The second half of the 2013-2014 regular session of the 120th General Assembly was gavoted to a close on June 5 at 5 p.m. The House of Representatives and Senate returned to Columbia for three days on June 17 to handle the governor's vetoes and conference reports. Any legislation that did not pass this session must be reintroduced in 2015 as a new bill.

2013-2014 Legislative Priorities

For the second half of the 2013-2014 session, the Municipal Association identified four legislative priorities to address major challenges cities and towns of all sizes face. The four priorities were removal and rehabilitation of dilapidated structures; dependable revenue sources for cities and towns; enhanced public safety; and long-term and stable funding sources for roads, bridges and infrastructure maintenance, improvements and expansion.

In 2014, the Association spearheaded introduction of the Dilapidated Buildings Act that would have given cities and towns a new tool to address unsafe and dilapidated buildings. The bill passed the Senate but died in the House in the last week of the session.

Increased state revenues this year gave local governments some hope for increased funding to get the Local Government Fund back toward its statutory funding level. Since 2009, the General Assembly hasn’t funded the LGF at the level required by state law.
Annual Meeting Tech Talks .......... 3
Water liabilities can dampen summer fun ....................... 4

Special Insert: Awards Program

Flood Act could impact property values, historic preservation, infill projects ......................... 5

Disaster readiness: It’s never too early to plan ...................... 6

Ten municipal points of interest in Downtown Charleston .......... 7

Wrap-up, from page 1 >

Included in the FY15 budget for the Local Government Fund is $187.6 million in recurring dollars and $25 million in nonrecurring dollars for a total of $212.6 million. This puts the LGF at the same funding level as the current year.

A positive step is that $5 million more of the LGF funding for FY15 is in recurring dollars versus nonrecurring dollars when compared to FY14. However, with the increased dollars in the FY15 state budget, the LGF will be funded at only 74 percent of statutory funding compared to 81 percent statutory funding in this fiscal year.

New provisos adopted this year had no significant impact on cities and towns.

Two public safety bills that passed this year have direct impact on local law enforcement. S308 permits a patron to carry a concealed weapon in a business that sells alcohol consumed on the premise unless notice of a prohibition is provided by the business. See the June Uptown for more details about this bill.

S19 increases a circuit court judge’s ability to deny bond when someone is arrested for a “serious” or “most serious offense” while out on bond for an offense that falls into either of these categories. For more information about S19, see the June Uptown.

Other passed bills

The Association tracked more than 600 bills during the 2013-2014 legislative session. More than 60 of those bills became law. A few of these bills that passed in 2014 are highlighted below. For a complete list of 2014 passed bills, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: legislative tracking).

Statewide technology equipment recycling

H3847 creates a statewide program for recycling electronic equipment. The bill allows nonelectronic portions of electronic devices to be reintroduced into the regular solid waste stream, allows participating local governments to charge manufacturers for recovery of devices once the manufacture has reached it recovery quota, and removes the rule that previously prevented participating local governments from charging consumers at any point in the device recovery process has been met for the year.

Multilot discount cap elimination

H4944, the bill that extends the multi-lot discount, passed the House and Senate. Since 2001, the multilot discount has allowed a developer who is developing at least 10 lots to keep the original property tax value for up to five years until each lot is sold. At the beginning of the recession, the General Assembly allowed developers at the end of the five year period to apply for an extension of the discount for tax years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The extension sunset on December 31, 2014. H4944 extended this time period to make application for an extension through December 31, 2015.

Study committee on expungement of criminal offenses

S900 creates a study committee to review the state’s criminal laws and determine criminal offenses appropriate for expungement.

Accommodations tax revenue for beach renourishment

S294 allows local accommodation tax revenues to be used for beach renourishment and allows a municipality by a two-thirds vote to hold the funds for more than two years if the funds are designated for control and repair of waterfront erosion.

Read the 2014 Legislative Review for more details. Visit www.masc.sc (keyword: legislative review.)
Annual Meeting Tech Talks

Throughout the Annual Meeting, attendees can attend brief technology sessions. These sessions are designed specifically for elected officials. In these nontechnical sessions, attendees can learn about a wide range of technology topics in a short amount of time.

**Disaster Recovery: Backing Up Data Isn’t Enough**

Your data is critical to your municipality, but is it as secure or as accessible as it should be? Explore what questions to ask your IT department to be assured that a plan is in place to bring your systems and data back online quickly after a disaster.

**Mobile-Friendly Websites: It’s Not Optional**

With mobile web users predicted to overtake desktop and laptop users this year, municipalities must have a mobile-friendly website. Get an overview of mobile-friendly website design, responsive design and native apps.

**You’ve Got Mail! How to Keep It, Search It, Retrieve It**

The continued growth of using email has made email archiving an invaluable tool. From increasing employee efficiency to responding effectively to FOIA requests, email archiving is an affordable solution for municipalities of all sizes.

**The Cloud and City Hall: A Perfect Match?**

Cloud technology now makes it possible for cities and towns, regardless of size, staff or budget, to have access to technology they may not otherwise have been able to afford. The cloud eliminates the need to make costly annual purchases of IT equipment, services and applications. Find out which cloud services are the right match for your municipality.

The Cloud: A Great Solution for Disaster Recovery

Many municipalities have a data backup plan that isn’t as secure and accessible as it should be. Does your municipality fall into this category? Learn how a cloud-based data backup solution offers a more secure, affordable and reliable option than traditional backup solutions.

**Technology: Buckle your Seatbelts, We’re Reaching Hyperspeed**

Telecommuting, walkstations …… There are few, if any, sectors that change as rapidly as information technology. Learn about what’s coming in the near future and how to position your municipality to take advantage of these changes.

**Top Five Things You Need to Know About Cybersecurity**

It is almost impossible for your municipality to avoid the threat of a cybersecurity breach. A data breach is a significant risk that requires advance preparation. It’s not a question of if one will happen, but when. Learn what you can do to be more prepared.

**Open Forum Q and A**

Have any pressing technology questions that you need answered? Staff from the Municipal Association and VC3 will be available to answer questions from attendees. Even those without a question to pose will learn a great deal in this informal session.

**How to Weather a Multicloud Environment**

A multicloud strategy involves using two or more cloud services to diminish the risks of data loss and downtimes. It can also increase the efficiency of multiple departments with diverse needs. Learn more about this emerging trend and how your city might benefit from using multiple cloud services.
The warm (let’s face it...hot) South Carolina weather is here, and vacations are underway. While cities and towns with pools, water parks and natural bodies of water close by may benefit economically from more users at these facilities and additional visitors, these same cities and towns need to make sure that they take steps to keep water enthusiasts safe.

Swimming pools

With drowning being the second leading cause of death for children 14 years old and under, pool operators must pay close attention to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control regulations (61-51) related to swimming pools.

