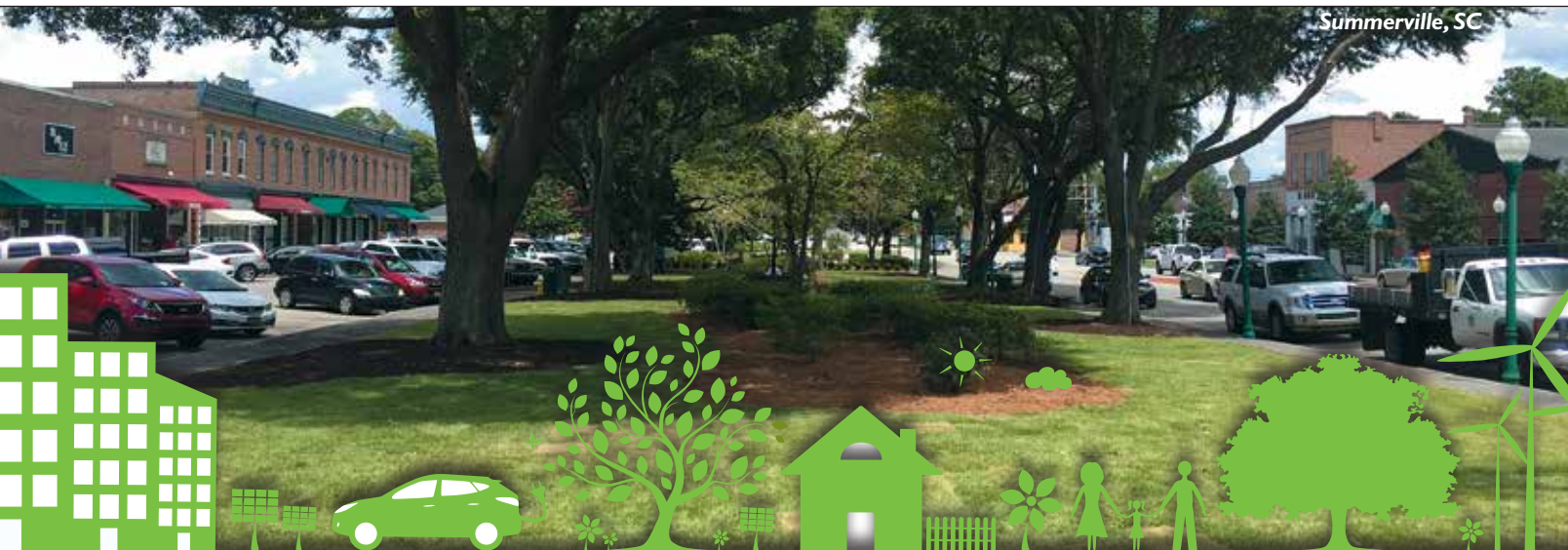




# UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



Summerville, SC

## What does 'sustainability' mean?

It gets used a lot, but it's not an empty buzzword — "Sustainability" simply has lots of definitions. That means employees of cities and towns find countless ways to incorporate green practices, ideals and expertise into their work. There are plenty of methods to create sustainable communities, such as recycling, which overlap across cities and towns. But some approaches are unique to a community's particular environment. Here are four city officials who bring their interpretation of sustainability into their daily work:

**Mary Pat Baldauf, sustainability facilitator, City of Columbia**

Sustainability means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Because I get the question so often, I have a couple of definitions that I use, often depending on the audience.

In my own words, sustainability is about balance. There are three parts to sustainability: the environment, the community (people) and economic prosperity. In order for something to be truly sustainable, it has to meet those three categories. It's not an easy balance. There are often great projects that may meet two of the criteria quite well but not the third. In that case, it's not truly sustainable.

The following are a couple of other definitions that I like and often use:

1. A sustainable future is one in which a healthy environment, economic prosperity and social justice are pursued simultaneously to ensure the well-being and quality of life of present and future generations.
2. Sustainability is living off nature's interest, not her capital.

*Sustainability, page 2 >*

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Town of Bluffton's May River/  
Unique Perspective, LLC

### Sustainability, from page 1 >

3. Sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### Jim Jordan, wildlife biologist, Town of Kiawah Island

Sustainability to me means a functioning, natural ecosystem. As a wildlife biologist of a developing municipality, this not only means protecting and preserving native plants and animals, but maintaining the natural relationships between them. Ecosystems consist of countless interactions between predators and prey, i.e. “the food chain.”

All plants and animals are part of the food chain, but large predators sit at the top, and their presence is vital to ecosystem health. On Kiawah, bobcats are a top predator and play a large role in controlling deer and rodent numbers. Research on Kiawah has shown that bobcats take approximately 50 percent of the deer fawns born each year. This natural control helps maintain deer numbers at acceptable levels, reducing vehicle collisions and landscape shrubbery damage.

A healthy bobcat population is only possible if they can readily find the large amounts of resources (food, water, cover, space) necessary for survival. In this way, bobcats are a great indicator of local habitat health and its ability to sustain populations of many other native species further down the food chain. By focusing research, management and preservation strategies on bobcats, we can help maintain the sustainability of the local ecosystem for years to come.

### Madelyn Robinson, director of planning and economic develop- ment, Town of Summerville

Working in local government planning for the past 21 years, I’ve been fortunate to be surrounded by people who have represented different perspectives on how a community’s development should be managed and what sustainability means.

Personally, I think sustainability is creating an environment that results in the betterment of a community whereby decisions create opportunities for ongoing comprehensive success. Often this goal is achieved day by day or one project at a time.

On a micro scale, sustainability could start with a color or material choice or a single tree being planted. Steps toward sustainability might begin with a grant application for construction of a trail section that will eventually become a longer trail throughout the community for recreation and transportation.

On a larger scale, achieving sustainability may entail the implementation of design review guidelines that ensure a community is home to more attractive development or completing a green infrastructure plan to further promote natural and cultural resources through increased preservation or promotional programming. However the community decides to reach its sustainability goals, the decisions made yesterday and today will determine tomorrow’s success.

