

# UPTOWN

## **Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day focuses on key role cities play in South Carolina's economic development**

**W**hen hometown officials from cities and towns across the state gathered for the Municipal Association's annual legislative day February 28, they learned about strategies to focus the message to take to their legislators. In a new twist on the traditional agenda for MASC's legislative day, this year's meeting focused on consistently communicating the message of the "value of cities" to policy makers and key influencers.

The meeting opened with a rousing and inspirational speech by communications expert John Daly from the University of Texas. Daly returned by popular demand after his presentation at a pre-conference session at the 2006 Annual Meeting.

Daly gave pointers on techniques effective leaders can use to better communicate and convey the "value of cities" message (a transcript plus audio and video streaming are avail-

able on MASC's Web site). "Advocacy is selling ideas," he said. When trying to communicate the "value of cities" to a legislator or key influencer, Daly said, hometown leaders must be consistent and believable in their message.

He challenged the leaders in South Carolina cities and towns to sell their value message by reframing how they communicate. "If you've not been successful in selling an idea in the past, learn from that. Change how you frame your message. Stop talking about the problem and frame it as an opportunity," he said. "Always have new evidence to present every time you present your issue to a legislator or key influencer."

Daly's presentation reinforced the goal of *Hometown, SC* to help municipal leaders communicate a consistent message that reinforces the value of cities rather than just talking about the services cities provide.

Throughout the day, participants heard from several prominent state-wide business leaders who talked about the challenges facing city leaders when trying to communicate the value of cities. All echoed the theme of the importance of building partnerships and collaboration between the business community and the state's cities and towns to increase South Carolina's competitiveness.

### **Luncheon address**

Joel Smith, dean of the Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina, served as luncheon speaker. Smith, a longtime state

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## **Important Annual Meeting dates and deadlines**

**May 10 - Brochures mailed and information posted on MASC Web site**

**June 11 - Housing deadline**

**June 25 - Registration deadline**

**July 12-15 - Annual Meeting in Greenville**

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business leader, discussed the importance of cities to the state's economy.

Cities are becoming increasingly more important with cultural and population changes, Smith said. "Cities are economic engines, attracting the brightest employees with their diversity, cultural activities and abundance of services," he said. "These employees are seeking a good quality of life and the best educational opportunities for their children."

Great urban areas to live and work are places that support and nurture the knowledge-based economy, Smith said. "As we move further away from industry and manufacturing to the knowledge economy that rewards innovation and entrepreneurship, cities have a renewed opportunity to compete for jobs and workers."

Smith pointed to three trends that lend credence to the importance of cities in encouraging economic growth. "First, density or a critical mass of people is a primary requirement of the knowledge economy. Face-to-face interaction is important in fostering creativity and innovation," he said.

"Second, research indicates that density improves productivity. That's to say that when economic activity is clustered, you get higher productivity. Third, cities have more diverse populations that stimulate cultural development and creativity."

Economists now view the city as the promise of opportunity; an important resource and not a liability, Smith said. "In today's market

economies, knowledge and learning are the goods and services of the past. It is knowledge and learning that create value and give the competitive edge that results in economic success."

He closed his speech by challenging local elected officials: "It's not just about delivering services – it's about building places that support, nurture and attract the knowledge economy. It doesn't happen in the suburbs and it doesn't happen in the countryside. It happens in urban centers that need solid infrastructure, healthy environments and inclusive communities."

Smith also participated in a forum of business leaders who discussed the importance of partnerships between businesses and cities and towns.

### Business leaders' panel

Leaders in our cities and towns must convince the leadership of our state that there is a broader opportunity to position South Carolina to compete regionally, nationally and internationally, Smith said. "And, by building partnerships, we need to work together to find solutions to those impediments that prevent South Carolina from living up to its fullest potential."

For too long, cities have viewed each other as competition, said Paula Harper Bethea, director of external relations for McNair Law Firm and former chair of the SC Chamber of



To support Jim Ritchie's bill to ease restrictions on annexing doughnut holes within city limits, an honorary doughnut shop was temporarily opened in the Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day registration area.