In addition to regulating the pool's design and construction, DHEC also provides guidance on the number of lifeguards needed based on pool size, the required safety equipment and the use of emergency notification devices.

Ignoring these regulations and numerous others can be costly. The pool may be shut down until violations are corrected, and DHEC can impose fines and penalties. More important than avoiding a hit to the wallet, following the regulations greatly diminishes the likelihood of a drowning or other water-related incident.

Aquatic features

In recent years, the number of municipal-owned water parks and splash pads has risen. While these aquatic features provide the public with another water recreation outlet, they come with additional liability concerns not typically found with swimming pools. The presence of stairs and platforms increase the opportunities for trips, slips and falls.

Wave pools, in particular, bring additional elements into play. Glare, the rise and fall of the water, and the number of people present can create additional risks. Officials may need to consider adequate handrails, more signage and additional lifeguards to keep these increasingly popular aquatic features safe for people to enjoy.

Bodies of water

While man-made facilities can be constructed, equipped and staffed to mitigate liability exposures, natural bodies of water have exposures that are not so easily remedied.

Because many of these areas do not have lifeguards present, signage is especially important. The municipality should post “Swim at your own risk” warnings in areas without lifeguards. In some cases, the municipality may need to restrict, or prohibit altogether, activities such as swimming and fishing. Officials may also want to consider having adequate railings and lifesaving equipment nearby for visitors to use.

Having the proper equipment on hand and staffing pools and water features correctly goes a long way in preventing accidents and allowing residents and visitors to enjoy a respite from the dog days of summer.
Started in 1987, the program provides local government officials and employees the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina.

This year, 26 municipalities entered the Achievement Awards. Summaries, along with a video highlighting this year’s winners, are available on the Association’s website at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement).
**Population 1-1,000 Category  | Town of Ridgeway**

The Town of Ridgeway has been enjoying economic momentum in the last few years fueled by a strong business community and passionate residents. Maintaining the economic momentum demanded a new way of thinking, one that keeps retail businesses flourishing and visitors returning. This small town of roughly 360 people launched a massive public relations and marketing campaign.

The campaign evolved from the town’s strategic plan, which is updated and prioritized each year by council with input from residents. The plan called for an updated website, a new slogan/brand and new community events.

Ridgeway’s new slogan, “One Tank Town,” refers to how little gas it takes to get to Ridgeway, which is centrally located in the state. Town officials and the local chamber of commerce harnessed excitement for the town’s signature event, Pig on the Ridge, to promote other popular events like First Fridays downtown and a 43-mile garage sale held in cooperation with other Fairfield County municipalities. Bright, new signage greets visitors when they arrive in Ridgeway.

Local officials used technology and social media to share the town’s assets. The custom-designed website allows town officials to include more information about the town, local businesses and special events. To complement this effort, officials began using social media to connect with both residents and visitors. QR codes direct visitors to the town’s website then on to the websites of downtown businesses. These efforts were funded through a variety of sources, including town funds, revenue from Pig on the Ridge, and in-kind efforts and donations from local merchants.

Visits to Ridgeway’s website and Facebook page are increasing, along with tourism revenue and overall interest in the town. Officials are confident that through these initiatives, prosperity will continue. The “One Tank Town” campaign has let the world know about the big things going on in this little town.

*Contact Mayor Charlene N. Herring at charlenenherring@gmail.com or 803.337.3316.*

**Population 1,001-5,000 Category  | City of Manning**

In an effort to promote community well-being, Manning City Council made it a priority to create recreational outlets across the city. With this initiative in mind, a group of residents urged council to convert a dilapidated, private recreational/baseball facility into a park in an area of the city without one.

Through the effort of multiple partnerships, the property became the Gibbons Street Park, a state-of-the-art facility providing a safe and secure green space. The park includes an 1800 square-foot facility with storage, restrooms and a large, fenced playground. It also has the capability to host parties and corporate events.

City officials collaborated on the project with the Clarendon Junior Chamber of Commerce, Clarendon County and the local business community. Each of the three entities involved provided funding, as well as fundraising efforts that included oyster roasts, giveaways and individual donations.

Because multiple parties participated in making the park a reality, a sense of joint ownership encourages a group effort in maintaining the space. The public has also embraced the park. Family and civic events are a common occurrence.
Plans are already in the works to make the park even better. Manning residents can look forward to a walking track, free Wi-Fi access and additional playground equipment in the near future.

Contact Scott Tanner at administrator@cityofmanning.org or 803.435.8477 ext. 115.

Population 5,001-10,000 Category | City of Lancaster

Lancaster’s police department and the county’s sheriff’s department had both outgrown their offices and needed more space to continue meeting the public safety needs of the community. Lancaster officials felt they found a solution with an abandoned, dilapidated building on the outskirts of town. Since acquiring the building in 2004, city officials could only use the 90,000 square-foot abandoned textile building as a storage facility because of inadequate water lines on the property.

Because the surrounding neighborhood desperately needed stabilization, rehabbing the building to house public safety officers seemed like it would be a good place to start.

City officials brought Lancaster County on board and soon plans developed for a multidepartment facility. Officials worked together to develop plans to provide adequate utilities to the building. For the most part, funding came from the city and county. Lancaster also received funding from Duke Energy and a Department of Commerce grant.

When the planning and fundraising efforts were completed, the building was transformed into a bustling community space for city and county services, including police, fire, EMS and public works offices. The building also has free meeting space open to civic and community groups.

A unique aspect of the project was converting the third floor into an indoor training facility, which is being used by departments across the state. On the third floor, Lancaster officials built a “city” with an apartment, doctor’s office and convenience store, so that all facets of emergency services can prepare for almost any kind of scenario.

The city is committed to continually improving the facility and the surrounding neighborhood. There are plans to renovate the community rooms with an industrial kitchen and develop the outdoor space for family gatherings.

The Fifteenth Street Project provided much needed space for city and county staff while simultaneously creating safety and stability for a transitional neighborhood in Lancaster.

Contact Helen Sowell at hpsowell@lancastersc.com or 803.289.1699.

Population 10,001-20,000 Category | City of Conway

In 2007, Conway officials made a long-term commitment to bring about positive change in the community by creating the Rebuild Conway Program. The mission of the program is to identify neighborhoods in need of revitalization then infuse them with the necessary support and infrastructure to reverse their decline. The targeted areas were full of overgrown lots, abandoned buildings and inadequate infrastructure. They were places that promoted delinquent activity. Dialogue between residents and police was nonexistent, and crime in these neighborhoods was at an all-time high.
Representatives from city council and city departments serve on the Rebuild Conway Committee to spearhead the program. The committee evaluates potential projects, develops an action plan, and makes recommendations to city council about the best way forward taking into account the city’s budget.

