

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions and concerns. I would request that the following written statement be published in its entirety:

I appreciate the opportunity to address these issues. For nearly a quarter of a century that I have served on County Council, I have pushed and attempted to bring transparency to our local government so that it might better serve our community. I have not been informed of any specific allegations by anyone in authority, only what has been brought to my attention in social media. If SLED is conducting an investigation, I will do nothing to impend their important work. If and when it is completed, I will be happy to comment.

I will however take this opportunity to inform the citizens of Greenwood County on exactly how public funds are used and allocated. County Council members have absolutely no access to public funds. We have no discretionary accounts, no checkbooks, credit cards or method of directing the expenditure of funds as an individual Council member. Council is a legislative body which sets priorities and approves budgets but the day-to-day expenditure of funds responsibility lies with the executive branch, i.e., the Treasurer in conjunction with the County Manager and Department heads. I could not use public funds for a specific item on my own authority even if I wanted to do so – which I have not.

This matter has brought into focus a much more important issue. Traditionally, news outlets, like The Index Journal, had junior and senior editors on staff to ensure that publications were factually based and fairly presented. In today's internet based social media, self-proclaimed influencers have no oversight. While many are ethical and honest, it is important to understand that their success, their income, is based largely upon the number of followers or "hits" they receive. Advertisers compensate these influencers with cash, products or other compensation so

that there is a direct incentive to generate interest in ones own post. Unethical influencers can publish baseless stories or innuendos to generate these hits and be compensated accordingly. I would encourage the public to take the nature of this system into account if they rely in any way on receiving news through unvetted social media. It is very sad that a story that contains a fundamental misunderstanding of how our local government operates can bolster the author's own self interest.