

UPTOWN

Court ruling requires strict compliance with statutory formula for rollback millage calculation

Budget calculations for “rollback millage” in a year of countywide property reassessment must strictly follow the mathematical formula and variables set out in the State Code. Prior year property tax revenues, a number required in the formula, cannot be adjusted to allow for variables such as anticipated collection rate. Use of the statutorily specified “rollback millage” formula in determining any limitation on a millage rate increase can only be avoided if the municipal council follows the proper “override” procedure also set out in the State Code.

In *Angus v. City of Myrtle Beach*, a decision issued on January 31 of this year, the State Supreme Court ruled the City improperly calculated the property tax rollback millage rate limitation for its fiscal year 1999-2000. The Court ordered the circuit court to determine the appropriate relief for the individual taxpayer plaintiff and the certified class of all municipal taxpayers.

On March 23, the Court denied the request of the City and MASC to limit the Court’s ruling in its effect to municipalities that used the rollback millage calculation **after** the date of

the Court’s January opinion. The denial of that request may open the doors to taxpayer lawsuits against other municipalities that did not strictly follow the statutory formula in setting millage rates for previous years.

The basis for the Court’s case decision was, in calculating the rollback millage under SC Code Section 12-37-251(E), the City factored in **additional** non-statutory variables, adjusting for an estimated revenue “collection rate” and for an “assessment appeals allowance.” Even though the City had incomplete prior year revenue

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Municipalities can decide on tattoo facilities

In an opinion issued May 2, the South Carolina Attorney General agreed with MASC’s position that municipalities can decide whether or not to allow tattooing in their communities.

“The 2004 Tattoo Act’s wording led MASC to advise municipal governments the legislature intended to give local governments an option as to whether tattoo facilities would be allowed,” said Howard Duvall, MASC executive director.

MASC based its local-option opinion on Section 44-34-20 (B) (5). In a list of requirements needed to obtain a tattoo facility permit, the Act states, “provide to the department (Department of Health and Environmental Control) a certified copy of an ordinance passed by the local governing body where the business will be located which authorizes the tattooing of persons within its jurisdiction.” Therefore, if a

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2005 Achievement Award Winners

Population Category

0 - 1,000: Town of Trenton

The Town of Trenton had no idea of the opportunities that would come about when Town officials accepted a donation of an abandoned historic building in the heart of its downtown. Initially, the Town could not decide what to do with the building, but the pieces of the puzzle started coming together when Trenton's Town Square was designated an official site along the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor. Because of the designation, the Town wanted to create a visitors' center. Officials received a Heritage Corridor grant to locate the center in the donated building, which was adjacent to the Town Square. Faced with the problem of staffing the center, the Town asked the regional library system to relocate its branch to the building.

With help from the Edgefield County Building Department, the Town developed its own renovation plans. Volunteers from the Experience Works Program (a national program that gives community service opportunities to older workers) saved the Town an estimated \$20,000 by

doing much of the demolition needed to prepare the building for renovation. In addition to the Town's financial contribution and grant money, the Town received funding from First Citizens Bank, SCE&G and the Edgefield County Transportation Committee.

Once the renovation was complete, Trenton moved its 150-square-foot library to a 2,700-square-foot facility with five computer workstations and a computer card catalog with access to all books and materials in the Edgefield Regional Library System. Library usage grew from 20 visitors per month to more than 100 per month. Requests for library cards tripled. The Visitors' Center is located in the front of the building and offers brochures, maps and other historical information about Trenton and the surrounding areas located along the National Corridor. Library personnel staff the center.

With the generous donation of a historic building and the vision to see opportunities, the Town of Trenton was able to pull the pieces together to create a picture-perfect project.

Contact: *Bernie Welborn,*
803.275.2538



This renovated building, home to the Trenton Library and Visitors' Center, sits in the heart of downtown Trenton and adjacent to Trenton's Town Square, which is an official site along the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor.

Population Category

1,001 - 5,000: City of Woodruff

The City of Woodruff's Fire Department made small dollars do big things when it was given the go-ahead to renovate and relocate its headquarters to the City-owned, yet

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figures and relied on advice from the State Department of Revenue, the Court held that the City could not use additional variables not specified by Section 12-37-251(E) and must use only the variables described in the statute.