Concerned residents and volunteers actively took a role in clean-up days, beautification events and neighborhood crime watches city staff organized. Federal and state grants along with city general fund dollars paid for these efforts. In its six years, Rebuild Conway has put more than $700,000 to good use in the city’s neediest neighborhoods.

The project is ongoing, but the program’s success is clear. To date, the city has cleared 235 overgrown lots, demolished or rehabilitated 79 structures, and spent more than $500,000 on infrastructure needs such as sidewalks, landscaping and drainage. Conway officials are encouraged by a 23 percent decrease in crimes such as arson, homicides, breaking/entering, assaults and stolen autos.

Rebuild Conway’s success requires coordination of city departments, elected officials and residents to identify needs and respond accordingly with action. Using a variety of sources and inviting numerous community stakeholders to take part, officials in Conway are rebuilding the city, one neighborhood at a time.

Contact Chief Reginald E. Gosnell at rgosnell@cityofconway.com or 843.248.1790.

Economic Development Category  |  City of Greer

The City of Greer—some 200 miles from the Atlantic Ocean—may seem like a strange place to find a port. But the newly-opened Inland Port has already become an economic engine in the state, creating jobs, reducing pollution and connecting regions for a stronger South Carolina.

The idea for the port in Greer was born when global trade in the Port of Charleston began to pick up speed after years of deep recession. Officials with the South Carolina Ports Authority were thrilled with the increased traffic but worried about overcrowding in Charleston, as well as the negative impact on state highways and the environment. Located on both the Norfolk Southern Railroad and Interstate 85, Greer was the ideal location for the state’s first inland port.

City officials acted quickly and committed to the port, knowing it would be an economic boon for Greer, as well as the Upstate region as a whole. With a $3.5 million loan, the City of Greer and the Greer Commissions of Public Works designed and will build a substation to provide electricity to the Inland Port and to serve additional industrial customers as the area around the port grows.

City building officials expedited reviewing plans, processing permits and performing inspections to keep the project on track. City employees used iPads to conveniently review the latest set of approved plans during site visits.

Many state and private entities contributed to the massive project, which resulted in a 400,000 square-foot warehouse and 300 new jobs. The City of Greer greatly expanded its tax base by annexing the Inland Port property. The port has also benefited the entire state by removing an estimated 25,000 trucks from the road annually, which means less fuel being burned and less wear and tear on the state’s highways.

Seven months after breaking ground, the Inland Port offloaded its first cargo because of the swift work of city officials from Greer.

Contact Steve Owens at sowens@cityofgreer.org or 864.416.0121.
Public Safety Category  |  City of Orangeburg

In 2004, the City of Orangeburg and Claflin University forged a partnership to improve forensic laboratory services in the hope of reducing crime in the area. Officials from both entities recognized that forensic evidence critical to solving local criminal cases was not being processed quickly enough, resulting in a dangerous backlog of services necessary for convictions. Meanwhile, offenders who were out on bond and awaiting trial had ample time to commit additional crimes.

Members of the US Senate and House secured much of the funding for a full-service forensics laboratory at Claflin University. More than $1 million was spent to renovate existing space and buy equipment for the state-of-the-art facility.

The City employs two crime scene investigators, a forensic chemist and an evidence technician for the lab. Claflin employs two full-time staff members for the lab, which today is utilized by 17 municipalities, four counties, and several state agencies. More than 4,000 cases have been processed at the lab so far, often with results returned within a week.

Residents of the region are the ultimate beneficiaries of this partnership and the new forensics facility. As the lab processes the DNA, a profile is created in a local database to generate police investigation leads and to help identify suspects. Soon, officials hope the laboratory will receive additional accreditation that will allow it to analyze more serious crimes and a greater number of cases.

Orangeburg and Claflin’s partnership is the only local law enforcement and private university alliance of its kind in the United States. It has meant safety and peace of mind for many in the City of Orangeburg and beyond.

Contact John Singh at jsingh@orangeburg.sc.us or 803.533.6000.

Public Service Category  |  City of Rock Hill

Last year, the City of Rock Hill and the Rock Hill School District joined forces in a progressive partnership that has touched nearly every member of the community in some way. The iROC initiative created a partnership between the city and the school system that uses students’ natural talents, gives city officials new perspectives and uses resources more efficiently.

iROC reaches past the boundaries of a single city department, classroom or specific work assignment. The program leverages the talents of 800+ city employees, 17,400 students and 1450 teachers/administrators to create viable solutions to community challenges. The city’s strategic plan drives each project undertaken.

The initiative gives students real-world examples to demonstrate learning. Now, fifth graders in Rock Hill can be proud of the civil rights walking tour that they created with city staff. Math and science students from the high school can boast that they developed community wellness campaigns designed by examining local eating and exercise habits. Residents have students to thank for the new bike racks around town, and students’ illustrations have been integral to the development of Rock Hill’s new Old Town East Park.

In a world of decreasing budgets and demanding workloads, this collaboration provides a unique opportunity for the city to accomplish tasks that would otherwise need to be funded through the general fund or not undertaken at all.
The city’s approximate $75,000 in start-up costs for student iPads, travel and staff time was funded through the general fund. Through the projects completed in the first full year, city officials estimated they saved $100,000 in staff time and consulting services by using the students’ talents rather than traditional service providers.

City employees at all staff levels and across all departments gain leadership and mentoring experience, encouraging cross-generational dialogue about core community values.

Participation in iROC establishes relationships between today’s city leaders and the leaders of tomorrow. The initiative is leaving a legacy of responsible, engaged individuals who have left an indelible mark on priority areas including infrastructure, transportation, healthy living, historic preservation, recreation and quality of life.

Contact Hope Matthews at hope.matthews@cityofrockhill.com or 803.817.5122.

Public Works Category  |  City of Florence

In 2004, Florence officials recognized the city’s wastewater treatment plant was nearing the end of its service life. Though it had received multiple upgrades during its 50-year existence, the plant was inefficient and outdated, as well as prone to permit compliance issues. Florence officials also needed to increase the plant’s capacity to support commercial and industrial growth.

To begin the process, the city established the Pee Dee Regional Water and Sewer Steering Committee, a committee of area water and wastewater providers. Partnerships soon developed that improved communication about the delivery and sale of water and wastewater services regionally.

Instead of constructing a new facility on “greenfield” property outside the corporate limits as originally planned, Florence officials ultimately decided to build a new 22 million gallon-per-day plant on the existing plant’s site.

City officials knew they had a unique challenge before them: providing exceptional treatment capacity within a growing urban area while maintaining their commitment to regionalism and environmental stewardship. They were committed to constructing the new plant in a socially responsible way, giving consideration to improving the quality of life, resource allocation and educational opportunities for Florence residents.

