



Decorate your holiday table with these delectable dishes **Pages 1B-4B**

Index Journal

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SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1919

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025

DAILY \$2

From a traffic light to a council vote

Greenwood's ordinance against prejudice-based crimes evolved from February incident

By **Renee Ortiz**
rortiz@indexjournal.com

Greenwood City Council approved a series of measures this month, including the Criminal Conduct Based on Prejudice (CCBoP) ordinance, which enhances penalties for prejudice-based crimes.

The ordinance, approved following multiple readings and months of debate, did not originate in council chambers.

Its roots trace back to a February encounter on a Greenwood County roadway that exposed gaps in state law and

See **ORDINANCE**, page 4A



Dennis Allen, a McCormick County resident, was captured on cellphone video during a road rage incident in Greenwood County in February. The video showed Allen using racial slurs toward a Black woman.

SUBMITTED



Winston Shirley pours water on Amy Tyler as classmates look on during the Polar Plunge fundraiser.

'Freezing for a reason'

Fundraiser for Special Olympics lands Mathews SRO in cold water

By **Mya Atten**
matten@indexjournal.com

Amy Tyler, the school resource officer (SRO) at Mathews Elementary School, brought the Special Olympics Polar Plunge fundraiser into the school, using it as a way to teach students about community involvement, trust and inclusion.

As Tyler put it, she was "freezing for a reason." Working alongside students, Tyler helped raise more than \$500 for Special Olympics, surpassing the school's fundraising goal. To raise money, the school hosted a hot chocolate bar for teachers, and parents were able to send cookie grams to their children.

On Dec. 17, after the fundraising goal was met, Tyler followed through on a promise by allowing special-needs students to

See **FREEZING**, page 4A



Tyler, school resource officer, explains the Special Olympics Polar Plunge fundraiser to students at Mathews Elementary School.

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James Thomas 'Jimmy' Rambo, Sr.

LAURENS — James Thomas "Jimmy" Rambo, Sr., widower of Louise Baker Rambo, passed away December 17th at McCall Hospice House. He was born in Abbeville to the late Hugh Rambo, Sr. and Katherine W. Ware. He was reared in the home of his maternal grandparents Edgar and Katie Woodhurst.

Jimmy graduated from Abbeville High School, Erskine College with a degree in accounting, and the South Carolina Bankers School. He retired from Milliken & Co. and Pa-colet Milliken with 39 years of service. After retirement, he devoted his time to volunteering in various missions of Laurens First United Methodist, including its community garden, food bank, and support of backpack blessings.

Most of his life, he was a member of Grace United Methodist in Abbeville but attended First United Methodist after moving to Laurens. He was a member of the Laurens Gideon Camp, Laurens Lions Club, and the Searchers Sunday School Class of First United Methodist.

He loved attending sporting events with his family. He was a 56 year member of the Gamecock Club. He especially enjoyed the revival of Erskine's football program. His favorite events to attend though were his grandsons' football and baseball games.

Jimmy is survived by his son James Thomas Rambo, Jr.; daughter-in-law Courtney Howard Rambo; grandsons John Parker Rambo and McKay Woodhurst Rambo of Simpsonville. He is also survived by half-brothers Hugh and Thomas Rambo. He is also survived by cousins Albert Dansby, Cyndi Gary, Geri Miniati, and his brothers and sisters of the Byrnes Scholars.

The family would like to thank the members and staff of First United Methodist, the staff of Martha Franks Retirement Community, and the nurses at McCall Hospice House for all of their kindness and care.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to First United Methodist P.O. Box 203, Laurens, SC 29360; The James F. Byrnes Foundation PO Box 6781 Columbia, SC 29260; or Erskine College James T. Rambo Scholarship, PO Box 338 Due West, SC 29639.

The Celebration of Life and Resurrection will be held January 10, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. at Laurens First United Methodist. The family will receive friends in the church fellowship hall immediately following the service. The burial will be private.

Condolences may be expressed to the family by visiting www.grayfuneralhome.com

Gray Funeral Home of Laurens is honored to assist the Rambo family with services.



JAMES THOMAS "JIMMY" RAMBO, SR.

GREENWOOD COUNTY

- Barry Roy Richards, Greenwood.

LAURENS COUNTY

- James Thomas "Jimmy" Rambo, Sr., Laurens.

INSIDE SOUTH CAROLINA

- Timothy Woolston, Greenville.

VISITATIONS TODAY

- NICHOLSON, Register, 1-6, Robinson and Son Mortuary.
- HUGHES, John, 2-3, Episcopal Church of the Resurrection.

SERVICES TODAY

- HUGHES, John, 3, Episcopal Church of the Resurrection.

