



# Richland County Council takes new look at how it votes

By **TIM FLACH**  
*tflach@thestate.com*

Richland County Council agreed Tuesday to take a second look at how its 11 members vote.

Councilman Jim Manning proposed increasing the number of recorded

votes on some—but not all—decisions so the public can know who favors and who opposes measures.

His plan would require a record of how council members stand on final approval of measures if there is disagreement as well as on one-time decisions.

Roll-call votes still would not occur on what council members consider procedural items, such as approval of minutes, noncontroversial matters and adjournment.

Manning described the plan as “doing a hybrid” that assures recorded votes on

major matters. It will be studied for possible changes, but he predicted it’s mostly what will be adopted.

Consideration of the changes come after complaints erupted when council members rejected an effort last month to require many more votes

showing how they stand.

“It’s due to a lot of attention to that decision and voter outcry,” said Councilman Seth Rose, sponsor of the change turned down. He called the new proposal a start that’s “imperfect.”

It won’t apply to many preliminary decisions on

which council members split in developing a proposal that then breezes to final acceptance after compromise, he said.

“Still, I’m happy to see this first step,” Rose said.

Reach Flach  
at (803) 771-8483

## I want you to know how I vote as your representative

As many of you know, I made a motion to establish a policy of recording how every council member votes on every issue. That motion was defeated last month by a 9-2 margin (Greg Pearce was the only person to join me in voting for the motion).

As a result of intense public opposition to its decision, County Council is now considering a new measure that may

record members’ votes on some issues. While I support this compromise, I think you deserve more from County Council.

I want you to know how I vote as your representative. I believe all constituents deserve to know how representatives vote on all items taken up by Council. And, all elected officials should be willing to stand behind their votes and you should be able to find out how they vote.

*Seth Rose*



**County Council District #5  
CONSTITUENT UPDATE**

# You deserve the right to know how your County Council representative votes

www.thestate.com • THE STATE, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA • THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2015 • A7

## Richland council doesn't want roll-call voting

**By SAMARI ELLIS**  
ellen@thestate.com

The majority of Richland County Council members this week voted against a proposal for on-the-record roll-call voting for all council decisions.

Councilman Seth Rose, who proposed the motion, and Greg Pearce were the only members who voted in favor of changing council's practice of voting collectively "aye" or "nay."

Currently, a council member can make a request for division on a vote, in which case council members raise their hands in favor or against an issue, and the clerk calls out the names of any voters which way it's a matter of record.

Rose said, "I strongly believe this is one of the most important things we can be doing for the people of Richland County." Rose said, "I want my constituents to know how I vote."

Other council members, though, said they saw no need to change the county's voting practice. "The council has been doing it for long before I got there and also I've been there," Councilman Jim Manning said.

Manning is a member of council's Rules and Appointments Committee, along with Bill Malinowski and Julie-Ann Dixon, the council's spokeswoman.

"It is a sad day in Richland County when we elected officials, in the year

### Richland County Council Shoots Down on-Record Voting

By Chris Trainor

A attempt by Richland County Councilman Seth Rose to change the way the Council votes on issues failed decisively on May 19.

May 27-June 2, 2015

Rose proposed a measure to adopt roll call voting for County Council, meaning that individual council members' votes on various issues would be placed on the record. As it stands, County Council members simply collectively say "aye" or "nay" when voting, and the chairman indicates whether or not the motion passed or failed. If they wish, Council members, through a process called division, can then call for a vote breakdown on individual issues.

Official minutes of Council meetings, viewable on the county's website, do not indicate a vote tally on the various measures Council considers. For example, if a motion passes, the minutes read, "The vote in favor was unanimous."

Rose, the Councilman for District 5, has been pushing for roll-call voting, whether it be through a machine, the raising of hands or any other tallying method that would put Council members' votes on the record.

However, his efforts failed at the May 19 meeting of Council, as, according to published reports, only two members of the 11-person Council — Rose and Greg Pearce — voted in favor of roll call voting.

Rose says he is "appalled" that Council was not willing to adopt a process to put its

votes on the record.

"Our council rules are outdated, archaic and basically, as for voting, need to be changed," Rose says. "What we do now is that all in favor say 'aye,' and all opposed say 'nay.' Sometimes there are members who don't even say anything. They just kind of know how the vote's going to go and they don't even open their mouths."

Rose concedes that any Council member can call for division on a given vote. However, he says he has found that other Council members don't appreciate it if someone exercises that right.

"Here's the problem: When you call for division, everyone on County Council starts huffing and puffing and blowing and looking at you and shuffling in their chair as if you are being disruptive," Rose says. "Everyone glares at you like 'Why are you calling for division?' It becomes disruptive in the meeting."

Reasons why certain Council members are against roll-call voting have varied. According to WTS, Councilman Bill Malinowski said acquiring the appropriate technology to record votes could cost as much as \$15,000. Meanwhile, Councilman Jim Manning told The State the Council has been using its current voting measures for years

and if people want to know how he voted on a given issue, they can ask him. Manning also pointed out the Council's meetings are recorded and streamed on the Internet.

Using some form of on-the-record voting is standard for many bodies. For example, in the State House of Representatives, legislators key in their votes electronically and the results are displayed on a board in the House chamber. When Columbia City Council votes, the city clerk calls out each individual Council member by name, one at a time, and they individually respond "aye" or "nay."

John Crangle, director of government watchdog group Common Cause South Carolina, says he thinks local governments should have on-the-record voting.

"The thing about politicians is, they would like to disclose as little as possible about what they do," Crangle says. "If they could hold their meetings in a submarine at the bottom of the ocean, they would do that. Should their votes be on-the-record? Absolutely. No question about that. But a lot of them want to hide what they are doing. Something is going to have to come from the General Assembly that forces these local governments to be more transparent."



It's an honor to be your voice and represent you on Richland County Council.

If you ever need my help, please visit my website at **SethRose.com**, call my cell phone at **361.2360** or reach me at my law office at **803.779.0100**.

*Seth*  
**Seth Rose**  
County Council District 5  
CONSTITUENT UPDATE



1517 Hampton Street • Columbia, SC 29201  
803.361.2360 • **www.SethRose.com**

5

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
COLUMBIA, SC  
CR+5