Commerce. Today's competition, she said, is with other countries, not other cities, counties, regions or even states.

"We've got to have a unified voice. We need a partnership between towns." Bethea said. "That's the real opportunity, to come together around the economic well being and health of South Carolina."

Communication is the best way for city and business leaders to build trust, said Columbia attorney Steve Benjamin who is involved in a partnership with a City of Columbia project to build affordable housing. "Leaders need a regular forum – one that crosses racial, gender and socioeconomic divides – to discuss and push ideas forward," he said. "Strong leadership is crucial in making that happen." Benjamin

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John Daly



Joel Smith



David Stanton



Paula Harper Bethea



Steve Benjamin

# Municipal Elected Officials Institute graduates honored

Seventeen municipal officials graduated from the South Carolina Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government during MASC's *Hometown*, SC Legislative Action Day in February. The Institute is sponsored by the Municipal Association in cooperation with USC's Institute of Public Service

and Policy Research and Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute. Institute topics address the varied concerns of local government such as powers and duties of elected officials, finance and planning/zoning.

The next session, "You've Been Elected, Now What" and "Freedom of

Information Act" will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of government May 3. For more information, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) or contact Michelle James at 803.933.1228 or [mjames@masc.sc](mailto:mjames@masc.sc).



Winter 2007 graduates of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government are, in alphabetical order, Thomas Alford, councilmember of Andrews; Granita Boyd, councilmember of Clover; Frank Brand, councilmember of Florence; Doris Brekenridge, councilmember of Society Hill; Howard Bridgman, councilmember of Summerville; Donnie Burris, mayor of Clover; Bervay Carter, councilmember of Denmark; Kenneth Currie, councilmember of Bishopville; Lynn Gaskins, councilmember of Society Hill; Michael Locklear, councilmember of Moncks Corner; Charles Lucas, councilmember of Walterboro; Retha Pierce, councilmember of Atlantic Beach; Thomas Rhodes, councilmember of Ridgeland; Michael Shaw, councilmember of Andrews; Wes Spurrier, councilmember of Clover; E. A. Stevenson, mayor of Allendale and Junie White, councilmember of Spartanburg. (Not all graduates appear in photo.)

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also serves on the boards of the state Chamber of Commerce and the Palmetto Institute.

Local leaders need to work together and consider future generations, said Bill Barnet, Spartanburg mayor and a statewide business leader who serves on the Palmetto Institute Board. "Leaders can't point fingers at each other," he said. "We're trying to land precious things called jobs."

Through the day, participants snacked on Krispy Kreme doughnut holes that humorously reinforced one of the Association's legislative priorities – passage of a bill to ease restrictions on

annexing doughnut holes within city limits. To encourage awareness of this issue and remind legislators to attend the Association's annual legislative day reception, MASC staff used the Krispy Kremes to gain attention of the senators and house members.

Senator Glenn Reese, who owns a Krispy Kreme franchise, delivered 200 boxes of doughnut holes to MASC before the event. Staff added stickers that looked similar to the Krispy Kreme logo encouraging legislators to support the bill to allow enclave (doughnut hole) annexation. The boxes were delivered to legislators the day before the meeting.

"This gimmick was the buzz throughout the State House," said Howard Duvall, MASC executive director. "It even brought a smile to the opponents of the legislation. But more importantly, it gave the municipal officials a great opening to discuss a serious legislative issue."

Download streaming audio and video of sessions, handouts, talking points, sample press releases and sample thank you notes from the *Hometown*, SC Legislative Action Day Web Site [www.masc.sc/Education/07HSCLAD.htm](http://www.masc.sc/Education/07HSCLAD.htm)

# State auditors and you

Whether it's your personal income tax return or your city's financial books, the word "auditor" can make your heart skip a beat — or two.

The State Treasurer's Office periodically asks the Office of the State Auditor to audit municipal court finances to ensure the municipality is correctly withholding and reporting court assessments. If the municipality does not have a "clean" audit, the State Treasurer could withhold the city's distribution from the Local Government Fund.