OBITUARY GUIDELINES

- Obituary submissions are submitted online at memoriams.com through an approved funeral home. In the event you are not using a funeral home or our offices are closed, you may submit your obituary through legacy.memoriams.com. Obituary and Death announcement submissions may not contain digital links to external websites or any reference thereof. Flag emblems are included for free, upon request, for all veteran obituaries. Additional emblems are available for a nominal charge. Up to two photos can be included with paid obituaries only for a per-photo fee. Death announcements are available at memoriams.com for a \$30 administrative fee. Death announcements are available at memoriams.com. They are limited to 50 words and can only contain name, age and address of deceased, wife/husband or widow/widower of, date of death, place of death, home where family members are gathered and funeral home in charge of arrangements. The obituary base fee is \$65, plus \$.85 per word. Submission deadline for placement in the Wednesday & Friday edition is 2:45 p.m. the day before. Submission deadline for the Sunday edition is 6 p.m. on Friday. Obituaries will appear online once submitted. Deadlines are subject to change based on holidays and special circumstances, such as inclement weather. Submitted notices are deemed accurate for ad placement and should be thoroughly reviewed prior to final submission, including pricing considerations. The Index-Journal is not responsible for inaccuracies after final copy submission. Please contact memoriams.com Support Team at 877-705-4995 for any assistance with your submission.

Barry Roy Richards

Barry Roy Richards, resident of Greenwood, beloved husband of Margaret Richards, entered into the presence of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on Wednesday, December 17 at National Healthcare of Greenwood. Blyth Funeral Home and Cremation Services is honored to be assisting the family with the funeral arrangements.

Timothy Wesley Woolston

GREENVILLE— Timothy Wesley Woolston of Greenville, SC, 70, passed away December 14, 2025. Arrangements provided by Mackey Funerals and Cremations at Woodlawn Memorial Park.



MYA ATTEN | INDEX-JOURNAL

Layla Pugh dumps a bucket of cold water on Amy Tyler during the school's Polar Plunge fundraiser on Dec. 17.

FREEZING

From page 1A

dump an ice-cold bucket of water on her, while seated outside in about 36-degree weather, similar to what Special Olympics supporters do during the annual Polar Plunge.

Tyler said the fundraiser was about more than raising money. Involving students in the effort, she said, helped build trust and a sense of belonging, especially for students who may not always feel heard.

"I think it gives students a sense of security and trust when another person stands up for them," Tyler said.

She said it's important for students to see adults lead by example and keep their word, noting that trust is built through actions.

"I believe we have to keep our word in order for people to see us as trustworthy," Tyler said. "If not, people will not have confidence in

Chilling during the holidays

Members of the Greenwood County Sheriff's Office took a dip in Lake Greenwood. Find out why in Tuesday's e-edition.

our character or what we say or do."

Tyler acknowledged that everyone makes mistakes, including herself, but said growth comes from learning from those moments and choosing to do better.

As an SRO, she said she strives to live by Proverbs 22:6, which says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Tyler added that she hopes moments like the Polar Plunge help students and the broader community see law enforcement as advocates and partners.

"I think when law enforcement interacts with the community, it shows that we can have fun and still do our jobs by protecting and serving," Tyler said.

Condolences can be submitted online at indexjournal.com/obituaries

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

UPTOWN GREENWOOD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS
WHERE: The Arts Center at the Federal Build-

ing [2nd Floor Conference Room

WHEN: 8:30 a.m.

AGENDA: Call Meeting to Order – Chair, Laura Bachinski; Approval of Nov. 25 Meeting Minutes;

Old Business/Discussion [Merchants Association Update—Taylor Tucker; Holiday Recap]; New Business/Discussion [Annual Meeting Discussion; 2026 Budget and Meeting Schedule Adoption]

ORDINANCE

From page 1A

sparked a sustained push for local action.

The incident

What Greenwood City Council approved this month began not with legislation, but with a moment of fear at a red light.

In February, Lakelands resident Sanquetta Brown was driving along Bypass 225 near Emerald High School when a man, later identified by law enforcement as Dennis Allen of McCormick County, pulled alongside her vehicle.

Brown told police and the Index-Journal that Allen began driving erratically and directing aggressive behavior toward her. When the two ended up at a red light at Emerald High School, Brown recorded Allen as he repeatedly shouted at her, "Where did that car get that n-word at?"

Brown reported the encounter to Greenwood police, but the initial response by law enforcement characterized the incident as protected speech and cited a lack of identifying information.

Afterward, Brown posted the video of the encounter to Facebook, where it quickly went viral, garnering thousands of reactions and comments in the days following the incident.

Greenwood Police Chief T.J. Chaudoin later reviewed the video and contacted Brown, stating in his incident report that he disagreed with the initial assessment and believed the language constituted "fighting words."

"The victim was informed that she had spoken with the police and that the statement fell under the category of free speech. However, after reviewing the video, I disagree with that assessment. I believe the statement constitutes a hate crime involving fighting words, which is a violation of the law," Chaudoin's report stated.

