

Five Questions with Easley Combined Utilities Commissioner Jeff Fogle



1 You're Easley Combined Utilities longest serving commissioner. What do you enjoy about the post?

I've lived in Easley since 1970 when I was 5 years old so I'm not quite a lifelong resident. I have seen the positive growth that we've experienced, and I wanted to be part of planning for the future growth that is to come.

Also, I'm an architect by profession. I enjoy master planning and thinking about the future. I recognize the importance that good utilities play in attracting business and maintaining our high quality of life.

2 What are some of the big projects ECU is working on now?

We've been busy relocating and providing utilities along the Highway 153 extension project. Also, we have purchased from Pickens County its portion of ownership of the Georges Creek ReWa Sewer Treatment Plant so that we will now can serve the eastern end of our county.

That's a real opportunity to get rid of some sewer force main lines, which are sewer lines that don't have downhill slope, meaning you have to pump the sewage. It's not the ideal way to do it. Now, we have an opportunity to not only get rid of some force mains but to also provide sewer service to a new part of the county, which is more environmentally friendly than septic tanks.

3 I understand ECU is thinking outside of the box about preventing future silt buildup near its water treatment plant on Saluda Lake?

Yes. Previously, we paid to dredge an island of silt that had

built up in the Saluda Lake. It could have impacted our water treatment plant. These days, we're taking a broader view and taking proactive steps to be part of a solution rather than just reacting to the problem.

We purchased property upstream of the lake with the express purpose of selling it to Nature Land Trust so it can protect it from being developed. By protecting that land, it limits sediment going into the river. It's a win-win for ECU, its customers and the environment.

4 The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in job losses and other hardships for many people. Has ECU made changes to help?

One thing I'm really proud of is we suspended late fees for several months earlier this year and did not cut off customers who could not pay. We have also established a payment plan so those behind on their bills can catch up by making installment payments. We've seen a lot of success with that and customers appreciate it.

5 You and your wife, Cindi, raised your two daughters in Easley. What's next now that you're empty nesters?

We love Easley and are happy to stay. The size of the community is big enough to have whatever you need at your disposal without driving a long way. But it's also small enough to feel like you're not living in a city. It has a wonderful small town feel. Plus, we have close proximity to the mountains. It doesn't get any better than that.