The state has long required municipal courts to add state assessments and surcharges to municipal court fines. However, the assessment and surcharge amounts have changed almost yearly. "It is a difficult task for judges and clerks of court to keep up with this ever-changing assessment and surcharge schedule," says Howard Duvall, MASC executive director.

Training is not mandatory, but it is critical to ensure the municipality is following proper procedures. There are

numerous training opportunities to keep up-to-date, Duvall said. "It is also important for the proper people (court administrators and the city's financial staff) to attend the training." Too often, officials who do not work with court fines and assessments attend the training and return home with incomplete (and inaccurate) information.

Steve Blake, a contract auditor with the state, will speak at the April 20 meeting of the Municipal Court Administration Association. The three keys to a successful audit, according to Blake, are continuing professional education for the financial and court staffs, open communication between the two departments and a well-designed functional method of organizing the information.

At the April meeting, Blake will share the top 10 things the state auditors look



for when auditing municipal courts and the top 10 problem areas they discover.

Having complete records in an orderly fashion will lessen your anxiety level the next time you hear "the state auditor is coming."

The MCAA meeting will be held April 20 at the Embassy Suites in Columbia. For registration information, visit [www.masc.sc/calendar/calendar.htm](http://www.masc.sc/calendar/calendar.htm) or call Denise Brown at 803.933.1208.

## Top three things court auditors look for

- 1) An organized monthly State Treasurer's Office Remittance form (STORF) folder with support for every figure on every line neatly laid out. The STORF has detailed descriptions of what is requested on each line.
- 2) A monthly report, by ticket number (or some other organized arrangement), showing collections on that ticket with receipt number and how payments are allocated to the various fines, assessments and surcharge categories.
- 3) Victims' Services funds transferred in a timely manner with accounting system entries supported by the STORF amounts.

## Top three problem areas found by court auditors

- 1) Out-of-date software fine tables that did not include all assessments and surcharges required by law.
- 2) Improper partial payment allocations.
- 3) Employees preparing the form that did not understand the information and could not determine if the information they had was correct. There was no one to ensure the system was working properly. They had blind faith that the report was correct.



# 2006 SCMIT Safety Idea Contest winner: City of Aiken

**W**orking in and around trenches is an extremely dangerous job. If proper safety procedures are not followed, a trenching job could turn into a hazardous, even deadly, situation. Lex Kirkland, risk manager for the City of Aiken, developed a way to encourage employees to think about safety first when working in trenches.

A cave-in is the biggest threat to workers who are working in a trench. Walls can collapse quickly and without warning. A cubic yard of soil weighs about 2,700 pounds, the weight of a mid-sized automobile. A trench collapse may contain three to five cubic feet of soil.

The hazards are great, but the safety precautions are easy. The only hard part is challenging employees not to take chances with their safety.

Common complaints are “We are only going to be in the trench for a few minutes;” “We’ve been doing this for

years and never had a problem;” or “The trench box is down the street and it’s too much trouble to get it for just a few minutes.”

The City of Aiken developed a trenching work practices and guidelines form. The form must be completed for each trench and turned in daily to a supervisor. The form requires the public works employee to assess the worksite, go through each guideline and answer yes or no to each item. As an additional step, Aiken printed its trenching guidelines on the back of the form.

Recognized during the Municipal Association of SC’s *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day in February,



Mayor Fred Cavanaugh of Aiken accepts the 2006 Safety Idea Award from Phil Cromer, RMS risk and safety services manager, during MASC’s *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day in February.

the City received \$500 from the SC Municipal Insurance Trust, a self-funded workers’ compensation insurance program administered by the Association.

## 2006 SCMIT Occupational Safety Contest Winners

Each year, the SC Municipal Insurance Trust (SCMIT) sponsors an Occupational Safety Contest for its members. During the Municipal Association’s *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day, SCMIT recognized 12 local government entities for their safety efforts. The competition is based on OSHA and loss-ratio data. First-place winners receive a \$2,000 credit toward the purchase of safety equipment, safety training or both.

