Feaster named Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration

By Pete Poore

ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration Angela Feaster is a 25-year veteran at SCDOT and has a background in accounting, finance and management.

The new Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration has spent several years at SCDOT, but she did not begin her career at the agency.

After earning a degree in Accounting from Lander University in 1983, Angela Feaster spent two years as an accountant in the private sector. Then in 1985, a job ad for a position at SCDOT (which was then the SC Department of Highways and Public Transportation) caught her eye. She got the job. "At the time, I thought the job at SCDOT was a good opportunity. I decided to give it a chance for a few years and see what happened, but I expected at some point to go back to the private sector as a CPA (certified public accountant). Almost twenty-five years later, Feaster is still making the commute from her home in Saluda to Columbia each work day.

The new Deputy Secretary went to work in the Accounting Division which was divided into three sections. She was an accountant in the section that produced financial statements. This new job was quite an experience. "I had never seen such complicated financial statements in my life. In college you learned accounting as it's done in the private sector. I wasn't prepared for the complex financial reporting of a public agency," said Feaster.

A promotion moved her into the second section, Accounts Payable, as a Senior Accountant. There was a big challenge on the horizon at just about the same time that promotion came. "SCDOT had always handled paying its own bills, running its own payroll and cutting its own checks. All of those functions were being transferred to the State Comptroller General's Office. It was a big transition that was not easy," Feaster said. "Keep in mind that there were no such things as PCs and each section (about 15 employees) shared a few computer terminals. In fact, there were only one or two telephones for each section," she said.

The Lander graduate then took a position in the Budget section. She was hired by then-Budget Director Debra Rountree. She had been through every financial process at SCDOT. Her next stop on the career track was a promotion to Director of Accounting, supervising all three sections, followed by a promotion to the agency's Comptroller, a position she held until the appointment to Deputy Secretary.

As she assumes the leadership role for the Finance and Administration Division, the Saluda native has improving the gathering and reporting of information high on her list. "We've come a long way from the days when I remember recording financial information in a black book or ledger. Technology has eliminated all those manual processes we used to have, but there is more technology available that can provide more information to the public on the web like project expenditures," said Feaster.

When Feaster began at SCDOT in 1985, somewhere in the back of her mind she thought working her way up to Director of Accounting would be a lofty but attainable goal. Now she's providing leadership for an entire division. "I never thought I would have reached this level. It's both humbling and exciting. The diversity of the work that takes place in this division is very broad. It takes a number of people who wear very different hats to support the mission of SCDOT," said Feaster.

The new Deputy Secretary is married to Ken Feaster. The couple makes their home in Saluda County with their daughters Emily and Anna.

A letter we liked

Folks at SCDOT:

I thought I would write you a "thumbs up" about the incident response I had here in Florence County. I was on I-95, my car all of a sudden was handling funny, and a driver in the next lane over was trying to gesture to me that something was wrong. As I pulled over, there behind me was this truck with yellow lights also pulling over right behind me. What a coincidence.

When I got out of my car, there was one of my tires, completely flat. I expected to spend at least the next hour to change the tire, there in 95 degree heat and with cars going seventy miles an hour a few feet away. I wondered about this truck behind me. I'd gladly pay him plenty to change my tire for me.

On the truck were the letters SCDOT. I was wondering how much he'd do for me. He was already starting to help me. He jacked my car up, far faster and more reliably than with the little jack that was in my car. He changed my tire. He did everything. I was back in shape in under fifteen minutes.

Only when he was done did he tell me that helping stranded motorists is his job. And when I offered him twenty dollars as a tip for his services, he waved it away with his hands. I tried to press it: "Is it illegal for you to take it?" He answered, "We can lose our jobs if we accept tips." I certainly didn't want him to lose his job.

And so, I am writing this email now. I felt I never got my money's worth out of my tax payments so much as I did then. Feel free to show this letter to any legislator who may question this service. Incident response is such a great idea that it should not only survive any tight budget, but even be expanded to encompass the entire State.

Damon Scott
Florence