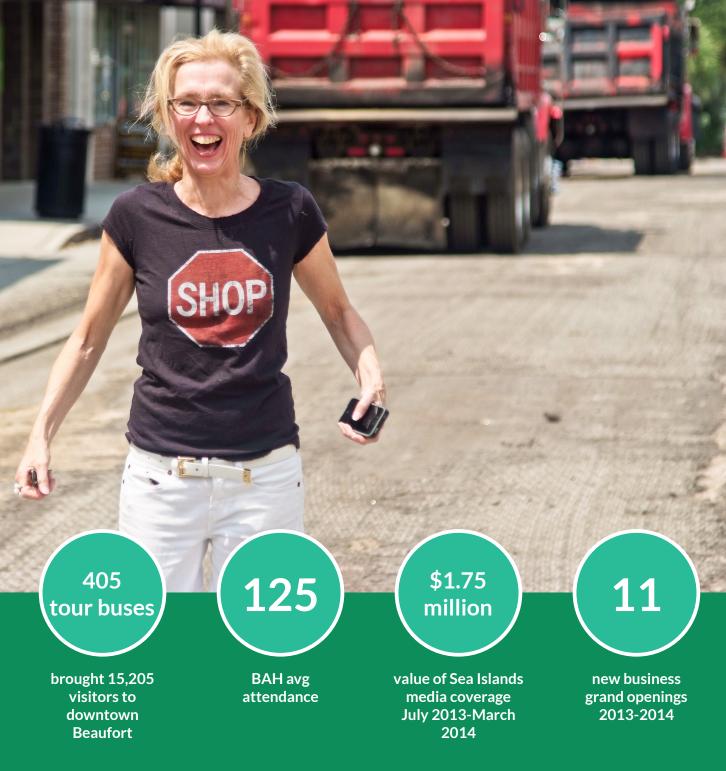
- Visited key members of Congress, the Department of Defense and defense contractors in Washington, DC resulting in the Center of Excellence concept and an F-35 Fly In for the premier and first glimpse of the new planes.
- Created "MEC Blasts" to inform the community of current events related to the Military and the impact on the Tri Command.
- Supported expansion of the Townsend (GA) Bombing Range, which is a key training site for Beaufort fighter pilots. The Record of Decision was signed in 2014 and we are thrilled for this progress.

Advocated for the passage of H.3027, the Military Homeowner Protection Act of 2014, legislation that provides property tax relief to active duty military men and women in South Carolina. In 2014-15 we will continue to advocate for these efforts:

- 1. Lobby to maintain and grow the military installations in Beaufort County
- 2. Advocacy for MCAS Beaufort to be established as the Center of Excellence for the F-35 B.
- 3. Support military friendly legislation:
 - HB 3014 Provides authority for establishing veterans' treatment courts.
 - SB 787/HB 3086 Waives waiting requirement to establish residency for separating service member to be able to obtain in-state tuition.
 - HB 4859 The Military Quality of Life Enhancement Act. This critical Omnibus Bill would address all of the quality of life initiatives on the DOD list which have not been passed in prior sessions, including the two preceding bills as well as those dealing with issues covered in other bills that did not meet the cross-over.
 - HB 3112 Proposing a resident income tax exemption for military retirement pay.
 - SB 825 Proposing to add a section to the South Carolina Code to make it clear that privately developed housing for the military personnel on military installations is not subject to real property taxes.

The passage of these bills would be an unprecedented and resounding vote of confidence and support for the military service members, retirees, their families and the military installations in our State which contribute so significantly to the national defense as well as to South Carolina's economy.

Moreover, we will have surpassed all other states as far as the nationally-recognized "Military Friendly" criteria are concerned – a unique opportunity to lead the nation in a very positive way.



Overnight tourism revenue grew by 5 percent in 2013, generating nearly \$19 million in direct local spending

CHAMBER FACTOIDS



REASONS TO

Smile about Local Tourism...