During the design phase, the treatment process was specifically studied to determine the most cost-effective means to satisfy the goals of the community, effluent quality, energy conservation and operational needs.

Florence formed partnerships with surrounding municipalities, counties and regional septic haulers. They now use Florence’s expanded treatment capacity, resulting in efficient delivery of wastewater treatment services throughout the region.

Florence’s partnership with the school district and ScienceSouth, a science education program, led to adding an educational component within the facility’s environmental laboratory. This allows students to learn about real-world applications of the science of wastewater management and their ecological challenges.

Soon the area around the new plant will be developed further with green space and a trail system.

Florence has demonstrated that wastewater treatment facilities, appropriately designed, can coexist with surrounding land uses and substantially benefit the community without compromising its ability to meet the city’s wastewater treatment needs for years to come.

Contact Andrew H. Griffin at dgriffin@cityofflorence.com or 843.665.3113.
Aiken

After a rash of violent crimes, Aiken officials committed themselves to finding an immediate solution. Over the course of a few months, city staff engaged the public in multiple community conversations to address what might be done to prevent violent crimes. What developed was a unique crime-prevention process, called the Aiken Safe Communities approach.

Instead of focusing on geographic areas or groups, this approach targets actual violent offenders in the community and works to prevent recidivism. Task forces made up of public safety staff, county officials, public agency representatives and community members respond to each offender personally. They confirm that the offender is getting the kind of support he or she needs and is making productive decisions.

Overall violent crime is down in Aiken, thanks in large part to the Safe Communities approach. Pleased with the results, officials expanded the program to reach offenders throughout Aiken County and to offer support to family members of offenders as well.

Contact Chief Charles Barranco at cbarranco@cityofaikensc.gov or 803.642.7624.

Bluffton

The DuBois family donated the DuBois Park to the Town of Bluffton more than 70 years ago. Over time, the urban park became dilapidated with blighted buildings and outdated playground equipment. In public forums and town meetings, residents asked officials to update the park.

Officials knew it would be a challenge to renovate the space with a tight budget. They received a grant through the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Also, town council designated hospitality tax funds for the project, and multiple private organizations donated time and money for all aspects of the makeover.

These days, DuBois Park is a well-lit, manicured space with walking paths, a rain garden, bench swings, a new pavilion with restrooms and enhanced parking. The park’s design incorporated local elements into the upgrade. Children love the new shrimp boat play structure. A recently installed historic marker educates visitors about Bluffton’s role in the Civil War. DuBois Park is once again a point of pride and a place to gather in downtown Bluffton.

Contact Karen Jarrett at kjarrett@townofbluffton.com or 843.706.7802.

Cayce

During Lexington County’s population boom in the early 2000s, Cayce’s existing wastewater treatment plant came dangerously close to capacity. Realizing that the aging facility would have to be replaced, officials initiated a planning process to fund and build the new plant.

Working with other municipalities in the county, as well as the local council of governments, Cayce officials took the lead on the project. During the planning process, officials established goals to build the new plant within a conservative budget, to protect the integrity of the Saluda River and to allow for shutting down smaller, less efficient plants around the county. They kept the public in the loop through public meetings and local media.

The state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant opened in 2012 and now processes 25 million gallons a day. Officials designed the facility to allow for expanded capacity to meet growth needs for the next 30 years. Officials are already planning a companion facility to handle septic tank waste and cooking grease.

Contact Tara Yates at tyates@cityofcayce-sc.gov or 803.796.9020 ext. 3066.

Clinton

Clinton’s community-driven strategic plan called for more affordable and energy-efficient housing options and an appealing corridor into the Upstate city. To reach these goals, city officials worked with partners to redevelop the dilapidated properties along North Broad and Elizabeth Streets into a modern and attractive neighborhood.

They first reached out to the Upper Savannah Council of Governments to secure funding then to the nonprofit Homes of Hope for help with construction. The city acquired the land, cleared it and installed the necessary utilities. Clinton built four single-family, energy-efficient homes with more on the way. Soon an eye-catching neighborhood will greet visitors as they enter the city.

Contact Frank Stovall at fstovall@cityofclinton.sc.com or 864.833.7505.
**Columbia**

Home to both Fort Jackson (the Army’s largest training facility) and the Dorn VA Medical Center, Columbia has a large population of veterans and active duty servicemen and women. In 2013, Columbia officials demonstrated their commitment to these individuals by partnering with the Army on the Creative Journey program.

Formed in conjunction with Fort Jackson’s Wounded Warrior Transition Unit, Creative Journey is an arts outreach program for soldiers suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injuries. Once a month at Fort Jackson, community artists work with these soldiers to draw, paint or create pottery. Soldiers receive art supplies of their own so that they continue to work on their projects between sessions. Soldiers can also work on their projects at the city’s art center. All labor and materials for Creative Journey are volunteered and donated.

It is difficult to quantify the results of outreach programs like Creative Journey; however, soldiers’ case managers have continually noted its positive impact on the soldiers, and the Army has given the program a glowing recommendation.

**Contact Chris Segars at cmsegars@columbiasc.net or 803.545.4143.**

**Dillon**

Seven years ago, Dillon officials demonstrated their commitment to community health and well-being when they opened a state-of-the-art community fitness center. However, officials knew their work was far from finished. They continued to work to make the grounds outside the facility just as valuable to the public as the inside.

Their biggest challenge was securing funding for the project. After submitting multiple unsuccessful grant applications for an asphalt walking trail, city officials decided to use money from the city’s general fund for a “crush and run” path instead. Local gardening groups stepped up to provide native plants for the trail, and community organizations donated benches. A Friends of the Wellness Center group is installing eight fitness stations along the trail.

When the project is finished, the new walking trail will boast canopy trees for shade as well as lighting for early-morning and late-night joggers.

Five “education nodes” will allow visitors to learn about plants native to the area.

The fitness center and enhanced outdoor facilities benefit more than just local residents. Advertisements along I-95 for the center draw travelers into the city to work out, introducing new visitors and tourism dollars into the local economy every day.

**Contact Maggie Riales at mardillon@bellsouth.net or 843.774.5167.**

**Fort Mill**

As Fort Mill continues to grow, officials remain dedicated to providing recreation space to residents. With town-leased baseball fields showing their age, town officials built Doby’s Bridge Park in 2004 with an eye toward the future. The 15-acre park received playground equipment two years later, but few people used the space. Officials decided it was time for a full-blown renovation.

Council funded the project through bonds to pay for an architect, contractor, grading and equipment. When the town finished the renovations, two new fields, bathrooms, parking and a well-lit walking trail enhanced the space. The town now manages youth athletic leagues, instead of relying on a private entity to do so.