### Kimberly W. Jones, watershed management division manager, Town of Bluffton

The town’s covenant and vision help create a culture of valuing and investing in the local environment, as the town’s leaders





(above) When bobcat kittens on Kiawah Island mature, they become top predators in the food chain. / Kiawah Island (right) The City of Columbia provides 95-gallon roll carts.

and residents are acutely aware that the health of the town's natural resources are directly linked to the high quality of life and coastal lifestyle Bluffton offers.

In addition to the town's environmentally friendly ordinances and policies, it is also the daily activities that make a difference in protecting the town's sustainability. The town has spent millions to install sanitary sewer to hundreds of residents to avoid the negative impact of failed septic tanks on the local environment.

In addition, town facilities are landscaped primarily with native plants which are naturally heat and pest resistant, reducing the need for irrigation and pesticide

applications. Town leaders and staff also emphasize pervious or permeable materials in our parking lots to reduce stormwater runoff as a protection to our valuable waterways.

Town-wide, our collective sustainability efforts include recycling at each town office, water coolers to facilitate reusable water bottles, and even a means to wash dishes to encourage reduction of plastic silverware and paper plates. Our efforts are as simple as reducing energy consumption by turning off lights in meeting rooms and offices when not in use and use of energy-efficient appliances and technology whenever feasible.

Twice a year, the town hosts a community-wide river and street cleanup. These events attract more than 200 residents, employees and community-wide supporters who volunteer their time to pick up trash, debris and other pollutants to mitigate impact to the May River.

## Make plans now to attend the 2017 Annual Meeting

The Municipal Association's Annual Meeting will be held July 20 - 23 at Marriott Hilton Head Island. The Association will again use a registration/housing reservation process to ensure municipal officials receive priority for hotel reservations.

A drawing will be held on May 22 to determine the order of appointments for municipalities to make hotel reservations. To participate in the drawing, each municipality must select one representative to register all of its officials. The representative must register online by May 19 for the drawing.

This year, the appointments for municipal representatives to register their officials will be spread over three days. A limited number of appointments will be scheduled

on Friday, June 2. The online registration system will be locked down on Saturday and Sunday. Appointments will resume on Monday, June 5, and Tuesday, June 6.

During the online process, municipal representatives will make hotel reservations and register municipal attendees for the meeting using a Visa or MasterCard with a sufficient credit limit and per transaction limit. Nonrefundable hotel deposits and registration fees are collected during the registration process.

After the drawing on May 22, Association staff will notify representatives of their appointment time and will post all appointment times at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).

During the 30-minute scheduled phone appointments on June 2, 5 and 6, an Association staff member will call the city representative to initiate the online registration/reservation process. The representative can only register municipal officials from his city during the appointment. The designated representative must have completed reg-

# NEWS BRIEFS

The **City of Georgetown** was one of five finalists chosen to compete for a \$500,000 business development award from the Small Business Revolution – Main Street by Deluxe. Georgetown and the other four finalists were chosen from an eight-town tour and thousands of nominations. Ultimately, the prize went to Bristol Borough, Pennsylvania.

The members of the **South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust** board elected fellow members David Seifert, City of Greer, the chairman and Newt Pressley, Spartanburg Water System, the vice chairman. The board also elected Steffanie Dorn from the City of Greenwood to fill an unexpired term.

istration forms in hand, including housing and meal ticket requests, for each person being registered during the call.

### Key Annual Meeting Dates

**April 11** - Agenda and registration information posted online.

**April 12** - Registration brochures with meeting agenda mailed.

**April 24** - Online registration for the appointment drawing opens.

**May 19** - Deadline to register for the appointment times drawing.

**May 22** - Drawing for appointment times and results posted to [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).

**June 2, 5 and 6** - Online registration process for cities with appointments.

**June 7** - Online registration opens for cities without appointments and non-municipal officials.

**June 15** - Hotel reservation deadline

**July 5** - Meeting registration deadline.

**July 20-23** - Annual Meeting.



# Incentives factor into police officer retention

**T**here are only so many dogs and new cars you can promise.

Because of that, police departments must get creative to recruit and retain officers, said Larry McNeil, employee safety and law enforcement liaison for the S.C. Department of Social Services.

“I understand what it’s like to have a 23-year-old decide he wants to leave after six months because someone offered him a new car and a dog,” said McNeil, emphasizing that departments must also communicate the realities of police work to new hires so that new officers don’t come in with the wrong expectations. McNeil is the former police chief of Bennettsville. He joined DSS last fall after serving 40 years in law enforcement.

“Some believe that what you see on TV is what you’re going to do,” he added. “One of the most important things that

we can do is sit down and talk with these ladies and gentlemen and explain exactly what this job entails.”

McNeil said that means telling new hires that sometimes, “the most exciting thing you’ll do today may be to get somebody’s dog that’s stuck under a house. ... It’s not all limelight. You don’t put on a vest and a gun down to your hip and run around town all day shooting at people and getting the bad guys. That’s not what we do. We make a safe environment for people to live in.”

McNeil was part of a three-person panel of law enforcement officials who shared practical advice at the Municipal Association’s Hometown Legislative Action Day. The former Bennettsville chief said that buying a new police car can be more than just a lure for new hires. It can make communities safer by raising the visibility of the police department, given

that officers may be inclined to drive their vehicles more.

While McNeil spoke about the limitations of attracting officers with material incentives, all three said it’s helpful to remember that law enforcement officers — like workers across all sectors — care about tangible job benefits. For officers, a newer automobile, a police dog or a seemingly insignificant difference in salaries can be central factors in whether a police officer stays or goes.

“It’s not uncommon for new police officers, 21 or 22 years old, fresh out of college to leave an agency for a raise of \$500 or a take-home car or better equipment, and that’s something that we really haven’t seen in the history of policing,” said Ryan Alphin, executive director of the S.C. Law Enforcement Officers’ Association and the S.C. Police

Chiefs Association. In particular, he said millennials — those born in the early 1980s through the late 90s — have been quick to leave a policing job for one that promises slightly better pay or benefits. Previous generations, he said, were more tied to the community they worked for.

“It’s not like that anymore,” said Alphin.

But both millennials and non-millennials are more likely to stay put if their police department keeps them well trained. Appreciation helps, too.