The Court also emphasized the City could have avoided using the rollback millage limitation altogether if it had followed the "override" provisions of SC Code Section 6-1-320(C). This statute allows the override of the millage rate limitation by a "positive

majority" vote of Council (a vote for adoption by a majority of the total number of councilmembers and not just a majority of the number of members present). The override vote must be taken at a specially called "sole purpose" meeting of the Council immediately following a noticed public hearing at the same meeting.

As a practical matter, municipalities will always create a deficit budget situation if the final millage rate does not allow for a realistic estimated

collection rate (because all property taxes will not be collected). For this reason, a municipality, in a reassessment year, may want to first calculate the rollback millage rate limitation figure following the statutory formula and then determine estimated revenues using an estimated collection rate. If the resulting estimate of collectable revenues using the statutory rollback millage number is insufficient, Council should use the override procedure to increase the final millage rate.

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abandoned National Guard Armory. Fire Chief Godfrey approached Council with the idea because of the small size and aging condition of the department's facility.

The chief, sensitive to the concerns of residents living nearby, met with them before the renovations began. The citizens welcomed the fire department after policies were established, such as a no-siren policy, to address their concerns.

Several years of neglect had taken their toll on the Armory. With determination and elbow grease from volunteers, the building began its transformation. The department turned the budgeted \$20,000 for the project into a \$50,000 project by using donated items and state and federal surplus materials, along with a lot of volunteer labor. Surplus and donated materials included paint, drywall, drop ceiling materials and lockers. Twenty-five volunteers and 12 paid firefighters spent more than 2,500 hours on the renovation project.

City funds paid for a bay door, carpeting and a glass partition to separate the offices from the bay area. Innovative ideas helped save even more money. The department decided to park the trucks diagonally in the bay area so only one bay door would be needed. Another innovative solution was heating the bay area with a wood-burning stove instead of installing a traditional heating system. The stove not only warms the bay, but also serves as a gathering spot for the firefighters.

In the new facility, all the department's vehicles are housed under one roof, whereas several were stored outdoors at the old station. Response times have improved now that firefighters can drive any vehicle directly out of the building.

With a \$20,000 budget, volunteer labor, donated materials and sheer determination, the department moved

into a building three times the size of its original home. If built new, the new facility would have cost more than \$500,000.

Contact: Scott Slatton, 864.476.8154

Population Category 5,001 - 10,000: City of Marion

Restoring the abandoned Marion High School campus allowed the City of Marion to create opportunities for its community to grow both culturally and economically. The school's C.D. Joyner Auditorium was the area's only major venue for the performing arts, but it was in a serious state of disrepair. Marion School District One donated the auditorium to the City.

Seeing the possibility for economic development through tourism, the City decided to restore the facility by collaborating with the Arts Council of Marion County. The arts council would promote cultural events at the auditorium, and the City would provide office space for the council. With seating for more than 900 people, the auditorium hosts concerts, public service programs and community

events. Recent performances include the U.S. Air Force Band and the Columbia Ballet's production of "Cinderella." The City plans to implement a 2 percent hospitality tax to fund additional renovations to attract more visitors.

The City decided to utilize the classroom space connected to the auditorium. After receiving a FEMA grant for physical fitness equipment for its firefighters, the City created a fitness center for its firefighters and all City employees. The City's Recreation Department also uses classroom space to offer aerobics classes to the public on a regular basis and plans to offer additional programs in the near future.

The City also worked with Marion School District One to utilize the main campus building, a designated National Register site. District One moved its offices into the building and created a technology center and community room for professional development programs.

Renovation of both the C.D. Joyner Auditorium and the old Marion High

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Twenty-five volunteers and 12 paid firefighters spent more than 2,500 hours working to renovate the City of Woodruff's abandoned National Guard Armory into a fire station.

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School has made an aesthetic contribution to the historic downtown. To make the plan a reality, the City collaborated with the Historic Marion Revitalization Association, the Arts Council of Marion County, the Marion Chamber of Commerce and Marion School District One. The City also received help from congressional officials, state elected officials, citizens and businesses. Because of these partnerships, an entire city block has been transformed from a state of disrepair to a beautiful campus that has increased property value, quadrupled the cultural opportunities for the community and boosted the city's economy.

Contact: Tim Harper, 843.423.5961

Population Category 10,001 - 20,000: City of Orangeburg

The City of Orangeburg wanted a place for its children to go during the hot summer months to cool off and have fun. Using part of its award-winning Edisto Memorial Gardens, Orangeburg developed the only city-owned and operated water park in the state.

Orangeburg funded the project using the local hospitality tax, a federal grant through the Land Water Conservation Fund, Orangeburg County's Capital Project Fund and a generous donation from the Dick Horne Foundation. Orangeburg received more than \$500,000 to develop the park.

The park includes a 6,000-square-foot rubberized mat with spray features. The rubberized mat not only allows the children to run around and be kids, but it also eliminates the need for a lifeguard because the mat has a zero depth of water. The City met Department of Health and Environmental Control requirements by installing a

recirculation/filtration system. The park also has other amenities such as a picnic shelter and traditional playground. There is a building with restrooms and office space in addition to fencing, lighting and landscaping.

Seven part-time employees trained in first aid staff the park. The park is open weekends during May and August and daily during the summer. Because admission to the park is affordable, it drew more than 14,000 visitors during its regular operating hours in 2004. Children ages 12 and under are charged \$1, and all others are charged \$2. The spray park is especially popular with local day care centers that bring busloads of children for a fun, safe outing. Additional revenue comes from after-hour rentals for family gatherings and birthday parties. Church groups and schools have also rented the park.

Although the park was not created to generate revenue, the City was pleased the operational costs exceeded revenue by only \$2,000. Compared to the fun and enjoyment provided by the park, city officials felt the shortfall was inconsequential. The Children's Spray Park is another step by the City of

Orangeburg to enhance the quality of life in its community.

Contact: John Yow, 803.533.6000

Economic Development: City of Rock Hill

With an overall economic impact of \$5.2 million from the 44,000 people visiting Rock Hill for the 2004 Cherry Park softball tournaments, city officials know firsthand sports tourism can have a large economic impact. The City decided to capitalize on this knowledge and increase its sports tourism efforts. Rock Hill Rocks included a marketing campaign, constructing two premiere sports venues and establishing the Rock Hill Parks Foundation.

Rock Hill developed a well-executed sports marketing campaign to showcase the City's world-class venues and attract visitors from across North America. With a dynamic slogan — Rock Hill Rocks — a sports Web site and a visually bold sports marketing brochure, the City received grant funds from the Tourism

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Seeing the possibility for economic development through tourism, the City of Marion restored the old high school auditorium and collaborated with the Arts Council of Marion County to promote cultural events at the renovated facility.

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Marketing Partnership Program to distribute its message.

The City is utilizing hospitality taxes, accommodations taxes, York County recreation funds and private donations to complete renovations and construction of the Rock Hill Tennis Center and the Manchester Meadows Soccer Complex. With eight courts and a pro shop, the new tennis center will host numerous tennis tournaments. The \$10.5 million, 65-acre soccer complex will be a tournament destination, too. The complex will encompass eight regulation-size soccer fields and seating for 750 spectators.

The recently created Rock Hill Parks Foundation, administered by the Rock Hill Parks Commission, will provide additional funding for these projects. Fund-raising opportunities allow donors to earmark dollars for specific projects or for existing venues such as Cherry Park. The Foundation has already secured more than \$230,000 in donations.

By realizing the economic impact of sports tourism and using a creative marketing strategy, the City of Rock Hill is bringing economic development to the City by making itself a major

national sports destination with a competitive edge.

Contact: Ed Thompson, 803.329.5622

Public Safety: City of Columbia

Columbia officials were concerned about the city's high crime rate and demand on police services. The police department formed a strategic management and planning team to assess the department's strengths and weaknesses and to give recommendations for improvement. One recommendation from the team was to implement COMPSTAT.

COMPSTAT is a crime analysis and police management process in which crime data is collected, analyzed and mapped on a regular basis. Police personnel are held accountable for performance as measured by the data.

Using the COMPSTAT process, police officers use real-time data and collaborative efforts to solve crime. Information from police reports is input into computers. Using GIS software, the data is compiled and organized into different reports. In weekly COMPSTAT meetings, the real-time

data is shared with commanders, investigative sergeants and line officers. A brainstorming and problem solving session occurs to formulate a plan of action to solve problems revealed by the data. Once a tactical plan is developed, patrol and special units coordinate their resources and expertise.

Community outreach is an important component of the COMPSTAT process. Everyone from the line officer to the region commander is expected to interact with the community, both to solicit help and information and to educate them about the crime trends in their community. Now empowered with real-time information, line officers are allowed to use more independent judgment while on their daily patrols. This has improved officer morale. Officers receive immediate recognition on their job performance at the weekly COMPSTAT meetings and receive certificates of appreciation in front of command staff and fellow officers.

COMPSTAT has allowed the Columbia Police Department to take a pro-active, rather than reactive

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To give its citizens a break from South Carolina's hot summers, the City of Orangeburg developed a 6,000-square-foot Spray Park in the heart of the Edisto Memorial Gardens.



To increase its sports tourism, the City of Rock Hill is marketing its \$10.5 million, 65-acre Manchester Meadows Soccer Complex, which includes eight regulation-size soccer fields and seating for 750 spectators.

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approach toward policing.

Contact: Captain Hines, 803.545.3570

Public Works: City of Aiken

The City of Aiken's public works department seized an opportunity to create a program that would change the lives of some of its employees. The department created the Changing Direction program to teach reading to those who cannot read, enhance the reading skills of those who can and offer life skills courses such as workplace Spanish and computer classes to those who excel.

The public works department collaborated with Aiken Technical College to determine a reading baseline scale for each job classification. All public works employees, including managers, took a reading evaluation test to determine their baseline reading level. All employees scoring below baseline were contacted confidentially and invited to participate in the Changing Direction program on a voluntary basis. Literacy classes were offered at the public works department to those employees. Public works employees who are trained by the Greater Columbia Literacy Council teach reading skills to non-reading employees. Those scoring above baseline (level 3) were invited to attend Work Keys sessions offered at Aiken Technical College and paid for by the



Commanders, investigative sergeants and line officers convene in weekly COMPSTAT meetings to discuss real-time crime analysis data and brainstorm a plan of action.

City. The classes are designed to enhance workplace reading skills and are taught during work hours. Once an employee reaches level 6, they can participate in life skills courses, such as workplace Spanish or computer classes, at Aiken Technical College. Although the City pays for these classes, they must be taken during the employee's personal time.

Sixteen employees entered the Changing Direction program. Seven have achieved level 6 or above and are enrolled in the life skills courses. Not only have the lives of these 16 employees benefited from this program, but the City has also benefited. Fewer jobs have to be completed again, workplace accidents



Aiken's public works employees participate in the life skills courses offered through the partnership between the City and Aiken Technical College.

have decreased, and the department has less employee turnover.

Contact: Larry Morris, 803.642.7610



Classifieds

■ The City of Rock Hill is seeking applicants for a public affairs coordinator. Submit resumé to Human Resource Department, City of Rock Hill, PO Box 11706, Rock Hill, SC 29731.

■ The City of Conway is accepting applications for a city administrator. Send cover letter, resumé and salary requirements to Linda Vereen, City of Conway, PO Drawer 1075, Conway, SC 29528 by September 1, 2005.

■ The Town of Allendale is accepting applications for a part-time building inspector. Submit resumé to Town of

Allendale, Attn: DeWayne Ennis, PO Box 551, Allendale, SC 29810.

■ The Town of Estill is seeking applicants for a public works director. Submit resumé to LaKisha Youmans, Town of Estill, PO Box 415, Estill, SC 29918.

2005 SCMIT Safety Idea Contest Winner: The City of Lancaster

The City of Lancaster used a Homeland Security grant for an interdepartmental equipment trailer and excavation program.

The City of Lancaster earned this year's title of Safety Idea Contest winner for its interdepartmental equipment trailer and excavation program. Recognized during MASC's Annual Meeting at the Awards Breakfast, the City will receive \$500 from the SC Municipal Insurance Trust (SCMIT), a self-funded workers' compensation insurance program administered by MASC.

"Through interdepartmental cooperation between the fire department and public works department, we have solved several safety issues with this one program," explained Steve Willis, Lancaster city administrator.

Using special excavation equipment and a 28-foot trailer purchased with funds from a Homeland Security grant obtained through Lancaster County, the City's fire department provides a safety presence in addition to assistance to public works employees working in deep trenches.

When a public works employee is laying utility lines in a trench, the fire

department puts equipment in place to support the sides of the trench and prevent cave-ins. The process is similar to building a wall. If dirt caves in, the public works employees will not be trapped under the rubble.

"The equipment used by the fire department can make the excavation site safer for our workers and can be used for a trench rescue if something does go wrong," said Willis.

"Our public works staff still receives the mandated training for trenching where a standard trench box suffices, yet they do not need training for deeper trenches because the fire department handles constructing these," Willis added. "As an added benefit, our firefighters have enhanced their trench/confined space rescue skills, as they work on trench construction



Using a 28-foot trailer, Lancaster firefighters can transport its special excavation equipment to assist in trench construction and rescues.

regularly, not just once a year when it is time for a refresher class.

"We also benefit by having fire-rescue standing by to quickly respond to any emergency at the job site," he concluded.

2005 Occupational Safety Contest Winners

During the Awards Breakfast at MASC's Annual Meeting, the South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust (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 to purchase safety equipment and/or safety training.

DIVISION 1 (10 to 50 employees)

First Place	Town of Hemingway
Second Place	City of Pickens
Third Place	City of Liberty

DIVISION 2 (51 to 150 employees)

First Place	Town of Cheraw
Second Place	City of Bennettsville
Third Place	City of Chester

DIVISION 3 (151 or more employees)

First Place	City of Camden
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Second Place	City of North Augusta
Third Place	City of Aiken

DIVISION 4 (public utilities)

First Place	Gaffney Board of Public Works
Second Place	Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works
Third Place	Laurens Commission of Public Works

Creating successful municipal Web sites

by Jennifer Dellacroce, VC3

Many companies in the world today rely on technology to help them do business. While municipalities are vastly different from private companies, they can and should take advantage of the Web to serve their residents and visitors more effectively.

When creating a municipal Web site, there are several factors to consider in making it a beneficial tool for the community. Municipalities have a lot of information to provide to their users. The more Web pages that exist, the harder it becomes to find information. Labels that are clear and concise will inform users of what information is available and where it can be found within the site. When creating the site's structure, it is important to arrange the information by what a user may look for instead of simply repeating the municipality's internal organizational structure. Providing a way to search the site will ensure that users can obtain the information they are looking for. If a search is not possible, creating an easily accessible site map that provides links to the site's pages in logical order is another solution.

Two of the most popular areas on municipal Web sites are jobs and events. The site should have a list of current job openings and a downloadable job application. A page that lists upcoming events and government meetings is a great way to keep users informed and get them involved. The home page is an ideal place to post these events because it is the most prominent area of the site. Make sure these events are updated often.

According to a report issued by the National League of Cities and the Center for Digital Government, cities are increasing their use of Web-based services to provide for greater citizen involvement and increased response times for a variety of constituent services. The 2004 Digital Cities Survey of 183 city mayors, managers and chief information officers found:

- 75 percent use electronic forms for building permits and procurement
- 77 percent publish requests for bids online; almost half provide a variety of e-forms for tax, licensing, animal services and park reservations
- 40 percent offer online utility bill payment; 35 percent offer electronic payment for parks and recreation services; 36 percent offer online parking and traffic citation payment capabilities
- 44 percent accept job applications online
- 75 percent provide emergency preparedness information online

Provide any forms frequently requested by users, such as building permits, to save them a trip to city hall. These forms can be as simple as downloadable documents that a user can print, complete and mail.

Having detailed contact information on the site is important. Directions and maps to important municipal buildings are great additions, and a phone directory of departments lets users determine whom they need to call if they have a concern.

"Think of your Web site as a marketing tool for visitors, new business and industry," said Howard Duvall, executive director of MASC. "Providing detailed, easy-to-use information about your town on the Web could attract good, sound economic development opportunities for your municipality."

It is also important the Web site is compatible with various Web browsers and assistive technologies used by disabled citizens. Following accessibility guidelines set forth by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act or by the World Wide Web Consortium not only allows your site to be available to the widest audience possible, but also often enables the site to work with older browsers or Web-enabled mobile phones and PDAs (personal digital assistants, such as a Palm Pilot or handheld computer).

Once a Web site is created that is easy to use and accessible, it needs to be updated regularly. Finding time to make updates can be a challenge, but will keep your citizens better informed.

Simple content management tools are available that allow individuals or departments to easily change the Web site without difficulty.

Walkable communities offer many benefits

Across the state, municipal officials are recognizing the importance of making their city or town more walkable. Some benefits are obvious, such as healthier residents; however, some are not so obvious. Improving a town's "walkability" can positively affect economic development, specifically tourism.

The term "walking tourism" is not commonly used in the United States, but it is not a foreign concept in Europe. Countries from Ireland to Bulgaria have seized this opportunity to bring more tourists to their countries or to extend the stay of current visitors. Tourists take "walking holidays" ranging from less strenuous beach walks and nature trails to long distance walking through the countryside and mountains.

Walking tourism is starting to catch hold in the United States. The Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel reported one of its most popular programs is the Saturday Walking Tour. During the free, one-hour tours, community leaders take both tourists and residents through the historic districts or courthouse square areas of their hometowns. The local leaders provide a commentary to the group about their town and growing up there.

South Carolina is beginning to enter this niche market, too. Walking tours in tourist locations such as Charleston, Issaqueena Falls in Walhalla and Beaufort have been the standard. Other less traditional options are emerging. In Georgetown, Miss Nell's Tours offers a personal walking tour of Georgetown's historic district and downtown area. Conway is joining a list of other cities throughout the state that are putting more focus on greenway trails and paths.

The Smart Growth Leadership Institute recently chose Greenville as one of four cities in the nation to receive guidance for implementing

smart growth principles, such as providing public transportation options, mixing land uses, creating a range of housing opportunities and fostering walkable neighborhoods.

Officials point out the emphasis for making their city or town more walkable could also help improve the health of the community by giving people more outdoor exercise choices.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommend individuals engage in 30 minutes or more of moderately intense physical activity daily.

The risk of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, breast cancer and depression are measurably higher for inactive adults. Specifically, inactive people are twice as likely to suffer from a stroke and 30 percent more likely to experience depression.

Research suggests people are likely to walk more and weigh less in urban areas with a mix of retail and offices within a convenient distance from neighborhoods. Overwhelmingly, cities and towns are the places with tree-lined streets and sidewalks, allowing residents to walk to dinner or pick up odds and ends at the corner store.

Main Street South Carolina communities have led the way in creating walkable places. Collaborating with federal, state and regional organizations, Main Street communities completed numerous streetscaping initiatives that have created more jobs, more private investment and enhanced community pride.

A city or town can provide people with fantastic walkable places, but some people still won't take advantage of them. Lack of time, feeling too tired and lack of motivation are often cited as reasons for not engaging in regular exercise. Behavior change is tough, but the effect of inactivity is staggering.

The level of personal physical activity has a significant impact on the state and national economy. Experts estimate that obesity annually costs the nation \$117 billion and South Carolina \$1 billion. Improving wellness can yield substantial economic benefits in addition to the enhanced quality of life for the individual.

To help people with this behavior change, employers try to help employees make the shift to a healthier lifestyle. Responding to this pressing need, the SC Local Government Assurance Group (SCLGAG), a health insurance program of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, offers its members wellness program advice, services and grants. Its mission is to help cities provide appropriate programs to increase employees' health, safety, nutrition and sense of well-being. Indirectly, the programs positively affect morale and work production. Also, these programs have been proven to decrease the risk of disease, illness and injury.

In partnership with Aiken Medical Centers, Aiken provides educational seminars, preventive screenings and a \$25 gym reimbursement per month for averaging three visits per week. Aiken is seeing the results of its wellness program. The City has experienced lower employee health claims, which has produced overall insurance cost savings.

Making SC municipalities more walkable is a wise investment in terms of increasing economic development, enhancing quality of life and controlling rising health care costs for employees.

For additional information on making your city or town walkable, call Main Street SC Manager Beppie LeGrand at 803.933.1231. For additional information on wellness programs, call Health and Wellness Manager Anne Shissias at 803.933.1272.

SCCDA recognizes community development excellence

In May, the SC Community Development Association (SCCDA) recognized excellence in the community development field by presenting its Hettie Rickett Award to Becki Hood, administrator for the City of Chesnee, and its Award of Excellence to the Hampton County Department of Social Services (DSS).

Hettie Rickett Award

The annual Hettie Rickett Award recognizes a community development volunteer, staff member or official who went above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference in community development. SCCDA named Becki Hood, administrator for the City of Chesnee, as this year's recipient. Hood was nominated by the Appalachian Council of Governments.

"Hood has worked long and tirelessly on behalf of her City and its citizens, consistently going beyond the duties of an administrator to improve her community," said Judy Romano, project manager/grants services for the Appalachian COG.

In the last six years, Hood has worked with her council, various local partners and the Appalachian COG to bring \$3 million in grant money to Chesnee. These grants include a \$350,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to renovate 15 homes. Hood became so involved in the project that she still visits with most of the home owners, five years after the project's completion.

Funds from various sources and a partnership among the City, art groups and a local foundation renovated a dilapidated building into the Cherokee Foothills Artisan Center. The nonprofit gallery offers space to local artists, holds juried fine arts shows and conducts art, painting and craft classes for local residents.

Transportation Enhancement Grant funds paid for downtown improvements, including new Victorian lighting, trees and shrubs, curbs and gutters, paved brick sidewalks and crosswalks.

Working as part of a collaborative effort between the City, the local recreation commission, the Spartanburg County Council on Aging and Spartanburg County, Hood secured funds to build a community/senior center. The building serves the youth and the older residents of Chesnee with recreation facilities, a playground, classrooms and meeting rooms.

Through Hood's efforts, Chesnee received CDBG funds to upgrade and replace sewer lines in the aging mill village adjacent to both downtown and the community/senior center. Finally, Hood has embarked on another CDBG project in the residential neighborhood next to the mill village. The City will rehabilitate 15 low-income houses.

"This is an outstanding public official. Becki's special touch and hands-on approach can be seen throughout the town," said Harold Young, 2004-2005 president of SCCDA, who presented the award to Hood during a ceremony at the Chesnee City Council meeting in June.

"Hood's ability to develop partnerships and follow through on good ideas has brought her to the forefront of community development. Driven by her deep concern for the citizens of Chesnee, she is committed to making a difference in her community," said Michelle James, director of Education and Training for



Becki Hood, administrator for the City of Chesnee, receives the Hettie Rickett Award during a ceremony at the June Chesnee City Council meeting.

the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

Award of Excellence

SCCDA annually presents its Award of Excellence to organizations whose projects have significantly improved the community and have the potential to be a catalyst for further improvements to the area's quality of life.

"The project must involve diverse segments of the community, address the community's most important needs and involve creative use/leveraging of community resources," explained Harold Young, 2004-2005 SCCDA president.

The Hampton County Department of Social Services received this year's award for constructing a service center to centralize all DSS programs.

Originally located in two separate buildings, the department's office was a safety and security concern. Clients had to walk along a busy highway, often with small children, to go from one building to the next. The two facilities did not allow staff to adequately serve clients. Because of overcrowding, staff members shared offices. This took away the privacy needed to discuss confidential matters.

SCCDA continued on page 11

Hampton County's new, 13,697-square-foot service center allows staff members to have individual offices, giving clients necessary privacy. It features a spacious waiting room, a private visitation room for children in foster care and a job-training room equipped with computers. The building enables staff to offer more to their clients in terms of privacy, safety and quality service.

The \$1.2 million building was funded using a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant. New Life, a drug and alcohol abuse facility, provided \$50,000 for part of the grant's required 10 percent match, with Hampton County funding the remainder.

"We are very proud of this new facility in Hampton County. It was a collaborative effort between many agencies, and we are pleased to be recognized by SCCDA and its membership," said Sabena Posey, Hampton County administrator.

"Hampton County DSS has earned the Award of Excellence by filling a great need in their community," said James. "They have certainly improved the quality of life of their customers by constructing this new convenient and accessible building."

SCCDA, an affiliate of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, assists its members in addressing housing and economic development issues.

Tattoos continued from cover

municipality does not pass an ordinance allowing tattooing, DHEC cannot issue a permit. DHEC has developed its regulations for tattooing, but they have not been approved by the General Assembly. The regulations will become law in February unless the legislature takes action before then.

At the request of Senator William C. Mescher of Goose Creek, the Attorney General reviewed the issue. "... we agree with the Municipal Association's interpretation of Section 44-34-20 (B)(5) that failure of a local governmental body to enact an ordinance 'authorizing' tattoo facilities in a locality means that no such facility may be licensed in that jurisdiction."

The Attorney General went further and concluded the law may be "constitutionally suspect." It could be challenged as special legislation and a violation of the Equal Protection Clause because it makes tattoo facilities legal in some jurisdictions and not in others. The opinion stated, "Our Supreme Court has repeatedly held that a statute violates these provisions

of the Constitution by empowering local jurisdictions to opt out of state criminal law regulations."

"We expect the General Assembly to clarify its intentions on this issue when legislators return in January," said Duvall.

Municipalities have several options to consider concerning tattoo facilities. To prevent them from locating in their communities, municipalities should not pass an "authorizing" ordinance (an ordinance that would allow the facilities). Municipal officials also need to carefully review their current zoning ordinances. Current ordinances may unknowingly allow tattooing as a "personal services" business, a "home occupation" or a retail business. Because tattooing was illegal until the Tattoo Act passed in 2004, many zoning ordinances may not have expressly prohibited or limited the possible locations of tattooing businesses. Finally, passing an ordinance *prohibiting* tattoo facilities could be challenged as making illegal an action made legal by state law.

News Briefs



■ Fourteen business licensing officials received their Accreditation in Business Licensing (ABL) designation after completing the three-year institute and passing an examination. They are Tammy Barkley, CMC, assistant city manager of Cayce; Deborah Blanton, business license inspector of Loris; Valeria Brunson, finance assistant of Summerville; Melvin Curtis, business license inspector of Sumter; Allen Eleazer, business license inspector of Columbia; Byron Foster, auditor of Charleston County; Brenda Kelley, planning and zoning administrator of Hartsville; Lex Kirkland, risk management/business licensing administrator of Aiken; Kenneth Knudsen, director of planning and development of Cayce; Laurie Lane, clerk of Hartsville; Donna Langley, administrative assistant of Lancaster; Steve Martin, building official of Cayce; Gregory Morris, business license officer of Greenville; and Tommy Tamblin, revenue specialist of Charleston County.

■ In June, the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems elected its 2005-2006 board of directors: President — Sam Bennett of Clinton; Vice President — John Bagwell of Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities; Members at-Large — Charles Guerry of Newberry, Dale Satterfield of Laurens Commission of Public Works, William Medlin of Winnsboro and Nick Stegall of Rock Hill; Past President — Ken Barnett of Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works.

The Municipal Association encourages municipalities to consult with their municipal attorney before deciding how to address tattoo facilities in their communities.



Educational Opportunities

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **August 19**, will hold its Quarterly Meeting at Seawell's in Columbia.

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **September 8**, will present "The Forms of Municipal Government" and "Benefits and Pitfalls of Economic Development." The session will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of government.

SC Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

■ **September 14-16**, will be held at the Clarion Town House Hotel in Columbia. Topics include "New Technology for Paperless Council Meetings," "Section 125: The Benefits to Your Municipality," "Election Administration" and "The Roles and Responsibilities of the Notary Public."

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

■ **October 11-13**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Hilton Resort at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. Topics include evaluating budgeting software applications, a Robert's Rules of Order review and state retirement system changes.

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

■ **October 12-14**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Hilton Resort at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. Topics include code enforcement and licensing property management companies and developers.

SC Municipal Managers and Administrators

■ **October 21**, will hold its Quarterly Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Columbia.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

■ **November 2-4**, will hold its Fall Meeting at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort in Hilton Head Island.

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **November 10**, will hold its Fall Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Columbia.

SC Municipal Personnel Association

■ **November 16-18**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Bay Watch Resort in North Myrtle Beach.

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.



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