Doby’s Bridge Park is rarely empty these days. Tournaments fill the fields in summer and fall, and residents enjoy the space year-round.

**Contact Kimberly Starnes at kstarnes@fortmillsc.gov or 803.547.2116.**

**Hartsville**

The Community Foundation for a Better Hartsville was originally formed as a nonprofit organization to oversee neighborhood revitalization in one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods. The Foundation—composed of city officials, corporate professionals and leaders from the nonprofit sector—soon became a well-funded and organized machine, creating positive change throughout the city.

In just more than a year, the Foundation launched numerous initiatives, all of them aimed toward improving the quality of life for Hartsville residents.

The Residential Demolition Assistance program removes dilapidated residential structures. The new Duke Energy Center for Innovation helps develop new businesses in Hartsville, along
with high-paying jobs for residents. In the city’s Oakdale neighborhood, the Foundation established a neighborhood association to coordinate and facilitate projects that will transform the historic area back to its original charm.

Contact Natalie Zeigler at natalie.zeigler@hartsillesc.gov or 843.383.3015 ext. 1001.

Irmo

Irmo’s famous Okra Strut grows in popularity and size every year. After changing venues multiple times, festival organizers and town officials wanted to find a permanent place for the Strut. When 14 acres of property went up for sale downtown, a new park and a new home for the event became reality.

Private donations, grants and money from the town’s general fund paid for the Community Park project. Town officials were able to purchase the land and hire a landscape architect, civil engineer and general contractor to complete the work. A major goal was to conserve the trees and natural beauty of the space while ensuring events at the park did not disturb neighboring subdivisions.

The project included the construction of a 1,500-seat amphitheater, a large stage area, three playgrounds and a walking trail. Plans are in the works to establish a summer concert series and recruit other major events to the space in addition to the Okra Strut.

Contact Bob Brown at rbrown@townofirmosc.com or 803.781.7050.

Lexington

Opening a business in the Town of Lexington is simpler and more streamlined these days, thanks to the new Business and Development Services Center. The Center is a one-stop shop that assists prospective entrepreneurs with the process of establishing a business within town limits. In addition, Center staff walks developers throughout the commercial and residential construction process.

Staff from multiple town departments developed the Center when they recognized that potential business owners were struggling with complicated application and licensing requirements. Staff is now available to both new and existing business owners to help them through these processes. The Center brings together planning and zoning, engineering, business licensing, GIS/mapping, economic development and building inspections into one centralized location. This has also helped improve communication among all departments involved with development. Staff meets weekly to discuss current and proposed projects and issues that might inhibit the development process.

This new focus on efficient and friendly customer service has paid off. In 2013, staff issued more than 1,000 building and zoning permits, 239 business location permits and 86 new sign permits.

Contact Jennifer Dowden at jbowden@lexsc.com or 803.356.8238.

Mauldin

The annual Mauldin BBQ Cook-Off is one of the city’s most popular community events. A key element of the Cook-Off has always been providing programs for Mauldin’s youngest residents. Last year, officials upped the ante and partnered with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to promote active lifestyles and healthy eating to the community’s youth.

They offered giveaways, educational programs and performances by a professional children’s entertainer. More than 500 children took part in various exercises, dances, movements and sing-alongs. Parents also participated and got information about keeping their children healthy.

The event—and partnership from which it stemmed—was so successful that the city is already planning more ways to integrate the message of children’s health into future city-sponsored programs.

Contact George Patrick McLeer at gpmcleer@mauldincitysc.com or 864.335.4862.

Mount Pleasant

Faced with significant increases in employee healthcare costs and diminished benefits, officials in Mount Pleasant implemented a new approach to address the inefficiencies in the town’s existing healthcare model.

An employee committee, composed of junior and senior staff from each department, conducted research and made recommendations to improve the town’s insurance benefits and wellness programs. Working with a third-party consultant and with the support of town council,
the committee implemented a program that was beneficial to both employees and taxpayers.

The new program emphasizes employee empowerment. The town provides employees with the tools they need to make informed healthcare decisions, such as price transparency and on-site primary care. Wellness incentives encourage employees to be proactive about their health and serious about disease prevention.

Employees have embraced Mount Pleasant’s new healthcare model. Ninety-three percent of employees are participating in the plan, resulting in a 7 percent savings in the town’s annual healthcare costs.

Contact Lauren Sims at lsims@tompse.com or 843.884.8517.

Myrtle Beach

As in many large cities, homelessness is a persistent issue for the City of Myrtle Beach. With the understanding that homelessness affects not only those experiencing it, but also the community as a whole, officials worked to streamline and expand services to those in need. These actions culminated in the New Directions initiative.

New Directions has three goals. The first is to ease the physical and emotional suffering of homeless residents. The second is to ensure efficient and targeted services to this population in crisis. The third is to eliminate the secondary effects—like crime and litter—of homelessness. Funded by the city, Horry County, grant dollars, nonprofit contributions and private donations, New Directions emphasizes “nontoxic charity,” meaning recipients are required to participate in their own assistance and recovery.

As an umbrella initiative, New Directions is successfully coordinating efforts to help the homeless in Myrtle Beach. The initiative has also engendered fiscal responsibility for associated social programs, positive change at area shelters and an easing of the side effects of homelessness on the community at large.

Contact Mark Kruea at info@cityofmyrtlebeach.com or 843.918.1014.

Spartanburg

Spartanburg officials knew people were ready to come back downtown to live, work and have fun; however, residential and retail options continued to be scant as many downtown buildings stood vacant. The city’s economic development staff looked for programs and initiatives to push downtown to its tipping point.

The Main Street Challenge invited would-be entrepreneurs to compete for space in downtown Spartanburg, including $12,000 in incentives, as well as thousands of dollars of in-kind services from other businesses to help with the start-up process. Participants submitted an online application, and a panel of judges selected 12 semifinalists. After receiving a more detailed business plan from the semifinalists, the city culled the finalists to six.

Eventually, the city selected three business owners as winners of the Main Street Challenge. The three winners—an outdoor equipment store, a retail and education space for mothers, and a distillery—opened downtown, and they weren’t
the only ones. The contest and general excitement about downtown Spartanburg prompted dozens of other new establishments to open in the last year alone.

Contact Patty Bock at pbock@cityofspartanburg.org or 864.596.2972.

**Sumter**

City leaders wanted to reverse the trend of the community’s per capita income continually lagging behind the rest of the state. Interested in developing a sustained, cooperative effort, they reached out to their counterparts with Sumter County to form Team Sumter, a partnership designed to promote economic opportunity and development.