“If you tell the officer you appreciate them and that they are doing a service that benefits the community, that will

go a long way,” said Jackie Swindler, director of the S.C. Criminal Justice Academy, who spent 40 years in law enforcement, most recently as the City of Newberry police chief.

“I hear it all too often that officers feel like they’re constantly being criticized about where they work and because of who they interact with.”

While panel members suggested ways to treat and attract officers, they also urged department leaders to be considerate of police departments in other cities. Swindler mentioned a police agency that recently offered officers a \$2,000 signing bonus if they would leave their current police department and a \$1,000 bonus

to the officer responsible for recruiting them. Departments are even eying fresh graduates of the academy who were sent by other departments.

“Someone said, ‘Can I stand off stage at the graduation line at the academy and recruit?’” recalled Swindler. “I said that would not be very nice.”

Besides, doing so brings an extra expense. If an officer leaves for another agency within one year, the original department can recoup 100 percent of the training costs from the officer’s new employer. If the officer departs within two years, the original department can recoup 50 percent of the training costs.

“It is very competitive,” said Swindler.



## Test yourself monthly quiz

**True or False:** Minutes from municipal council meetings are public records subject to immediate access without the need for a written Freedom of Information Act request.



**Answer: True.**

Political subdivisions of the state, including municipalities, are public bodies subject to the S.C. FOIA. Meeting minutes of public bodies for the preceding six months must be made

available for immediate inspection and copying. An individual may make an in-person request for this material during normal business without being required to submit the request

in writing. This requirement applies to minutes of a municipal council, commission or board of public works meeting, or any committee, subcommittee or advisory committee of the municipality, in which the meeting was set up by the governing body.

To help elected officials become knowledgeable about public records requirements and other areas of local governance, the SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government offers training intended for all levels of experience in municipal office.

*The institute offers both in-person and online courses. Elected officials who complete all of the required coursework graduate from the institute. Register for the May 23 “Freedom of Information Act in S.C.” and “Municipal Economic Development” courses at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEOI)*





# Curb nuisance and blight with technology, courts and creativity

It takes creativity and resourcefulness to enforce building codes — and sometimes a few years of experience.

Jacob Peabody, zoning and codes administrator for the City of Clemson, and Buddy Skinner, building codes administrator for the City of Greenville and president of the Building Officials Association of South Carolina, shared some ways to take on nuisances and blight at the Municipal Association's Hometown Legislative Action Day in Columbia.

**Track down absentee landlords.** In the City of Clemson, officials have a method for dealing with landlords who live out of state or won't accept the city's certified mail. Peabody said staff will ask the local police department to issue a criminal summons, because violating Clemson's

rental ordinance is a criminal offense. That summons is sent to the municipality where it is believed the landlord lives, and that municipality's local police force serves the individual the court summons to appear in court where the property is located.

"You need cooperation," said Peabody.

**Be consistent.** Check the whole street. Don't stop at the first, most obviously noncompliant property. Otherwise, you may get a phone call that, "Well, Joe Blow down the street, his grass is higher than mine," Skinner said.

"Do everything the same," he said. "Follow the guidelines, and you're safe. If you miss a step, it's going to bite you."

**Have a helpful attitude.** "This is a hard job," said Skinner. "But you can still help people and enforce the code. ... You

can help people find alternate means, methods and materials. You can find them help, but you still can do your job."

**College town? Limit non-relatives per rental house.** In its traditional neighborhoods, the City of Clemson allows no more than two people who are not in the same family to live together. There are no strikes. One violation results in appearing before city officials where the rental license may be revoked.

"We take occupancy in our community very, very seriously," said Peabody. "You don't want to be raising your kids right next to a frat house. It is effective, because it's making it so the rentals in these neighborhoods are families renting it rather than a bunch of unrelated people renting one house and just renting out all the rooms."

The city has other separate zoning districts that allow higher occupancy levels. Peabody said the program was initially difficult to start and that it took time to bring properties into compliance, but it is working smoothly now, and new properties are being added.

**Four strikes rule.** In the City of Clemson, landlords get a rental housing license, pay a yearly fee, and undergo yearly property inspections to ensure the presence of smoke detectors, no visible defects, functional windows in all bedrooms and other basic standards. Peabody said the code helps the city weed out slum lords.

If a landlord lives far away, he must designate someone within 75 miles to be the person to whom the city can issue summons, complaints and other official communications. If a property accumulates four local, state or federal violations within two years, the landlord or designee must appear before city council and possibly lose his rental housing license for one year.

The city also gives landlords sample lease language to help them fight problem renters and follow the proper procedures to expel their tenants, if necessary. Peabody said officials give consideration to landlords who clearly have problem tenants and are working to evict them.

“The same properties that cause police issues are often the same properties that have code issues,” he said.

“We had a property that had several noise complaints, a stabbing, and junk and debris in the yard.” That was enough to bring the landlord before city officials for a revocation hearing and ultimately a one-year license revocation. If the individual is caught violating the revocation, the city imposes an additional three months moratorium.

**Use the court system as a means to compliance.** Fines aren’t the goal — bringing properties up to code is.

“We’ll be glad to work with you if you work with us,” Skinner said, describing the city’s approach to delinquent property owners. “We’ll give you more time if you show us improvement.”



After all, the city doesn’t gain anything from fining a property owner, said Skinner. Most of the time, however, when a judge threatens an offender with contempt of court if the violation is not remedied in 30 days, the property owner is motivated to make an effort.

But be prepared to spend money to bring properties into compliance. Every case will not be resolved, so cities must set aside resources to improve properties that have slipped below code.

“I’ve worked with budgets from \$10,000 to \$100,000. You can work within any realm of that,” said Skinner. “If this guy’s not going to cut his grass, you have to enforce that code, and you have to go cut that grass. If there’s a house to be torn down, and you’ve taken it as far as you can take it, you’ve got to tear it down, and you have got to have some money to do it.”

**Embrace teamwork.** The City of Greenville has regular meetings that bring together officials from various departments, including police, fire, legal, code enforcement and community development.

“What we realized was a lot of our problems were the same,” said Skinner. “The police were going to the same residences, community development was working on the same things, but none of us were talking.”

**Technology can help.** The City of Greenville is in the early stages of implementing a mobile enforcement program, which will allow the city’s field staff to access its database from the field using an iPad.

