

Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman
October 13, 2011
St. Helena Library Groundbreaking

Welcome fellow citizens, federal and state lawmakers, members of County Council, library officials, friends and neighbors. I'm Weston Newton, Chairman of Beaufort County Council. Thank you for joining us today as we gather together to celebrate the ground breaking for the new St. Helena Branch Library at Penn Center. Please join me for the pledge of allegiance.

Pledge

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to introduce my friend, the Pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church and our South Carolina State House Representative for District 121, the honorable Kenneth Hodges who will lead the invocation.

Invocation

Thank you, now we are privileged to have a vocal selection from the St. Helena Elementary School Singers.

Students sing

Thank you, singers. That was terrific!

Please allow me to congratulate each and every one of you here today on this important milestone, because without you this would not have happened. Our arrival at this significant moment has taken a united effort. It required the will of our local, state and federal leaders, our partners at Penn Center, our volunteers with the Friends of the Library, our Library Board of Trustees, our County Administrator and his staff, and our citizens to move this monumental undertaking forward.

When I think about it – I am amazed. How many communities these days can celebrate such a hopeful beginning? We are constructing a 10-million dollar facility in very difficult economic times. Yet, here we are able to celebrate because we locked arms and pushed ahead, all of us working together.

The need in this community for a public library is undeniable. We have known that for a long time. The effort began years ago with County Councilman Bill McBride urging council to meet this need. Beaufort County Council then designated the development and

construction of the St. Helena Library project as a priority. This was followed by a review of potential funding mechanisms while simultaneously grappling with the uncertainties of our economic future.

In May, 2006, Beaufort County Council authorized a general obligation borrowing of \$5 million dollars for the construction of a new County Library on St. Helena Island. Later that year, council set a goal of \$11 million for the development of the library with \$6 million from the County, one million from impact fees and \$4 million from federal sources.

Then in September of 2007 – the Board of Directors of Penn Center pledged the donation of ten precious acres of their historic campus for construction of the new library.

In February of 2009 County Council listed the project as a priority for Community Development Block Grant funds and in September council approved a CBDG application for \$500,000 for the library but we received \$1.5 million because of the merits of the project. Several days later -- county council got word that a \$2.5 million dollar grant had been awarded for the project through Rural Development and the American Recovery Act of 2009.

In December of 2009, the County received a federal Community Enrichment Grant of \$1.5 million. Then, in February of last year, County Council was notified of a loan and grant offer from the United States Department of Agriculture for \$8.5 million.

That brings us to this important day. Because of the generosity and good will of our federal and state leaders and the efforts of our county lawmakers, volunteers and citizens, and the urging of Councilman McBride we have arrived. We stand prepared to turn over the soil and start building a new facility that will further education and learning for all ages and enrich the lives of the people of St. Helena Island and all the residents of northern Beaufort County. I am grateful to all of you. Thank you.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce Ms. Vernita Dore, the South Carolina Director of USDA - Rural Development. After Ms. Dore, we will hear from Daniel Young, Director of Grants Administration, South Carolina Department of Commerce. Ms. Dore and Mr. Young, thank you for all you have done to aid this worthy project

Vernita Dore

Daniel Young

Ladies and Gentlemen, before we continue, allow me to recognize Senator Clementa Pinckney and Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling. I didn't see you here earlier and am glad you were able to attend. Thank you for joining us today. Now, I am pleased to introduce the Beaufort High School Gospel Choir which will perform for us.

Choir

Thank you, Choir. That was great. Our next speaker is Mr. Fred Washington, Jr., Chairman of the Beaufort County Board of Education. He will be followed by Penn Center's Executive Director, Mr. Walter Mack. Then we will hear from County Councilman William McBride who represents this District of St. Helena Island. He will be followed by Theresa Dunn, Chairman of the Beaufort County Library System Board of Trustees.

Fred Washington

Walter Mack

Bill McBride

Theresa Dunn

Thank you, now once again the outstanding Beaufort High School Gospel Choir will sing for us.

Choir

Thank you once again, Choir, we very much appreciate your presence here today. Good job! A special thank you as well to your director, Marilyn Wade. Ladies and Gentleman, at this time Rep. Hodges will lead us in the benediction and then I will let Library Director Wlodek Zaryczny have the final word. Again, thanks to each and every one of you for your participation in the realization of this wonderful Beaufort County project.

Benediction

Wlodek Zaryczny

Groundbreaking