<p><b>Division 1</b> (10 to 50 employees) First place: Town of Hemingway Second place: Town of Pageland Third place: Town of Hampton</p>	<p><b>Division 3</b> (over 150 employees) First place: City of Anderson Second place: City of Lancaster Third place: Town of Summerville</p>
<p><b>Division 2</b> (51 to 150 employees) First place: City of Dillon Second place: City of Camden Third place: City of Chester</p>	<p><b>Division 4</b> (public utilities) First place: Laurens Commission of Public Works Second place: Gaffney Board of Public Works Third place: Greer Commission of Public Works.</p>

# A closer look at GASB 45

**M**unicipalities are faced with two basic questions when complying with GASB 45. Fund the local government's other retiree benefits? Form an irrevocable trust or pool resources with other local governments to join an existing trust?

GASB 45 is an accounting requirement to report other retiree benefits, such as health insurance, on the municipality's annual financial statement.

Before deciding whether to fund this currently unfunded liability, officials must first calculate how much it will cost. An actuary must determine the figure based not on what is currently being paid to retirees but by the amount earned each year by current employees.

If the local government decides not to fund the cost, it will show as an

unfunded liability on the annual financial statement. This could affect the local government's credit rating and ability to issue bonds or borrow money. If the local government decides to fund it, the money must be placed in an irrevocable trust.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina created the SC Other Retirement Benefits Investment Trust (SC ORBIT) for local governments to pool their resources to address their GASB 45 liability.

SC ORBIT offers many benefits to participants not available to them if they formed their own trust. SC ORBIT participants receive a savings through shared administrative costs and greater investment power. Each participant also receives an annual actuarial valuation

that will meet the GASB 45 financial reporting requirement.

"Before we offer any new service, we always ask ourselves, 'is it more efficient or cost effective for cities to join together?'" explains MASC Deputy Director Miriam Hair. "If the answer is 'yes,' we will pursue offering that new program or service. It was the yardstick we used when forming our insurance, collection, training and technology programs."

For more information, visit [www.masc.sc/SCORBIT/description.htm](http://www.masc.sc/SCORBIT/description.htm) or contact Heather Ricard at 803.933.1258 or [hricard@masc.sc](mailto:hricard@masc.sc)



## Hometown Happenings

### May 2007 Hometown Happenings

**H**ometown Happenings is a service to municipalities of the Hometown, SC initiative launched in the summer of 2006. Each month, municipal officials have the opportunity to download materials that will help them share the value of cities and towns with the community and, more specifically, their key influencers. Through each suggested activity and corresponding materials, municipal leadership will form partnerships with the local business community, the media, local non-profit organizations and policy makers.

Contact Casey Fields at [cfields@masc.sc](mailto:cfields@masc.sc) or 803.933.1256 to let her know how you're using Hometown Happenings in your hometown.

- **National Physical Fitness and Sports Month** - With the weather turning warmer, May is a perfect time to get outside and exercise. Many local organizations have special events planned to recognize National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Partner with those organizations to spotlight healthy lifestyles, exercise and involvement in sports in your community. Highlight municipal sports leagues and fitness facilities, encourage hometown leaders to join an exercise program and declare through a proclamation that your hometown recognizes May as National Physical Fitness and Sports Month.
- **National Tourism Week** - Celebrated May 12 - 20, this week is aimed at encouraging travel around the nation and the world. It is designed to showcase the importance of tourism on the economy and industry throughout the nation, especially in South Carolina where tourism is a major industry along the coast and recognized as a cluster by the Council on Competitiveness. Take this opportunity to observe National Tourism Week and recognize the role travel, tourism and attractions play in improving the quality of life in your hometown.

Visit the MASC Web site to download *Hometown Happenings* materials in early April.

# SC House Speaker shares perspective about legislative priorities and issues

House Speaker Bobby Harrell joined a group of mayors and leaders of the state's major business associations to talk about the role strong cities play in developing the state's new economy. "The economy is the issue of the next two decades," he said. "Cities have an important role to play. We all have the goal of helping the private sector drive up per capita income."

Harrell is chief sponsor of legislation to support the growth of fuel cell research and hydrogen development, which many see as a cornerstone of this new economy.