“This program allows my staff to document violations and add their comments, pictures and other notes about the violation while at the location,” said Skinner. “These comments are then automatically transferred to our live data system.”

The system uses an app called Long Range in conjunction with programming developed by the city’s software provider.

“Our plan will ultimately cut out about 80 percent of our paper use by eliminating history reports, action logs, hand written violation notices and other documents that will all be electronic,” said Skinner.

While smaller towns may not have the technology to do this, he said, code administrators should incorporate as much technology as possible to help collect and retrieve information to prepare for court appearances and to address complaint calls.

*The annual meeting of the Building Officials Association of South Carolina will be May 7-10 in North Myrtle Beach. For more information, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: BOASC), or contact Scott Slatton at [sslatton@masc.sc](mailto:sslatton@masc.sc), 803.933.1203.*





# Insurance protects budgets, property, workers and residents

Cities face risks every day. From human resources issues to infrastructure failures and law enforcement incidents to cyberattacks, the responsibility for identifying and mitigating these risks lies with city councils to set policy and with staff to carry out the policy. Proactive risk management policies are central to protecting a city or town's assets.

## What types of insurance coverage should cities have?

State law requires employers to provide insurance to pay the cost of medical expenses and lost wages of employees who are injured on the job. Workers' compensation insurance limits the city's exposure while providing protection for its employees. Employees are entitled to receive non-taxable compensation equivalent to 66 2/3 percent of their average weekly wage for up to a maximum of 500 weeks. Medical expenses, such as surgery, hospitalization and prescriptions, are examples of the cost the insurer pays on behalf of the city for employees.

Property and liability insurance offers coverage for property the city owns, such as buildings, cars and equipment. It also covers claims resulting from damages caused to a third party due to an accident or the action of a city official. Examples of claims covered by property and liability insurance would

include a slip, trip or fall by a resident; an excessive-use-of-force claim by law enforcement; or a land use claim.

## Why should city officials be concerned about risk management and mitigating risk?

City officials must keep the city running. It's not just a city's buildings, vehicles or other tangible property that are at risk. Intangibles, such as the city's reputation, can be at stake. Officials must determine their loss exposures by identifying what is at risk for loss, threats that could cause a loss, and the potential consequences to residents if the city is unable to provide critical necessities, such as water, electricity and public safety.

City officials also purchase insurance to transfer risks so that the city does not assume responsibility for an asset or activity and bear the responsibility for any losses. A good example of this would be obtaining a certificate of liability for vendors that perform construction activities on behalf of the city.

## What are the consequences of a loss for cities?

Losses not only bring financial consequences but can also affect a city's ability to provide essential services to residents. A city can also face serious financial trouble if it does not have coverage for an occurrence, or if the city incurs costs

outside of the insurance policy's coverage limits. Some cities have made up the differences by dipping into their general funds or liquidating assets.

## What risks should now be on the radar of city officials?

Law enforcement liability claims and the cyber liability claims are currently major issues. In the event of a law enforcement liability claim, such as an officer-involved shooting, officials will be required to respond to the incident while navigating the internal and public relations challenges that result from these costly claims.

Large employers and banks have been the targets of cybercriminals, but attacks are now shifting toward local governments and other service-oriented organizations. City officials must understand the risks associated with a cyber breach and develop a contingency plan.

*The Association's Risk Management Services programs will offer Risk Management 101 for members of the SC Municipal Insurance Trust and the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund on May 9, 10 and 11. Participants will learn the fundamental of the workers' compensation and property and liability programs. For more information, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: risk management 101) or contact Venyke Harley at [vharley@masc.sc](mailto:vharley@masc.sc) or 803.933.1210.*





# What to know when considering solar panels

## From the S.C. Energy Office

### **What are the benefits of adding solar panels, regardless of whether I'm a private residential customer, business or city government?**

For most of us, a reduced electric bill is the most important consideration. Solar panels may also increase property value, although that research is still in the early stages. But many people also care about using clean energy and supporting local job creation. For a city government, there's the possibility of using solar panels creatively to provide additional benefits, such as shaded parking lots or even window awnings to cut down on sun coming into a building.

### **How do I make sure my structure and location are a good fit for solar panels?**

Ideally your roof should face south or west. Other exposures can support

solar, but less energy will be produced. You also have to consider shading — Are there lots of trees? Are there other buildings that will cast a shadow over your roof during the course of the day? Ideally, you would install solar when you installed a new roof, so that the panels don't need to be removed to re-shingle soon after they are installed. Google has a useful tool called Project Sunroof that estimates savings for purchased or leased panels.

