



# News Release

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## MEDIA CONTACT

Shawn R. Smetana, Media Relations Coordinator  
Phone: (843) 958-4007/Fax: (843) 958-4004  
Email: [ssmetana@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:ssmetana@charlestoncounty.org)

**Fact Sheet:** <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/pdfs/FactSheetBondPrelimCourtRibbonCutting11-15-13.pdf>  
**Before/after pictures of building with new sign:** <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/bond.htm>

## County “Recycles” Old Jail Building to Centralize Bond Hearing and Preliminary Hearing Courts

*Sen. Thurmond, Chairman Pryor attend ribbon cutting to celebrate reusing an old building and centralizing two important court functions*

On Friday, Nov. 15, [Charleston County’s Magistrates/Summary Courts](http://www.charlestoncounty.org/pdfs/FactSheetBondPrelimCourtRibbonCutting11-15-13.pdf) held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the centralization of the County’s Bond Hearing Court and Preliminary Hearing Court. Speakers at the event were S.C. Senator [Paul Thurmond](#), and Charleston County Council Chairman [Teddie E. Pryor, Sr.](#)

“Charleston County has once again proven their ability to step up to home plate and hit a home run. In this case they hit a grand slam,” said Associate Chief Magistrate James Gosnell. “The new Preliminary Hearing Court and Bond Court are state-of-the-art facilities that will serve the public’s judicial needs. These new magistrate court offices will be a model for the rest of the state to follow.”

The building was vacant after completion of the 2010 Detention Center Expansion Project, and was renovated and repurposed with two suites for the courts. The Sheriff’s Training, Logistics and Facilities suites remain in the building.

“The County saw an opportunity to reuse the vacant, yet structurally-sound Detention Center Administration Building,” said Facilities Director Dan Chandler. “In addition, the \$1.2 million renovation project and centralization of the two courts into the same facility provides the County cost savings in the long-run by eliminating an annual \$77,330 in rent for office space.”

### Bond Hearing Court

- In fiscal year 2013, the Bond Hearing Court held 13,953 bond hearings. Additionally, they generated 7,464 arrest warrants.
- Background: The Bond Hearing Court in Charleston County was centralized by Order of the Supreme Court in March 1985. The Centralized Bond Hearing Court sets bond on Municipal, Magistrate and General Sessions Offenses. All bond hearings must be held within 24 hours of an arrest. For this reason, bond hearing court is held every day of the year. The judge can set a bond of surety or personal recognizance based on several factors including but not limited to: risk of flight, danger to the community and criminal history. Since 2005, all bond hearings are held via video conference. This technology provides a safer environment for the victims and witnesses of crime to appear in the bond hearing courtroom.

### Preliminary Hearing Court

- In fiscal year 2013, the Preliminary Hearing Court held 5,442 preliminary hearings and 2,128 bond reconsiderations.
- Background: The Centralized Preliminary Hearing Court was established in May 1995. A preliminary hearing is a proceeding to determine whether there is enough evidence to proceed with a criminal trial. The judge can bound the case over for trial, dismiss the case, amend the charge or remand the case to a lower trial court. In December 2007, by Order of the Supreme Court, the Preliminary Hearing Court was given authorization to hear modification of bond requests made by defense attorneys. This change in procedure expedited modification hearings and provided all key stakeholders an opportunity to be involved and informed of the request.

Since 2000, Charleston County has constructed six new Magistrate Courts as part of its Capital Improvements Plan:

- 2000: Two in the main Public Services Building -- Small Claims and North Area Magistrate
- 2000: James Island Magistrate Court
- 2004: McClellanville Magistrate Court
- 2005: Johns Island Magistrate Court
- 2007: Melbourne Magistrate Court

“The County does plenty of work to support our judicial system. We have 17 judges (magistrates) in 14 court locations and we need to have safe and efficient court rooms for the judges and the public,” said [Pryor](#). “Keep in mind that not too long ago some of our courts were housed in trailers, so these upgrades were necessary to improve services for our citizens.”

For more information on [Charleston County's Magistrates/Summary Courts](#), call (843) 202-6600.

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- See us on You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/charlestoncountygov>
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- written by Jennie Flinn -