In discussing the state and local governments' roles in supporting the development of the new economy, Harrell said, "This is the first time we've seen everyone pulling together toward a common goal to raise individual income."

That's where strong cities can make the difference, said Jim Fields, executive director of the Palmetto Institute, a non-profit research institute focusing on increasing competitiveness and individual income. "We can't do the things

we need to do without strong, robust economically viable urban areas," Fields said.

Harrell echoed the themes heard in Dean Joel Smith's luncheon address at the *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day (see page 1) about the importance of partnerships with the higher education community to encourage the growth of the new economy.

"Our institutions of higher education are more often than not located in cities and towns," Smith said. "These institutions – especially our research universities – are playing leading roles in developing the new economy and should be developed as partners in promoting progress."

But it's not just about the research universities and larger cities, Harrell said. Part of this collaborative effort is making sure cities of all sizes contribute to this effort – and reap its benefits.

Harrell encouraged the mayors to make certain their local economic development leaders are connecting with the research universities to take advantage of partnerships to bring growth to their areas. "Our goal isn't just to have this kind of growth in the

big cities," he said. He cited hospitals as good local possibilities for partnerships with research universities.

"This meeting with the Speaker and high profile business leaders represents a new way for elected officials in our cities and towns to take a statewide leadership role in growing the new economy of our state," said Doug Echols, mayor of Rock Hill and board president of the Municipal Association of SC. "Strong cities and towns are critical to this effort."

George Fletcher, executive director of the SC Council on Competitiveness, agreed. "Cities are the engines of regional economic success," he said. The Council is charged with developing strategies and partnerships to foster economic growth.

"By bringing mayors together with statewide leaders like Speaker Harrell and business leaders who share our goals of making our state more competitive, we all win," Echols said.

For additional information about MASC's legislative agenda, visit [www.masc.sc/legislative/agenda.htm](http://www.masc.sc/legislative/agenda.htm).



## Classifieds

■ The City of Spartanburg is accepting applications for the position of city planner. Send official application, resume and salary history to Human Resources, City of Spartanburg, PO Drawer 1749, Spartanburg, SC 29304, e-mail [hr2@cityofspartanburg.org](mailto:hr2@cityofspartanburg.org), or fax 864.596.2262. The position will remain open until filled.

■ The Town of Fort Mill is accepting applications for town engineer. Send resume to David Hudspeth, town manager, PO Box 159, Fort Mill, SC 29716. The position will remain open until filled.

■ The City of Hardeeville is accepting applications for police chief. Provide a cover letter and detailed resume including references to PO Box 609, Hardeeville, SC 29927, Attn: city manager, or e-mail to [rsHaynes@cityofhardeeville.com](mailto:rsHaynes@cityofhardeeville.com). Faxes will not be accepted. For more information, visit [www.cityofhardeeville.com](http://www.cityofhardeeville.com). The position will remain open until filled.

■ Aiken County is accepting applications for a building official and a planner I (transportation emphasis). Apply to Aiken County Human Resources, 828 Richland Ave West, Aiken, SC 29801. For more information, call 803.642.1552. The position will remain open until filled.

■ Colleton County is accepting applications/resumes for an information technology director. Submit application/resume to the SC Employment Security Commission, 101 Mable T. Willis Blvd., PO Drawer 530, Walterboro, SC 29488. The position will remain open until filled. EOE

## Co-existing with big box retail stores

When a “big box” retail store, such as Wal-Mart or Target, moves into a town, it can sometimes spell big trouble for residents and local officials.

Many cities fight big box retail development, fearing it will hurt local businesses, destroy the character of their communities and bring increased traffic, noise and crime. They also worry how the local economy and community could suffer if the big box goes out of business or relocates in the future. Some local governments try to block the retailers from ever moving in by changing zoning ordinances.

Despite the issues, it is possible for a community to co-exist with big box retailers and not compromise its identity. Big box retailers can offer consumers more choices and convenience. They can boost the local economy by providing jobs, and they often can help small businesses by offering low-cost supplies.