The Team backed a penny sales tax to support economic development to help the community get through a difficult economic downturn. Officials created a business incentive package that included upgrading the city’s water and sewer infrastructure to accommodate new industrial customers. They also upgraded an existing sports complex and built another to lure regional and national sports tourism to the area. Officials also worked to protect Shaw Air Force Base from development encroachment by preserving the more than 3,000 acres surrounding the base.

This kind of intergovernmental cooperation is paying off for the region, as city and county officials work together to improve the quality of life in Sumter.

Contact Deron McCormick at dmccormick@sumter-sc.com or 803.436.2690.

**Tega Cay**

With their eye on an undeveloped lot at the entrance of town, officials in Tega Cay decided to create a garden space where residents could learn about different types of local plants and also enjoy a quiet spot to remember loved ones who have passed away. Staff on the city’s beautification committee took the lead working with the Clemson Agricultural Extension and a local landscape architect to design the park and its many gardens.

Funding for the Living Memorial Gardens came from a variety of grants, in-kind donations from local businesses, sponsorships, private donors and city funds.

The space includes seven specific garden areas, offering visitors a different “room” showcasing plants in various environments. A veterans’ memorial lies in the center of the gardens. The park provides a vibrant focal point directly across from Tega Cay’s new city hall and will be adjacent to a new elementary school.

The Living Memorial Gardens gives residents a place to pause, relax, reflect and enjoy the beauty of nature. It also touches on a point of pride for Tega Cay: volunteerism. Residents and volunteers donated thousands of hours to develop the park and for its continual maintenance needs.

Contact Charlie Funderburk at cfunderburk@tegacaysc.gov or 803.548.3512.

**West Columbia**

Officials in West Columbia had long been hearing complaints from residents about the city’s troubling stray animal population. Unwanted and nonidentified dogs and cats were roaming neighborhoods, fighting, damaging property and breeding unchecked. Through community discussions, it became apparent that neither officials nor residents were satisfied with the status-quo solution of capturing these animals and euthanizing them.

City officials formed a coalition with local animal advocacy groups and a nonprofit animal adoption agency to reduce the feral animal population. The partners agreed they wanted to save these animals rather than destroy them. They established a trap/neuter/release program with each partner taking on responsibility for a portion of the program.

The city’s animal control officer captured the animals; the adoption agency offered to assess, spay/neuter and inoculate the animals; and the support groups agreed to feed and monitor feral cats released back into the community. Residents responded with overwhelming support and made donations.

West Columbia is the first no-kill city in South Carolina.

Contact Mardi Valentino at mvalentino@westcolumbiasc.gov or 803.939.8603.
Risk Management Service Awards

Local governments cannot operate without assuming risk or without managing that risk. Each year, the Municipal Association’s two insurance pools recognize municipalities that have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to safety.

The South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust and the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund determine award winners based on the entity’s number of employees and its loss experience for the current year and the prior three years. This year’s award recipients have reduced their total costs and kept employees safe while delivering better public services.

Winners will receive a $2,500 monetary award and a luncheon for up to 25 staff members.

South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust winners

• Division I (1-50 employees) Town of Chesterfield
• Division II (51-150 employees) Town of Hampton
• Division III (more than 150 employees) City of Fountain Inn

South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund winners

• Division I (1-50 employees) Town of Edisto Beach
• Division II (51-150 employees) Town of Central
• Division III (more than 150 employees) City of Camden

Organized in 1983, the South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust is a cooperative local government program providing self-funded workers’ compensation protection for municipal employees. SCMIT serves 115 entities.

The South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund provides all lines of property and casualty coverage including tort liability and automobile coverage for its member municipalities. SCMIRF serves 104 entities.

In addition to municipal-specific insurance coverage, the programs offer free onsite and online training, grant funding, access to a labor hotline and many other benefits.
Main Street South Carolina empowers residents, business owners and local officials with the knowledge, skills, tools and organizational structure necessary to revitalize downtowns, neighborhood commercial districts and cities/towns into vibrant centers of commerce and community.

Main Street South Carolina follows the National Main Street’s Four Point Approach—Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring. Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members’ achievements and successes in downtown revitalization.

**Downtown Service Award**

The award recognizes an elected official, appointed public official, individual or organization who contributes leadership, vision and support to downtown revitalization efforts beyond the normal call of duty.

**Janet Meleney**

Nominated by Main Street Manning

Janet Meleney has volunteered countless hours to strengthen the community’s knowledge and understanding of historical resources in Manning.

To complete the Manning commercial district’s application to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places, she meticulously researched and compiled historical and architectural information for 60 structures. Manning went on to use the information to create a downtown walking tour brochure.

Since 2008, Meleney has served as an active member of the Main Street Manning’s design committee and volunteers to help at all Main Street events.

Contact: Carrie Trebil at ctrebil@cityofmanning.org or 803.435.8477.

**Gaines Jontz Rehabilitation Award**

This award recognizes excellence in façade rehabilitation or total building rehabilitation. The project must demonstrate quality and appropriateness in design, materials and construction, and a positive impact on the commercial district.

**Jeff Bisger, The Lipsitz Building**

Nominated by Main Street Beaufort, USA

The Lipsitz Building is a 10,000 sq. ft., two-story, wood-framed structure built in the 1880s. The National Park Service certified the building, located within the Beaufort Historical District, as a historic structure. For decades, the upper story sat vacant with one business occupying the bottom floor. After the business closed in 2009, the building sat vacant for years.

Local resident Jeff Bisger purchased the building with the goal of restoring the prominent building. He wanted to retain as much of the original materials as possible. Not only did Bisger have to meet local standards, but he also had to adhere to the National Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

During the rehabilitation, the vinyl siding and an aluminum canopy were removed to expose the original wood siding and windows. Two “modern” single-story building additions at the rear of the property were demolished. Interior renovations included exposing original floors, walls and ceilings. On the second floor, original floors, doors, moldings and hardware were incorporated into the renovations.

Today, the building has 100 percent occupancy with two retail stores on the first floor and artists’ galleries and studios on the second floor. The project has proven renovating upper story space can be successful. Local artists rented all available space even before renovations were completed.

Contact: LaNelle Fabian at director@downtownbeaufort.com or 843.525.6644.
Master Merchant

The award recognizes excellence in the retail field and is awarded to a merchant who is a “mover and shaker” in downtown revitalization and exemplifies creativity and success in merchandising, inventory, display, and value-added retailing and services.

Kimberly Sanchez, Rosalia’s Mexican Restaurant
Nominated by Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association

Kimberly Sanchez is the co-owner of Rosalia’s Mexican Restaurant, serving the Orangeburg area since 2003. In 2013, Rosalia’s relocated to downtown Orangeburg and has been setting a precedent both in terms of running a successful business and being actively involved in promoting downtown.