- 1. Smile! Coastal Living magazine and its readers named us "America's Happiest Seaside Town" for 2013.
- 2. In 2013, we grew our Facebook fans from 14,467 on January 1 to 29,891 by December 31. During the first quarter of 2014, we've earned 3,900 additional fans.
- 3. Beaufort ranked #1 for healthiest county in S.C. by the 2014 County Health Rankings.
- 4. Beaufort ranked #3 on Carolina Living's list of "Top 20 Most Preferred S.C. Destination Towns."
- 5. In the past year, travel stories about Beaufort have been featured by a variety of media outlets, including: Travel+Leisure, USA Today, Coastal Living, TODAY Show, Southern Living, Yahoo!, Fox News ABC News, The Charlotte Observer and The Cleveland Plain Dealer.
- 6. Just last month, Beaufort was featured in a USA Today story about the "30 Great Places for Business Travelers."
- 7. Overnight tourism revenue grew by 5 percent in 2013 generating nearly \$19 million dollar in direct spending.
- 8. Your Chamber hosted 27 travel writers from July 2013-March 2014
- 9. Running total on our national marking campaign (since September 2012) we have generated total estimated value of media coverage: \$5,427,211; total media impressions, 1,149,988,778
- 10. And the icing on the cake Smithsonian Magazine named our city to its "Best Small Towns in the U.S." list. We couldn't agree more!

Advertising in the following publications generated over 28,000 leads this year: Trip Advisor, AAA Go Magazine, AAA Going Places, Carolina Living.com, Yankee Magazine, Southern Living and Coastal Living.



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LOOKING AHEAD...



May 2014 William Achurch

I am proud of the work that the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce has done over the last few years. Our focus on member advocacy, economic development, and the protection of our existing assets is setting the foundation for a stronger business community.

Our municipalities and partner organizations are tuning in to the importance of a business friendly environment and the many benefits that come with it, which include but are not limited to: better schools, lower taxes, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more and higher paying jobs, and an overall better quality of life. The Chamber's working relationship with our community partners has never been stronger, and we will continue to lean on our partners to advocate on your behalf and to build a friendlier business environment.

There is still a lot of work to be done. I am honored to be your incoming Chair, but this is a group effort. I am fortunate to work with the bright and dedicated professionals that serve as directors, ambassadors, and staff. It is, however, your membership, your participation, and your feedback that are the most vital components of this process. Please continue with us down the path to making Beaufort, Port Royal and the Sea Islands the preferred community to invest, prosper and enjoy.

Blakely Williams. President & CEO Robb Wells, Tourism Division Executive Valerie Althoff, Member Services Manager Ida Bodiker, Office Assistant Joan Byrnes, Visitor Services Myrna Cruz, Accounting Manager Jaime Dailey-Vergara, Communications Manager Jason Ruhf, Account Executive Tiffany Singleton, Information Coordinator

Visitor Center Staff Leigh Aiken Jannie Allen **Anne Heyward** Angela Nelson Wanda Saunders **Trudy Stevens**

Welcomed our American Idol winner. Candice Glover, home for a highway sign dedication and her debut album release and signing celebration.

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Elite Member



Supporting Members

Parker Hannifin Racor Division Wells Fargo

Patron Members

CenturyLink First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. of SC Internet Services of the Low Country Marine Federal Credit Union Regions Bank S.C. Electric & Gas / SCANA SERVPRO of Beaufort County

Regional Leaders

Beaufort County Beaufort Hilton Garden Inn Branch Banking &Trust Co. of SC (BB&T) CBC National Bank Compupay Payroll Flint Group North America Lowcountry Medical Group, LLC MCAS Beaufort, A Division of CPM Federal Palmetto State Bank South Carolina Bank and Trust Staples The Office Superstore #0869 Technical College of the Lowcountry The Lane Construction Corporation University of South Carolina Beaufort

Premier Media Partners

94.5 The Coast Adams Outdoor Advertising Apex Broadcasting Bluffton Today The Beaufort Gazette The Island News WHHI TV WJCL-Fox 28 WTOC-TV

Premier Member



Top Level Investors

Carolina Realty of the Lowcountry City of Beaufort Dataw Island Club Friends of Hunting Island Fripp Island Resort Islands of Beaufort HOA Lowcountry Real Estate Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport Town of Hilton Head Town of Port Royal

Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce 843-525-8500 chamber@beaufortsc.org www.beaufortchamber.org

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