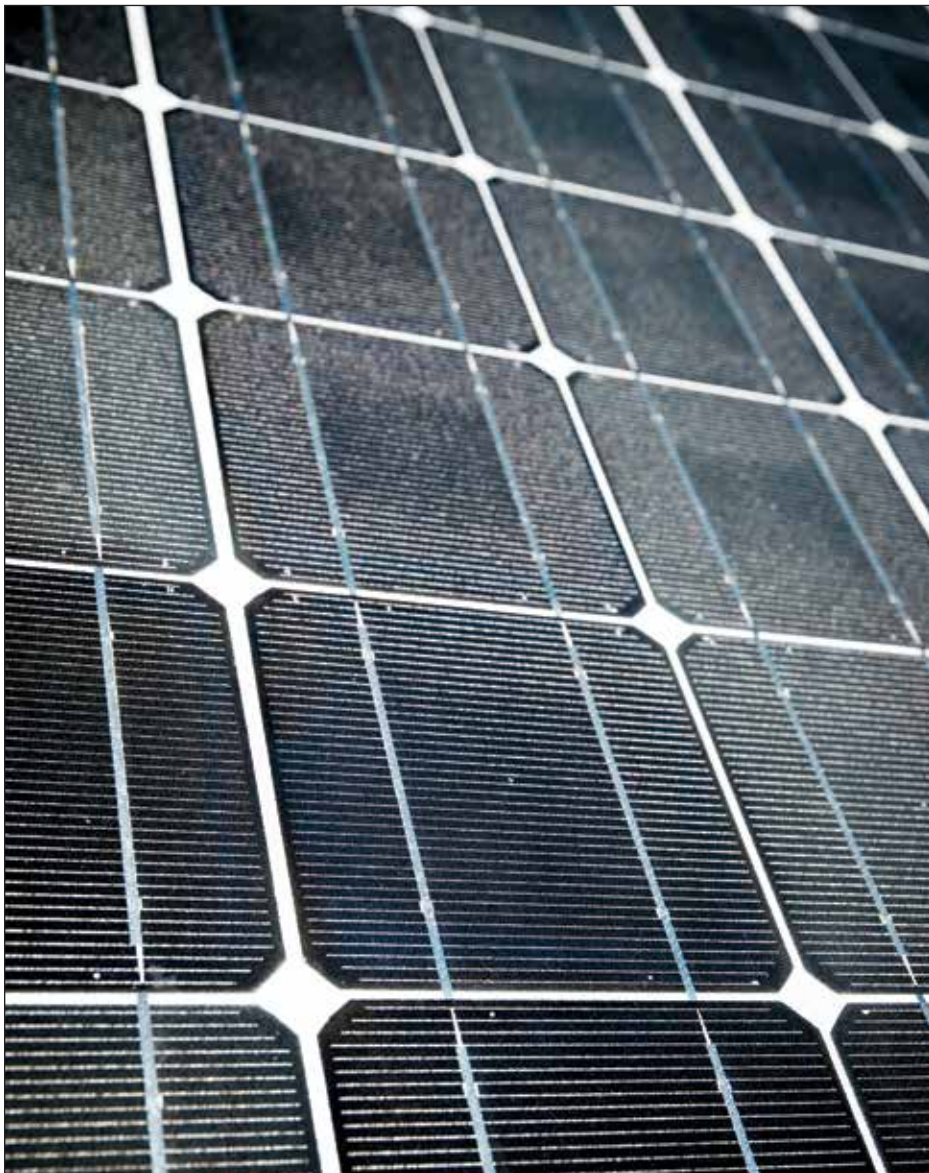
### **How do I figure out whether my building will generate enough solar energy to justify the equipment?**

A good installer will give you a spreadsheet showing how much energy you are likely to generate during each season. You can then factor in your utility rate to determine how much you can expect to lower your utility bill, and thus

how quickly the project will pay for itself. Make sure to consider how long you expect to be in your home when you make your calculations! As a double check on what the installer's estimates tell you, see the Project Sunroof site.

### **What rebates and tax credits exist for municipalities?**

Local governments won't be able to take advantage of tax credits. However, some utilities have special incentives for certain public sector customers, so it is worth checking. The S.C. Energy Office has a low interest loan program (currently 1.5 percent interest) that can be used for solar projects by local governments and non-profits, if the projected savings are high enough. Local governments in areas defined as rural by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy for America Program may be able to take advantage of grants or loans



Detail of a photovoltaic panel for renewable electric production.

to assist with the cost of solar installations.

### What rebates and tax credits exist for residential structures?

Some of the best incentives are tax credits. To take full advantage of the federal 30 percent tax credit and the state's 25 percent tax credit, you have to have enough tax liability to begin with. Residents who are, for example, living on a fixed income should evaluate their tax situation very carefully before counting on having up to 55 percent of the cost of the installation made up through the tax credits. There is a \$3,500 maximum per year cap on the state's

tax credit, but residents may carry the credit forward for up to 10 years.

As is the case for government installations, residents should check with their utility to see what, if any, incentives are available. They vary from utility to utility and may change over time. More information on incentives for a variety of energy-related activities is available at [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org).

### What questions should I ask commercial solar panel installers before committing to one?

This is the most important question out there! First, get several bids, so you can judge whether an installer is

proposing something way out of line. If you only have one estimate, you'll never know. The Energy Office, in conjunction with utilities, prepared a *Consumer Guide to Solar for the S.C. Homeowner*, which contains several useful checklists that anyone considering installing solar should consult.

### How common is it to see solar panels on public infrastructure? Are local governments in South Carolina going solar?

It is becoming more common. The Energy Office recently issued a ConserFund loan to the Town of Saluda to add solar to several of its buildings and a loan to the Edgefield School District for a large solar installation at Parker Elementary School. This will allow the school to get approximately 80 percent of its electricity from solar power. Several new schools are being constructed in South Carolina to either include solar panels or to be "solar ready" when financing to add solar becomes available.

### Is there a contact list for S.C. solar installers?

Not at this time. There is no requirement for solar installers to be licensed in the state, although they do have to be licensed contractors, and electrical work must be completed by a licensed electrician. The S.C. Solar Council maintains a listing of installers who have worked in the state for several years and have completed a significant amount of work in the state. See [www.scsolarcouncil.org](http://www.scsolarcouncil.org) and click the "resources" tab. The S.C. Solar Business Alliance also includes a list of members. See [www.solarbusinessalliance.com](http://www.solarbusinessalliance.com).

### Where can I get more information?

The Energy Office website, [www.energy.sc.gov](http://www.energy.sc.gov), contains information at both the "renewables" tab and the "residential" tab. Residents and local governments alike should always contact their utility to be sure they understand potential incentives and pitfalls.

*The S.C. Energy Office provided this article.*





# Bill to remove city control over plastic bags on hold for the year

Councils in two coastal cities have taken action to ban certain types of plastic bags from their communities. A bill introduced in the South Carolina House of Representatives had threatened to strip all cities and towns of their right to regulate plastic bags. But in March, the House voted to delay until next year further consideration of the legislation, H3529.

Before the vote, Rep. Cezar McKnight of Kingstree warned his colleagues that passing the bill would undermine local elected officials' ability to do the job their constituents elected them to do.

"Those local governments decided upon themselves — which they're constitutionally able to do — to introduce legislation in their body and enact their ordinances," said McKnight, part of the bipartisan opposition to the bill. "Who are we to stop that? What's next? ... Let's be careful about the path we start down."

In 2015, residents packed an Isle of Palms City Council meeting and urged their local officials to address a problem they saw as threatening the natural environment. They told councilmembers that the community's economy and quality of life depend on maintaining clean beaches

that draw visitors and investment. After city leaders spoke with local businesses, the Isle of Palms council passed an ordinance prohibiting the distribution of certain plastic bags while encouraging greater use of reusable containers through public signage and business outreach.