Prior to coming to Orangeburg and opening the restaurant, Sanchez spent much of her time event planning. It was then that she learned the creative art of entertaining and hospitality, which included an emphasis on stimulating all the senses in a positive way. According to Sanchez, “Rosalia’s is like having an event—an opportunity to put my best foot forward—every single day.” She continues to work building the Rosalia’s brand and touching the senses with the restaurant’s beautiful patio garden, delicious food, music and more.

Sanchez is an active participant in downtown promotions, including using social media to post events and happenings in real time from her business. She has made it a point to meet her downtown neighbors and encourage them to participate in beautification and other downtown projects. In an additional show of her support of downtown, she has made her home there by living in a second-story apartment above Rosalia’s.

Sanchez is known for her personal touches. She stops by each table to speak with her customers, taking the time to sit and talk to those she knows. She and her staff decorate Rosalia’s seasonally, and the restaurant’s new neon sign has brought a unique, period-appropriate look to the downtown area. From potted container gardens to glistening Christmas lights, the restaurant is among downtown Orangeburg’s most visually welcoming businesses.

Contact: Jennifer Hoesing at jhoesing@orangeburg.sc.us or 803.531.6186.

Outstanding Promotion

The award recognizes either a single promotional event staged during 2013 or the best promotional series during 2013.

The Downtown Plate Crawl: Home Cooks vs. Local Chefs
Nominated by Main Street Beaufort, USA

Main Street Beaufort, USA put home cooks and professional local chefs head-to-head in a tasting competition that brought vibrancy throughout downtown on a hot, rainy night in mid-August.

Organizers had three goals in mind when they created the special event: celebrate the downtown’s culinary attractions, encourage people to walk through all of downtown (not just the main street) and entice people downtown during a normally slow time of year. The event exceeded all of its goals with eight downtown restaurants participating.

Home cooks submitted a dish to enter in the taste-testing challenge. After reviewing the submissions, each professional chef chose one entry to compete against. Each tasting station had two of the same dish—one prepared by the home cook, the other by a local chef. Ticketholders conducted a blind-taste test of the dishes then voted on their favorites. At the end of the evening, home cooks won five out of the eight challenges.

Downtown retailers participated in the successful event by staying open late and offering water and wine to the public. They also offered shelter from the unexpected rainstorm. The businesses appreciated the opportunity to be involved.

Contact: LaNelle Fabian at director@downtownbeaufort.com or 843.525.6644.
Flood Act could impact property values, historic preservation, infill projects

There is growing concern among municipalities that property values, along with historic preservation and infill projects, could be negatively impacted by the changes Congress made this year to keep its federal flood insurance program afloat.

In the late 1960s, the federal government began offering flood insurance to property owners through the National Flood Insurance Program. The program, currently with 5.6 million policies in place, was created to provide flood insurance to places not covered by private insurance because of elevated risks.

While the program’s main goal is to keep new construction dry during floods, it also made policies available at discounted rates for structures built in flood hazard zones before 1975, when the rules were different and fewer flood maps were available. The program provided subsidized rates for these high-risk areas to avoid pricing the owners out of their properties.

The program began struggling financially following the catastrophic losses from Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. In 2012, Congress passed the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act in an attempt to restore solvency to the program. The act made changes to all major components of the program, including flood insurance, flood hazard mapping, grants, and floodplain management. It also increased rates to ensure that flood insurance rates more accurately reflected the real risk of flooding.

After scores of property owners complained of skyrocketing rates that threatened the loss of their homes, Congress enacted additional reforms. On March 21, President Obama signed into law the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014. This law repealed and modified certain provisions of Biggert-Waters.

Lisa Jones is the owner of Carolina Flood Solutions LLC, a private environmental consulting company, and an expert on Biggert-Waters. Jones said the 2014 act makes a number of changes designed to ease the immediate impact of the rate increases and phase them in over several years. Still, rates will increase 18 percent a year for primary homes located in a flood zone and 25 percent for second homes and businesses until they hit a level consistent with their actual flood risk.

The changes have some municipal leaders concerned about the impact on historic preservation, infill projects and property values.

The City of Georgetown lost eight buildings that housed 12 residential units and 19 retail and restaurant properties in a September 2013 fire. The loss of combined tax revenue to the city, county and school district was $43,205 in property taxes, $150,000 in annual sales taxes and approximately $38,000 in local hospitality taxes generated by the restaurants, according to City Administrator Chris Carter.

The most critical aspect of rebuilding the fire ravaged portion of the downtown is the FEMA requirement for rebuilding, Carter said. “Because the buildings were a total loss, they no longer have their historical designation and will be considered new construction when they are rebuilt. This will require the new buildings to meet all building codes for new construction, including FEMA’s requirements for flood mitigation,” he said.

Property owners must either elevate the first floor to the base flood elevation in Georgetown, which is approximately 5.5 feet above the current sidewalk elevation, or use a FEMA-approved method referred to as dry flood proofing. A dry flood proofed structure requires taking extra measures during reconstruction to ensure the structure is watertight. This extra cost to flood proof or elevate buildings above the existing sidewalk elevation is a conundrum for both property owners and the city as efforts get underway to rebuild, Carter said.

“Either of these two options adds cost, and the property owners are faced with a replacement cost to rebuild that exceeds the current market value for rents,” Carter said. “The flood insurance program requirements and premium costs are going to weigh heavily in the owner’s decision to rebuild.”

The City of Charleston, with its historic district of some 4,800 structures on a peninsula largely in a flood plain, also expects to see an impact from changes to the flood program.

Property owners with pre-firm (built before 1974 in Charleston) properties need to pay close attention for changes that could occur when the NFIP is reauthorized in the future, advised Laura Cabiness, director of the City of Charleston’s Department of Public Service. Under Biggert-Waters, subsidies for pre-firm properties were to be eliminated over time. Some property owners were seeing rates increase by tens of thousands of dollars per year, especially for properties located below the base flood elevation.

“This would mean that some historic properties might be uninsurable as a practical matter,” Cabiness said. “I think it would also add pressure to reduce flood risk and unaffordable insurance premiums by elevating historic properties, something that preservationists would resist.”

Before Biggert-Waters was repealed, the city became aware of property sales that fell through after the purchaser received exorbitant quotes for flood insurance, Cabiness said. Huge insurance costs would impact the value of property, which would also impact the valuation for tax purposes, she concluded.

Lisa Jones will provide updates on the latest policy changes regarding the federal flood insurance program during a session at the Association’s Annual Meeting in Charleston on Friday, July 11.
Disaster readiness
It’s never too early to plan

The ice storm that gripped South Carolina in February caused millions of dollars in damage to property, battered the timber industry, and left thousands without power. The impact stretched across 22 counties and was the first federally declared disaster in the state in nearly a decade.