Tega Cay is one city that has successfully dealt with the challenges brought by a big box retailer. Tega Cay is a growing municipality located on a peninsula in Lake Wylie, 20 miles south of Charlotte. During the 2000 census, the City had 4,040 residents. However, planned growth and new annexed areas will more than double the population by the year 2010, according to the City’s Web site.

“Where the rooftops go up, that’s where the retailers are going to move,” said Tega Cay City Manager Grant Duffield.

Wal-Mart expressed interest in building a store in Tega Cay in 2005, Duffield said. Several public hearings were held. Residents and councilmembers were concerned about the appearance of the store, as well as the crime and additional traffic the store would bring, Duffield said.

City officials spent a tremendous amount of time working with the developer and representatives of Wal-Mart, Duffield said.

“We were pretty stringent about what it is that we require,” Duffield said. “They worked with us, but there were not a lot of negotiations. It had to be addressed to council’s satisfaction.”

The result will be a Wal-Mart store with a different look than most others. The façade has differing heights, with some stonework along some elements. There will be false windows to give it a Main Street-appearance, Duffield said. Space will be provided in the store for law enforcement facilities. Traffic issues will be addressed with road improvements, traffic lights and turn lanes, he said.

“It’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen in a Wal-Mart,” Duffield said.



Wal-Mart | Tega Cay, South Carolina

WAL-MART

 [www.taylor-scott.com](http://www.taylor-scott.com)



Other cities across the country have been dealing with the same growth management issues as Tega Cay.

The City of Toledo, Ohio developed an ordinance that pushed away big box retailers, with difficult requirements on building materials, window placement and parking. When a property rights coalition expressed its concern, the city brought together developers and big box opponents to create a plan that would work for all. Toledo now has big box design standards that promote quality development and represent best practices in design and construction.

The City of Albuquerque, New Mexico created regulations to make big box retailers compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, prevent neighborhood cut-through traffic and create attractive buildings. Its regulations also

call for a gradual transition from the vehicle-oriented retail developments with large parking lots to smaller, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use developments that can integrate into the community.

Back in Tega Cay, ground will break soon on the new Wal-Mart, Duffield said.

"We had the realization that the growth in our area is at such intensity that big box retailers are going to be drawn to our area," Duffield said.

"Where the stores build will be a

decision driven by the market and the desires of the retailer.

"If the big box is within the city limits, we have the ability to exert some control over what it looks like and how it affects the community. If it's outside the city, we have no real control and no new tax base," he added. "So if it's outside the city, are we really helping ourselves?"



### Web resources:

<http://growthmanagement-icsc.org/bigbox/>

<http://www.cabq.gov/council/BigBoxRegulations.html>

[http://www.propertyrightscoalition.com/local\\_policy\\_bigbox.htm](http://www.propertyrightscoalition.com/local_policy_bigbox.htm)

<http://www.tegacaysc.org/>

## News Briefs



■ MASC recently promoted two employees. Sophia Johnson was promoted to junior staff associate for information technology. Johnson joined the staff in 2003 as an administrative assistant. Kili Gilmore was promoted to administrative assistant for education and training. Gilmore joined the staff last year as receptionist.

■ In March, three new employees joined MASC. Ed Schafer came on board as legislative counsel responsible for lobbying and association legal work. Melissa Carter joined the staff as research analyst. She will provide research and technical assistance. Neepa Shah joined the staff as financial specialist for Risk Management Services. She will be responsible for general accounting support for MASC's three self-funded insurance programs.

■ Florence Councilmember Bill Bradham has been appointed to the National League of Cities' Council on Youth, Education, and Families. The Council oversees and supports the work of NLC's Institute for Youth, Education and Families.

■ The Great American Cleanup of South Carolina kicked off a three-month event on March 1, with a new challenge: for South Carolinians to lose 2 million pounds of trash from streets, parks and waterways. For information on how to participate, contact your local Keep America Beautiful affiliate to join in a cleanup or organize your own cleanup, or log onto MASC's web site at [http://www.masc.sc/hometownsc/hh\\_main0407.htm](http://www.masc.sc/hometownsc/hh_main0407.htm).

■ The SC Department of Health and Environmental Control recognized two municipalities and a municipal employee during its annual Recycle Guys Award Program. Alysen Woodruff, recycling coordinator for the City of Greenville, was named Recycling Professional of the Year. The City of Greenville was named the Outstanding Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Program in the large municipality category, and the City of Easley was named the Outstanding Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Program in the small municipality category.

■ Two MASC video projects earned recognition in the 2006 Communicator Awards for excellence in video in a national competition. MASC's planning officials' orientation received an Award of Excellence in the educational video category. The Hometown Network News Parts I and II DVDs received an Award of Distinction in the marketing services category. The Award of Distinction is presented to projects that exceed industry standards in quality and excellence.

## Start Annual Meeting early

Municipal officials can get a jump-start on the July Annual Meeting by attending one of two pre-conference sessions July 12. Attendees can choose between a development tour of Greenville and a leadership session examining the role of mayor and council members.

The Greenville development bus tour will give participants a first-hand look at recent city projects. Learn about the tools (especially financial tools) used to make the projects a reality, and see the value the City has brought to downtown by supporting mixed-use development. Visits to The West End Field (Greenville

Drive's Baseball Stadium), the Riverplace development, Falls Park and the Liberty Bridge are on the itinerary.

"Public Problems, Democratic Decisions: The Role of Mayor and Councilmembers" addresses the role of elected officials in a democratic society. Phillip Boyle, president of Leading and Governing Associates and adjunct professor, School of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will conduct the session.

According to Boyle, "This seminar helps public officials explore the democratic context of leading and governing. It addresses the role of elected officials

in a democratic society, the relationship between elected and appointed officials, the core values underlying public problems and choices, and the reasons why councils can make better choices than individuals."

Participants will learn how to use public problems to discuss the kind of community they want to build, and how to ensure their choices and decisions preserve the fundamental goals of our democratic society. This seminar will encourage and assist officials in exploring such questions as: Why do we elect citizens from all walks of life to govern our cities and towns? ... How can members tell when a majority decision is good, or right? What is the council's purpose, and how do councils achieve this purpose?

Participants in the leadership session will receive credit for the National League of Cities' Leadership Training Institute which promotes excellence in municipal leadership through high-quality education and training seminars for local elected officials. Through the Institute, local leaders learn practical leadership skills and strategies to lead change and innovation in their cities and towns.

The Institute offers four certification levels. The first level is Bronze Certification. Sixteen credits are required, and participants usually reach this level in one year. Platinum Certification is the highest level, requiring 67 credits and leadership participation. To learn more about enrolling in the Institute, visit the NLC Web site at [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org) or call 202.626.3170.

Pre-conference sessions are not part of the Annual Meeting, but MASC offers them as an additional learning opportunity for municipal leaders. A separate fee of \$50 is required, and participants can only attend the session for which they register.



MASC will offer a Greenville development bus tour as an Annual Meeting pre-conference session July 12. Participants will see first-hand the city's support of mixed-use development by visiting the Riverplace, currently under construction, (above) and the The West End Field baseball stadium (below).



# Working with the media in a crisis

By Amy Geier Edgar

In the early morning hours of January 6, 2005, disaster hit the small mill town of Graniteville. A train derailed, smacking into another parked train and releasing a poisonous cloud of chlorine. Nine people were killed, hundreds injured and some 5,400 others evacuated from their homes.

It was a nightmare scenario, softened only by the quick action of first responders and local officials. In the days that followed, the town was filled with reporters seeking answers from an anxious public. Law enforcement public information officers provided the media with round-the-clock news conferences, press releases, experts and photo opportunities.

Many reporters cited the Graniteville crash as an example of a disaster handled well by officials. While most municipalities hopefully won't deal with a disaster of this magnitude, it is important that public information officers and officials know how to work with the media. A group of reporters recently took part in a panel discussion offering tips to law enforcement public information officers on dealing with the media in a crisis.

## Provide information quickly

In a disaster, PIOs should tell reporters as much as they know, as quickly and concisely as possible, said Jack Kuenzie, a reporter with WIS-TV in Columbia. Provide frequent updates and if conditions warrant, schedule those updates, he said.

Reporter Rick Brundrett from *The State* newspaper in Columbia suggests issuing a press release via fax or e-mail as soon as a crisis hits. This information can then be immediately broadcast or posted on Web sites. Brundrett said the release should contain as many details as verifiable about the crisis, as well as specific instructions for the affected public.

## Establish a command center

Brundrett said regular press conferences should be held at command centers, with at least one person designated as the media spokesman during the crisis. It's helpful for the spokesman to provide cell phone numbers for additional questions throughout the day. Brundrett said PIOs should hand out updated press releases at all briefings – cutting down on time spent answering questions on name spellings, titles and addresses - in addition to answering questions from reporters. Law enforcement, government officials or experts should be present at all press conferences to answer any questions the spokesman cannot answer.

"Print reporters typically need more background or contextual information than their broadcast colleagues," Brundrett said. "Government officials should be prepared to help them with obtaining as much statistical information as possible."

## Understand deadlines

Often, reporters are on tight deadlines. Kuenzie recommends asking about deadline requirements if you're unsure. He also suggests avoiding scheduling news conferences that coincide with TV newscasts. Television also has its own set of challenges. "Live television is fraught with technical challenges," Kuenzie said. "Please be patient."

## Provide access

"Reporters should never interfere with an investigation during a crisis," Brundrett said. "But government

officials should allow as much latitude as possible for reporters to interview victims and witnesses at crisis scenes; it is critical that the media be allowed to show the human toll during a crisis."

It's also important for officials to remember the needs of photographers, both still and video, Kuenzie added. PIOs should also try to accommodate and provide access to photographers.

## Establish relationships

In order to best work together, it's important that the media and PIOs are familiar with each other before a crisis ever hits, said CNN reporter Mike Brooks.

It's also key to establish and understand ground rules before a crisis. Reporters and PIOs should discuss the meanings of background, deep background, off the record and on the record, Brooks said.

"It's very important to develop relationships," Brooks said. "Trust is developed through communication."

*For more information about crisis communication, visit MASC's Web site at [www.masc.sc/resources/PIO\\_crisiscomm.htm](http://www.masc.sc/resources/PIO_crisiscomm.htm)*

*Edgar has worked for daily newspapers and The Associated Press. She currently is a freelance writer.*





## Educational Opportunities

### Municipal Court Administration Association

■ **April 20**, will hold its spring meeting at Embassy Suites in Columbia. Topics include expungements, NCIC and electronic dispositions, and top errors found in municipal court audits.

### Hometown Connection

■ **April 24**, municipal officials from Anderson, Cherokee, Chester, Fairfield, Greenville, Lancaster, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg and York counties visit with their state legislators. Officials will meet at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 a.m.

### SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **April 24**, will hold a member meeting and Legislative Reception at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia.

### Main Street South Carolina

■ **April 26-27**, will conduct a training session "Main Street in the Year 2025" at the Breeden Inn Bed and Breakfast in Bennettsville.

### SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **April 27**, will hold its first quarterly meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia. Topics include funding stormwater programs, overview of stormwater requirements and emerging technology for illicit discharges.

### SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **May 1 and 2**, will hold its annual lineman training at Pine Island, Columbia.

### Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **May 3**, will present "You've Been Elected, Now What," and "Freedom of Information Act." The session will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of government.

### Managers' Meeting

■ **May 4**, the Municipal Association will hold its quarterly managers' meeting at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia.

### SC Business Licensing Officials Association

■ **May 11**, will hold its spring meeting at Embassy Suites in Columbia. Topics include licensing real estate developers, Public Service Commission classification, filming, and problem areas.

### SC Local Government Assurance Group

■ **May 17**, will hold its annual meeting at the Embassy Suites in Columbia.

### SC Municipal Human Resources Association

■ **May 18**, will hold its spring meeting at the Embassy Suites, Columbia. Topics include "GASB 45: How to Communicate Your City's Decision to Staff" and the Freedom of Information Act.

For more information about these meetings or other MASC meetings not listed, please call 803.799.9574, or visit our Web site at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).



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