In 2016, the City of Folly Beach was approached by its local business association regarding the same issue and decided to pass an ordinance similar to Isle of Palms. Like Isle of Palms' plastic bag ordinance, the Folly Beach ordinance banned a specific type of plastic bag while specifically permitting the continued use of other plastic bags within grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, etc. Both cities' ordinances also contained hardship exceptions that would allow a business to apply for a temporary reprieve from the ordinance requirements.

"Folly's ordinance prohibiting plastic bags was an important step to protect our local environment," said Folly Beach Mayor Tim Goodwin, whose city's ban on the distribution of bags took effect at the beginning of 2017.

"We hope home rule will prevail to allow municipalities to continue to make these types of local decisions."

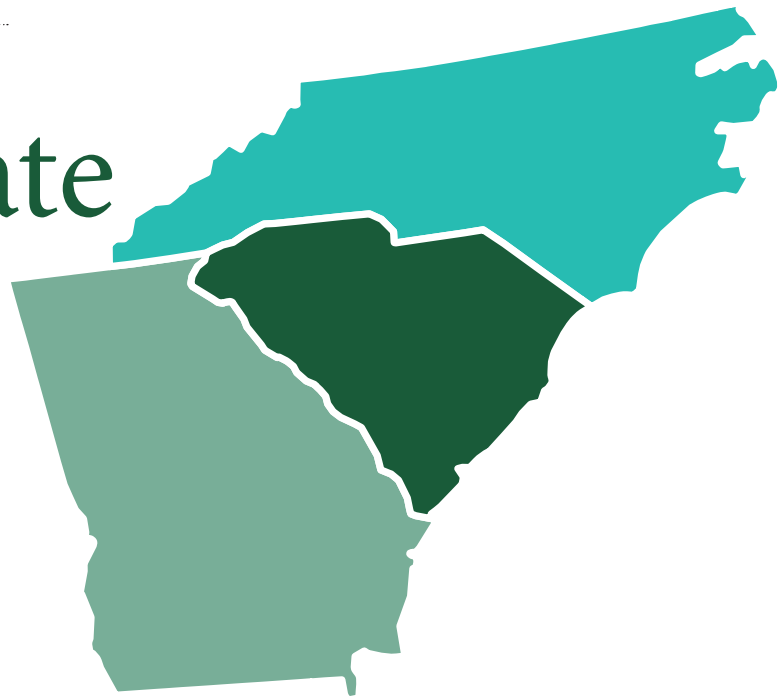
However, H3529, which was introduced in January, would remove local governments' authority to engage in the kind of local legislative process seen in Isle of Palms and Folly Beach, and reserve that authority for the S.C. General Assembly only. At least one similar attempt to strip cities and towns' decision-making powers on plastic bag restrictions was made in the House in 2016. But the bill, H4793, did not move forward.

The S.C. Coastal Conservation League and the Municipal Association expressed concerns about the most recent legislation, arguing that access to and enjoyment of those areas are a boon to residents, tourists, and the local and state economy.

"When local government is able to take the lead on assessing problems, gathering data, and finding potential solutions in the community, everyone wins," said Katie Zimmerman, air, water and public health director of the Coastal Conservation League.

"As an example, Greenville's restored Reedy River is most likely affected by different types of litter than the beach at Sullivan's Island. But both of those areas certainly draw visitors who spend money in local businesses."

# Neighbor-state cities share sustainable practices



South Carolina's cities and towns are rolling out lots of environmentally friendly ideas, but they're not alone in the region.

Some cities start off by creating a sustainability plan and appointing a sustainability officer. A lot of cities grow into a sustainability director, first by having a recycling coordinator, then an energy coordinator who tracks energy usage and looks for opportunities to save, according to Robert Reed, sustainable communities design director at Southface, an Atlanta-based non-profit that advocates for environmental solutions in construction, development and communities.

New development codes can help, too. Updated codes can reduce sprawl and traffic congestion, create mixed-used development, and overall improve sustainability, Reed said.

Many cities are making changes. Atlanta, for instance, is part of the Better Buildings Challenge, a U.S. Department of Energy program to make commercial, public, industrial and residential buildings 20 percent more energy efficient over the next decade. Through the program, public and private sector organizations across the country work together to share and replicate best practices in energy efficiency.

Atlanta also has a sustainability office, which focuses on instituting best practices into city government and the community. The goal is for every new environmental

activity, program, or policy to be screened and evaluated according to its economic and social impact. In addition, Atlanta requires all new city construction and major renovations to be Silver-LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified. Examples include the city's new public safety headquarters and the international terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

In Decatur, Georgia, the Atlanta Regional Commission recognized officials for implementing policies and practices that contribute to the sustainable use of resources in metro Atlanta. Decatur became the first jurisdiction in the 10-county region to achieve the highest certification level as a Certified Green Community.

To become certified, Decatur developed an environmental sustainability plan that outlines goals and strategies that the city and community should take to serve as good stewards of the environment. The city committed to building LEED-certified facilities, including its Fire Station No. 1, which has high efficiency equipment and lighting, a green roof garden, a geothermal vertical-closed loop heat pump system, solar water heating, rainwater harvesting and greywater reclamation.

The city also supports several community gardens with financial and in-kind support. At Decatur's Kitchen Garden, more than 30 refugee families grow

hundreds of pounds of fresh food each season. The produce is sold at the Decatur Farmers Market and various Decatur restaurants, according to Renae Madison, spokeswoman for the City of Decatur.

## Even streets can be green

North Carolina cities have also developed a number of innovative green programs. Fayetteville recently completed its "green street," two downtown blocks that include several different stormwater control measures designed to reduce the impact of runoff and promote the infiltration of water into the ground, according to Giselle Rodriguez, city engineer. The stormwater control measures include permeable pavement, which has three levels of different stones that catch solid materials and allow water to filter through.

There is also suspended pavement, which consists of a crate-like system filled with specialized soil. Trees planted in this area absorb the nutrients from the water but have space for roots to grow while allowing the pavement above to remain stable.

