

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

January 26, 2024

**Jimmy Staton**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
(843) 761-7039  
fax: (843) 761-7037  
jdstaton@santeecooper.com

Re: Proposed Gratis Lease to the Grand Strand Humane Society

[REDACTED]

This is in response to your January 24th letter related to Santee Cooper's proposed gratis lease to the Grand Strand Humane Society ("GSHS"). While I understand you were traveling out of the country and could not attend the January 12 meeting I had with some of the Waterside Drive residents, I appreciated the opportunity to hear the other residents' concerns. I'm disappointed, however, that the Waterside Drive residents did not allow the opportunity to hear from the GSHS representatives that also came to discuss the matter and address concerns.

[REDACTED]

Santee Cooper had a board meeting on January 22 that included two executive sessions, which were properly noticed for the topics discussed. You are correct that discussion of the gratis lease was not included on the agenda. I assure you the proposed lease was not discussed in open or executive sessions at Monday's meeting. The discussions that did occur in the executive sessions only included the two topics which Santee Cooper noticed. Those two topics, by themselves, warranted robust and involved discussions and counsel, and that took, as you phrased it, "a significant amount of time." Santee Cooper takes its Freedom of Information Act obligations very seriously and always strives to meet the letter and the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act. To insinuate otherwise is unwarranted. A recording of the open sessions of the Board meeting is available on Santee Cooper's website if you are interested in listening to the procedure of Santee Cooper entering and exiting the executive sessions as well as the presentation that occurred after exiting the executive sessions. The Board action related to the proposed lease to the GSHS was done in open session during our December Board meeting after being properly noticed in our agenda, in a manner that was transparent and consistent with the approval of other gratis leases.

I understand the Waterside Drive residents are concerned with the proposed gratis lease to the GSHS. However, making baseless and unsubstantiated accusations that the approval of such a lease is a conflict of interest for Santee Cooper or Senator Rankin is unfounded and unsubstantiated.



I'd like to correct misstatements in your email. The GSHS is not Mrs. Rankin's personal organization; it is a non-profit organization for which she volunteers on the board as the President. Further, the proposed transaction is a gratis lease, not a donation of land. Santee Cooper has a long history of granting gratis leases that benefit the state as a whole. The granting of this lease is 100% within Santee Cooper's gratis lease policy and practices. Santee Cooper allows the use of its properties at no charge to certain organizations for purposes that advance both a public purpose and a Santee Cooper purpose. Currently, Santee Cooper has 38 gratis leases extended for property it owns, which is being used for playgrounds, recreation sites, law-enforcement facilities, training centers, research and development centers, and summer camps. At the same Board meeting in which Santee Cooper approved the gratis lease to the GSHS, Santee Cooper also approved the renewal of two other gratis leases.

Again, Santee Cooper appreciates your position. However, threats of media involvement are unnecessary, and I think you'll find, ineffective. Prior to receiving your correspondence, I had already instructed Santee Cooper staff to pause this transaction while we evaluate the concerns of the residents of Waterside Drive in conjunction with Santee Cooper's gratis lease policy and corporate mission of being the state's leading resource for improving the quality of life for all South Carolinians. When that evaluation is complete you and the other residents will be informed.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Staton

JDS:cbb