However, because the incident occurred outside city limits, the case was referred to the Greenwood County Sheriff's Office.

Weeks later, Sheriff Dennis Kelly



INDEX-JOURNAL FILE

Resident Jumelle Brooks first presented her plea to Greenwood City Council for a hate intimidation ordinance back in April of this year.

announced the investigation would not result in charges, citing a lack of applicable state law and no evidence of reckless driving.

When asked about Allen's comments to Brown, Kelly confirmed South Carolina does not have a hate crimes statute that would apply to the incident. While calling the language offensive, Kelly said words alone did not meet the legal threshold for a crime under existing law.

The conclusion left Brown without legal recourse and sparked broader public frustration, particularly as the video continued circulating widely online.

That gap between harm and accountability became the foundation of a monthlong discussion inside Greenwood City Council chambers.

Brooks brings issue to city council

In April, Greenwood resident and community advocate Jumelle Brooks addressed council during public comment, urging members to consider a local hate intimidation ordinance. Brooks said Brown's video motivated her to come before council. But, Brooks also raised concerns that the state legislature has continued to decline passing a statewide hate crimes law.

Brooks framed the issue not as a matter of speech, but as a matter of safety and protection, arguing that bias-motivated conduct causes harm beyond the underlying offense itself. She also educated council on the now more than 20

cities, towns and counties across the state that have some form of a hate or prejudice ordinance.

Brooks returned to council in months that followed, reiterating her concerns as discussions continued but no ordinance was formally introduced. Council acknowledged Brooks' public comments while emphasizing the need to proceed carefully.

In July, Greenwood City Attorney Tripp Padgett advised council to delay action while seeking guidance from the South Carolina Attorney General's Office, citing unresolved constitutional questions and the potential for legal challenges. Council agreed to pause consideration while awaiting an opinion.

In October, the Attorney General's Office issued an advisory opinion.

The opinion cautioned that some locally adopted hate crime ordinances could raise constitutional concerns under state law, particularly if they create new criminal offenses or punish conduct otherwise lawful under state statute.

However, the opinion stopped short of prohibiting such ordinances outright, noting they remain in effect unless and until challenged and struck down by a court.

As a result, enforcement decisions are left to individual municipalities, which retain discretion under the state's Home Rule authority. The opinion also distinguished between criminal penalties and civil infractions, indicating ordinances structured around civil fines tied

to existing crimes may face fewer constitutional hurdles.

The opinion further noted that the absence of a comprehensive state hate crimes statute has contributed to the patchwork of local approaches now under debate.

Following the opinion, Brooks again addressed council in October, questioning whether legal uncertainty should prevent local governments from acting where state law has declined to do so.

In early November, council met in executive session to discuss a possible ordinance. On Nov. 17, Greenwood City Council gave the ordinance its first reading. A second reading and final vote followed in December.

During Monday's meeting, no members of the public spoke for or against the ordinance during public hearing, and council did not engage in additional discussion before voting to approve the measure. The ordinance passed on a 6-1 vote, with councilman Ronnie Ables casting the lone dissenting vote.

With the vote, Greenwood joins a growing number of South Carolina cities and counties that have adopted local ordinances in the absence of a statewide hate crimes law.

South Carolina lawmakers have not passed such a law in more than a decade, including in the years following the 2015 mass shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston.

What does the ordinance do?

Greenwood's CCBoP ordinance **does not** criminalize thoughts,

beliefs or speech, nor does it create a new criminal offense.

Instead, it provides a penalty enhancement for certain crimes, when a victim or property is intentionally selected because of bias or prejudice.

The ordinance allows a municipal court judge to impose a limited civil monetary penalty not to exceed \$500. The penalty applies only after a defendant has been convicted of an existing criminal offense within the city's jurisdiction and if the court determines the victim or property was intentionally selected because of bias as defined by the ordinance.

The ordinance applies only to offenses committed within Greenwood city limits and only to cases heard in municipal court.

It does not apply to felony cases, does not affect prosecutions in General Sessions Court and does not authorize jail time beyond what is already permitted for the underlying offense.

In November, Padgett described the ordinance as narrowly tailored, applying to a limited subset of cases while providing municipal courts an additional tool when bias-motivated victim selection is established.

What's next?

Following council's vote on Monday, the ordinance is now in effect in the City of Greenwood. Brooks said this outcome reflects persistence rather than urgency.

"This wasn't about one person or one moment," Brooks said. "It started in February, and it didn't go away because people kept showing up."

The Index-Journal spoke briefly with Brown following the ordinance's passage. Brown thanked Brooks and the community for their support in keeping the issue alive and for seeing the ordinance through.

Brooks emphasized that passage of the ordinance does not end the conversation, noting that legal challenges remain possible and broader change would require state action.

"We know this isn't one and done," Brooks said. "But Greenwood chose to stand up and say something."