The green street also features bio-infiltration bump-outs, which look like landscaped islands, but instead of a mound of dirt, these are holes filled with engineered soil that can filter water. They also have plants — selected for their ability to tolerate being in water or in drought — which can remove nutrients from the water, Rodriguez said.



All of these stormwater measures work together in an innovative process. “If water bypasses one system, it goes to the next,” she said. The city is monitoring its water quality over the next year and expects to see improvements.

Elsewhere in North Carolina, the City of Jacksonville’s Land Treatment Site treats up to 6 million gallons of wastewater per day, which is repurposed back into the environment. Wastewater that has been naturally purified is distributed to cultivated forest land on the site.

The program makes a positive environmental impact by disposing of wastewater in an environmentally safe manner and eliminating the discharge of treated wastewater into the New River. The land treatment site covers 6,300 acres, with more than a third of the land dedicated to spray irrigation fields where pine trees are cultivated.

The final purification of the treated wastewater is provided by the soil and trees, which function as a living filter. They remove nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, which in turn support rapid tree growth.

“The benefit of discharging into the forest is that plants need the nutrients to grow,” said Pat Donovan-Potts, Jacksonville’s stormwater manager. “The plants need ammonias, phosphates and nitrogen. A waterbody can’t take that kind of nutrient loading.”

### Thinking green in South Carolina

South Carolina has environmental innovators of its own. The City of Sumter’s wastewater treatment plant uses sewage waste to create a slow-release, organic soil enhancer. As wastewater enters the plant, large objects are separated by automatic bar racks.

Sand and other small debris are removed, and the material is aerated and mixed with beneficial bacteria. This creates a sludge that is pumped onto belt filter presses where water is squeezed out, forming a putty-like cake. It is then heated, dried and converted to small pellets called poconite according to Al Harris, assistant city manager, responsible for the city’s public service area.

The City of Sumter produces about 1,200 tons of poconite per year, the bulk



(above) Seneca’s water treatment plant provides greater safety./Seneca

(right) Sumter’s poconite operation prevents waste from entering a landfill./Sumter



of which is sold to a fertilizer company in Florida, Harris said. Before, the city would haul the waste to a landfill, a costly and labor-intensive process, he said.

Groundbreaking green initiatives are not limited to large cities. Last year, the Municipal Association of SC awarded the City of Seneca an Achievement Award for its water treatment plant. The plant was built in the 1960s on Lake Keowee, and over the years, a residential development grew up alongside it. Residents expressed concerns about operational and safety issues at the plant, including its use of hazardous chlorine gas in the disinfection process.

City officials met with neighborhood leaders and developed a partnership to address their concerns. The plant stopped using the chlorine gas and instead began using a sodium hydrochloride process, according to Bob Faires, director of utilities.

The city upgraded the plant’s spill containment capabilities and site security. It also beautified the administrative building so that it no longer looks like an industrial site, said City Administrator Greg Dietterick. The city rents out a community meeting space, which has scenic lake views, for corporate events, as well as public and private events, Dietterick said.

The facility earned LEED certification, and Seneca also applied for Envision certi-

fication from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure, Faires said.

Also of note — Seneca has the world’s first all-electric municipal bus fleet. The six buses in the fleet have been in service since 2014. The buses save the city fuel and maintenance costs, run quietly, are fare-free and don’t contribute to air pollution, according to Ed Halbig, planning and development director and point person for the bus system.

Many cities function the same way they always have and are afraid of upsetting the apple cart, Dietterick said. But Seneca has been able to take on cutting-edge programs because they have open-minded department heads and city leaders who are proactive, and work toward a common goal, he said.

“It’s part of our culture here,” Dietterick said. “The citizens are our customers. We are here to serve.”



An architect's rendering of the new Kiawah Island Town Hall./  
Kiawah Island

# Cities reap green building benefits

**F**rom adding bike racks to using recycled building materials, cities and towns are designing new buildings (or rehabilitating old ones) with the future in mind. The benefits are clear — Green building practices improve energy efficiency and lead to long-term savings while minimizing facilities' toll on the environment.

Among cities' and towns' considerations when planning new facilities are the use of green building materials, sustainable land use and transportation, water conservation measures and waste reduction and recycling.

The Town of Kiawah Island worked with an architecture firm to design a town hall with several sustainable features, project architect David Burt said.

Since so many people ride bicycles on the island, the building's design included a path from the street and bike parking next to the building. It also has a shower facility in a garage building for bicyclists who need to clean up after a ride.

Burt said they maintained existing open space at the site and included some pervious pavement areas to minimize the impact on drainage. They are using drip-irrigation and native plantings. Once the plants are

stabilized, the consumption of water for irrigation can be eliminated altogether.

Kiawah Island Town Hall also conserves water by using low-flow plumbing fixtures. Fixtures for LED bulbs, which stand for light-emitting diodes and produce light more efficiently than some other types, are located throughout the facility to minimize electricity consumption. The building has an energy efficient air conditioning system and a thermally insulated continuous building envelope.

There is a clear difference.

"Typical construction methods include stuffing batt insulation - the pink stuff - in between the metal studs along the exterior wall. With that method there is a thermal break at the metal studs," said Burt. "To make the building envelope more energy efficient, we added a layer of rigid insulation on the outside face of the metal studs. To make it continuous, the rigid insulation continues up the wall and over the roof trusses."

The building also has several zones with thermostat controls, so occupants in separate spaces can make adjustments.

Many of the materials used to construct Kiawah Island's building are recycled materials. For example, Burt said,

all the steel in the building is made of 95 percent recycled material.

"A sustainably designed building is a comfortable place to work because it has views to the outside and lots of natural daylight. You will be hard-pressed to find a space in this building that doesn't have both," Burt said. "This building was designed with all of these (factors) in mind, and culminates in a very thoughtful and well-designed building."

## Positive effects on employees and residents

The City of North Charleston's new public works complex also was built with the environment in mind, said Ray Anderson, assistant to the mayor.

"Municipal governments should be good stewards of natural resources and instill the concepts of efficient building techniques in the facilities we are responsible for," he said. "In all cases, efficient building techniques equate to healthier buildings, which have a positive impact on the occupants, our employees and residents."

To encourage emissions-free transportation, the North Charleston complex has



Greenwood's federal building was repurposed./Greenwood



bicycle racks to accommodate 36 bikes, as well as 12 showers located on-site for those riders.

A 14,000-square-foot courtyard provides open gathering space, and water-efficient landscaping is used throughout the grounds, which feature some native and drought-resistant plants.

The complex has features such as a heat island-effect roof, constructed with roofing materials that have a high solar reflectance index. The building captures rainwater from roof structures, condensate from HVAC drains and waste water from restrooms, and pipes it to storage tanks for use as grey water.

The building has energy efficient appliances and windows, and a lighting system with occupancy sensors and central controls. Numerous large windows also provide an abundance of lighting from sunlight.

### Cooling measures

When the Town of Sullivan's Island looked to build a new town hall and police headquarters, officials wanted an attractive but efficient structure that would serve the community for decades.

"Achieving the proper balance of aesthetics, cost and function, while respecting the natural and built environments is a founding principle in the design of the Sullivan's Island town hall and police headquarters," said Town Administrator Andy Benke.

To address the coastal town's issues of heat and humidity, the design included a well-insulated building with shading devices. Large overhangs, porch roofs and Bahama shutters shade the windows without decreasing the natural daylighting from the adjacent rooms. Insulated windows with a special coating also contribute to reducing heat loads. Materials such as light colored metal roofing were used to help deflect the heat and ultimately reduce the town's demand on the HVAC systems.

The building's energy efficient design also included careful planning on the sizing and placement of the HVAC system to allow occupants in different zones of the building to control temperature. In addition, long-life and low-energy consuming LED fixtures were combined with

occupancy sensors to eliminate wasteful lighting of unoccupied rooms.

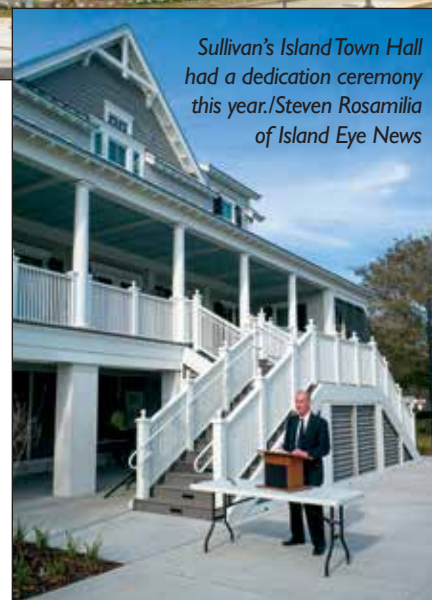
### Using what they have

Sustainability measures are not only achieved through new construction, however.

The City of Cayce received a \$5,000 energy efficiency grant from the S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff to purchase LED lights for its municipal complex and utility compound. With the grant, the city purchased 66 LED lights in a variety of wattages to use at City Hall. The new lights replaced inefficient, exterior metal halide bulbs.

City officials expect the new bulbs to provide both energy and cost savings. Quality LED light bulbs last longer, are more durable and offer comparable or better light quality than other types of lighting. The grant — Cayce's first one geared toward energy efficiency — is part of City Hall's move toward greener operations, said Ashley Hunter, city spokesperson.

The City of Greenwood decided to renovate a historic building rather than demolishing it and constructing a new facility in its place. The 25,000-square-foot former federal courthouse and U.S. Post Office is now jointly owned by the city and Greenwood County. It was donated in 2006 through a U.S. Department of the Interior program. The Self Family Foundation contributed \$1.8 million for the renovation of the facility as the Arts Center. The city and county entered into a concessions agreement with the Arts Council to operate the building.



Sullivan's Island Town Hall had a dedication ceremony this year./Steven Rosamilia of Island Eye News

The building now offers an art gallery, a gift shop, visitors' center and office space for the Arts Council of Greenwood. The former federal courtroom has been converted into a multi-purpose social hall. The basement of the building is used for arts and cultural classrooms, artist-in-residence space and storage. The facility also features a multi-purpose outdoor courtyard that is used year-round for events and gatherings.

The Arts Center is the hub of the shopping and dining area known as Uptown Greenwood, said City Manager Charlie Barrineau. In Greenwood's case, it was better to repurpose this building instead of constructing a new one.

"Cities set the tone and culture of where and how we shape our communities," Barrineau said. "By promoting historic preservation and reuse, the City of Greenwood is promoting long-term sustainability and reducing sprawl."



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# Calendar

For a complete listing of training opportunities, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) to view the calendar.

## APRIL

**7 Municipal Court Administration Association of SC Spring Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include domestic violence laws, diversion programs, Court Administration and Department of Motor Vehicle updates.

**12 Main Street Managers' Meeting.** Aiken. Topics include walkable communities, the importance of implementing a vision and a checklist of what makes a downtown attractive to potential investment.

**19 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Training and Advanced Academy.** Columbia Conference Center. Institute topics include business licensing procedures, the S.C. Freedom of Information Act and licensing coin-operated machines. The Advanced Academy topics include regulating food trucks, researching NAICS codes and communicating with customers.

**20 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include law enforcement recruitment and retention and local educational entities that are training students to enter the workforce.

**26 (repeated on April 27) SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Linemen Training.** SCE&G Pine Island, Columbia, SC.

## MAY

**5 Spring Managers Forum.** S.C. Criminal Justice Academy.

**7-10 Building Officials Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting.** Ocean Drive Beach and Golf Resort, North Myrtle Beach. Topics include the S.C. Freedom of Information Act, forms of municipal and county government, and the legislative process.

**17-19 SC Community Development Association Annual Meeting.** Inn on the Square, Greenwood. Walking tours in Greenwood and Anderson. Topics include tax increment financing and an update from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**23 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government.** Councils of Governments offices. Courses offered: "Municipal Governance and Policy" and "Freedom of Information Act in S.C."

## JUNE

**6 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Accreditation in Business Licensing Exam.** Municipal Association of SC.

**8 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Second Quarter Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control enforcement practices and MS4s, with a focus on construction and post-construction best management practices.

**11-13 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting.** Sonesta Resort, Hilton Head Island. Topics include the growth of small-cell antennas, cloud computing and the use of unmanned aircraft systems/drones for utility inspections.