Natural disasters like this winter storm or other emergency situations can happen at any time to any municipality. Disaster response begins at home, and it is crucial for local officials to be prepared and to know how to react, according to Derrec Becker, public information coordinator for the SC Emergency Management Division.

“It’s never too early to prepare for disasters, but it can be too late,” Becker said.

During the ice storm, 364,000 people lost power at the height of the storm. That’s more outages than during Hurricane Hugo, Becker said. About 550 people sought assistance in one of 40 shelters, he said.

Because it had been so long since the previous federally declared disaster in 2005, many municipalities were unfamiliar with the programs available to them and how to get reimbursed for damages, Becker said. Some rules and regulations also had changed.

FEMA’s Public Assistance program will reimburse local and state governments, nonprofit agencies and co-ops up to 75 percent of the total costs associated with the storm. This includes debris removal, emergency services related to the storm, and the repair or replacement of damaged public utilities. State and local governments will share the remaining 25 percent of the expenses through a cost share under federal law, Becker explained.

Reforms dealing with debris removal were enacted after Superstorm Sandy devastated the East Coast in 2012. The federal government will reimburse 85 percent of debris removal expenses the first 30 days after a disaster, 80 percent after 60 days, and 75 percent thereafter, Becker said. FEMA has debris monitors to ensure that everything is disposed of properly.

With hurricane season in full swing, disaster planning becomes even more critical. Municipalities should have a business continuity plan in place, with a clear understanding of who is an essential employee. Establish call trees to keep everyone on staff informed. Contingency plans to address how the city will make payroll and pay bills should be in place, Becker said.

Natural disasters are not the only catastrophes for which municipalities need to plan, according to Josh Smith, public sector manager for Agility Recovery. Fires, power and communication line cuts, and technology failures also can impede operations at a municipality.

The City of Mullins utilized Agility’s services when dealing with smoke damage to city hall from a fire in an adjacent building. While city hall underwent smoke remediation, Agility found employees temporary office space, Smith said.

Mullins was able to access Agility’s services as a member of the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, the Municipal Association’s property and casualty insurance program. Since 2012, SCMIRF has partnered with Agility to provide its members with disaster planning and recovery services such as alternative office space, generators and computer equipment.

Municipalities need to assess their risks and identify which functions are critical to their day-to-day operations. City officials need to determine which employees are essential, and have backups and cross-training processes in place, Smith said.

Smith reiterated Becker’s advice, business continuity plans are most successful when they involve everybody—department heads, staff members and even vendors (if they provide critical functions). That way municipal officials know their plans for continuity and can have backup vendors in place that can provide the same services in an emergency, Smith said.

Too often, an entity will create a plan, put it in a binder and shelve it for five years, Smith said. It’s not worth anything at that point, he said, because people move on. Technology and facilities change. Plans should be updated and communicated.

Once the plan is created, managers and department heads need to communicate it, test it and adjust it, Smith said. That way, they are able to identify weak spots and improve.

Municipalities also have a responsibility to be open and accountable to the public. During times of emergency, local officials need a crisis communications plan to alert and inform the community. Having a social media and online presence is expected, Becker said.

“Social media has drastically changed crisis communications,” Becker said.

If there was any doubt about social media’s impact, consider this: FEMA received 20 million tweets during Sandy. SCEMD received 1.4 million tweets about the ice storm, and the SCEMD website received 20,000 hits a minute during the storm’s peak, Becker said.

Derrec Becker will speak about disaster readiness and response during a breakout session at the Association’s Annual Meeting on Thursday, July 10.
Ten municipal points of interest in Downtown Charleston

1. Charleston Place
205 Meeting St.
The Charleston Place hotel and retail complex, constructed through a public-private partnership, was the initial catalyst for the King Street corridor revitalization. The area was the first TIF district in South Carolina.

2. SC Aquarium
100 Aquarium Wharf
Once a polluted brownfield area, the city reclaimed the site and built the aquarium in 2000.

3. Waterfront Park - between Vendue to the north and Adger’s Wharf to the south
The city’s gift to the future, Waterfront Park ensures a piece of the waterfront will always be available to the public.

4. The Flagship
475-A East Bay St.
Built to facilitate the development of Charleston’s knowledge economy, this coworking office environment is part of the city’s Digital Corridor.

5. Visitors Center
375 Meeting St.
Managed by the city, the Charleston Visitor Reception and Transportation Center is located in an area designated as a National Historic Landmark District.

6. Scatter-site public housing
123 St. Phillip St.
Recognized nationally for its innovative approach to providing affordable housing, there are numerous examples throughout the city of these traditional Charleston-style homes that blend in with their surrounding neighborhoods. Charleston received the first Presidential Award for Design Excellence ever bestowed on public housing.

7. East Bay/Prioleau Parking Garage
25 Prioleau St.
Charleston won the Federal Design Achievement Award in 1988 for the parking garage. It is the highest award in design given by the federal government.

8. Renovated City Hall
80 Broad St.
The top-to-bottom restoration completed in 2007 restored the building to its 19th century condition while also modernizing many of the building’s features.

9. Market Hall and City Market
188 Meeting St.
The City Market is a significant part of Charleston’s history and plays a vital role in attracting business to the downtown area. Major renovations completed in 2011.

10. The Battery seawall restoration
intersection of East Battery and Murray
The first phase of the $2.8 million project is underway. The last major reconstruction of The Battery occurred in 1893.

Market St. stormwater project
As part of the $25 million infrastructure improvement project on the city’s centuries-old drainage system, a tunnel is being constructed 120’ deep under Market Street and will take stormwater through a 4,000’ long underground pipe to an existing pump station on the Cooper River.
Calendar

For a complete listing of training opportunities, visit www.masc.sc to view the calendar.

**JULY**

10-13 Municipal Association Annual Meeting. Charleston Place Hotel, Charleston.

29 Setoff Debt Collection Program Annual Meeting – Mandatory New Participant Training. 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

31 Setoff Debt Collection Program Annual Meeting – Mandatory Training Session for Current Participants (Employees new to working with the Setoff Debt Program) 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

**AUGUST**

5 Accreditation in Business Licensing Exam. 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

6-8 Municipal Court Administration Association Annual Meeting. Sonesta Resort, Hilton Head Island. Topics include sovereign citizens, bond procedures, and legal updates from Court Administration and DMV.


**SEPTEMBER**

10-12 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute: Year 2 Session B. SpringHill Suites, Columbia. Topics include risk management, grants administration and payroll administration. (Participants can join the program at any point during the three-year cycle.)

11 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarterly Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. The meeting will focus on public involvement, education and outreach, and good housekeeping minimum control measures of the reissued NPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from regulated MS4s.


17 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Pee Dee COG area. Hotel Florence, Florence.


24-26 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting. Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach.