

UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

New

Legislation Affects Hometowns

As representatives and senators get settled back into their daily routines in their home districts, local leaders are learning about the new laws passed and how these laws affect their hometowns.

Immigration (Act 280)

Illegal immigration reform was one of the most hotly debated topics this session. This overall statewide reform requires both public and private employers to check the citizenship status of new employees. This new law also prohibits cities and towns from passing ordinances that are more lenient than the state law. There are three sections specifically addressing local ordinances.

- A political subdivision may not approve any ordinance or policy that limits or prohibits a law enforcement officer, local official, or local government employee from enforcing a state law related to immigration.
- A political subdivision may not adopt any ordinance or policy that limits or prohibits a law enforcement officer, local official or local government employee from communicating with federal or state officials about someone's immigration status.
- A city, county, municipality, or other local government or political subdivision may not take local action regarding employment, licensing, permitting or otherwise doing business with someone based on that person's authorization to work in the United States that exceeds or otherwise conflicts with federal law or that is in conflict with state law.

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For a list of current municipal job openings, visit www.masc.sc/misc/jobs.htm

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The illegal immigration bill also requires the state and all political subdivisions to verify the lawful presence in the United States of anyone seeking public assistance benefits. However, it creates exclusions for benefits such as emergency medical treatment, disaster relief, soup kitchens and others.

The law requires jail operators to verify, through federal officials, lawful presence of anyone confined in the facility with pending felony charges or charged with driving under the influence. Also, courts must consider the immigration status of a person seeking bail.

Finally, the law creates a statewide business license, the "South Carolina Employment License." Because the state does not have a universal business license and all cities and towns do not issue business licenses, this new license only deals with immigration. If an employer hires an illegal immigrant, the state can revoke the state license. Local governments can revoke the employer's business license as well, but the new law does not require it.

Public Prayer

A new law provides a procedure for local governments to adopt policies allowing for an invocation by one of the elected or appointed officials of the body, a chaplain elected by the body, or a speaker chosen on an objective and rotating basis from a pool of the community's religious leaders. The state Attorney General must defend any public body in a challenge to the constitutionality of the act. Also, the Attorney General must prepare a statement of the applicable constitutional law and, upon request, make that statement available to a legislator or a public body.

Smoking Ban

The General Assembly failed to take any action on a statewide smoking ban; however, cities and towns can pass local ordinances banning smoking



Retirement celebration

Mark your calendars and polish your dancing shoes—Howard Duvall's retirement celebration is one you sure don't want to miss! Howard is retiring on October 1 after 34 years of local government service. The Headliners, a long-time favorite of municipal officials, will kick off the party on Friday, September 25, at the Columbia Convention Center.

Howard has made many friends over the years and everyone is invited, from hometown friends in Cheraw to municipal and legislative officials. Contact Michelle Willm at mwillm@masc.sc or 803.933.1259 to RSVP for the party.

The Hilton (located across the street from the Columbia Convention Center) is offering a special rate of \$119. To make reservations, call 803.744.7800 and ask for the sales office. Make sure you reference the Municipal Association when you make your reservation.

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Long-range vision

PART 1 of 2

Executive director saw changes and challenges over

34 years

In the year 1973, two significant things happened to local governments in South Carolina: the Home Rule Act Constitutional Amendment was approved by the voters, and Howard Duvall entered the local government political scene.

Today, as Duvall readies for retirement on September 30 as executive director of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, he leaves a political landscape where much has changed to benefit municipalities, but more work lies ahead. He also leaves an Association that has matured and taken an active role in supporting cities through administration, education and service.

Duvall began his political career in December 1973, when he was elected a Cheraw city councilman. His political interest was apparent early on, when he served as senior class president for his high school. Duvall was the fourth generation to run the Cheraw Hardware store. When it came time to enter The Citadel, Duvall knew he already had a solid background in business, so he decided to pursue his interest in politics. The political science major did his senior thesis on the topic of downtown redevelopment, researching the changes taking place in Columbia and Spartanburg.

“I knew I wanted to be involved,” he said.

Duvall served on council for six years, and then ran for mayor of Cheraw in

1980. His friend, Mayor Charles Jackson, did not plan to seek re-election and encouraged Duvall to run. As part of his platform, Duvall proposed a roll-out trash system, where homeowners would roll their trash cans to the curb, as opposed to having sanitation workers pick up the cans from the back yards. While it’s common enough today, the system had its opponents then, and they nicknamed the garbage cans “Howard Haulers.” Fortunately, the name did not stick, and Duvall was elected mayor, where he served six years.

As Duvall was serving in Cheraw, changes were afoot in other South Carolina municipalities with the introduction of the Home Rule Act.

The aim of Home Rule was to give local governments the power to make the decisions that affect their communities. The great push for Home Rule came from counties, which had little control over their own budgets. Previously, state senators wrote the budgets for their counties.

“I’m not sure Home Rule changed municipal government much,” he said. “It changed county government; it freed county council from being dominated by its legislative delegation. Municipal government already had autonomy to make budgets.”

The Home Rule Act did allow cities to choose their form of government (Cheraw chose a strong mayor form). However, Duvall says the promise of Home Rule has not been fulfilled, and there were problems from the beginning. When the act was being debated in the General Assembly, lawmakers could not agree on an annexation policy or on the fiscal roles of cities and counties, Duvall said.

Annexation laws in South Carolina always have been restrictive, with turf battles among both utilities over who controls what areas as well as rural legislators, who did not want cities to grow.

“Because we didn’t have annexation flexibility, legislators formed special purpose districts that became political fiefdoms,” Duvall said.

South Carolina has hundreds of special purpose districts, created by the Legislature to run fire districts, recreation commissions, and water and sewer districts.

If changes could be made on the state level – the Municipal Association has been advocating changes to the state’s annexation laws for more than 60 years – the ideals of Home Rule could be realized.

“We were all excited – and still are – about the possibilities of Home Rule,” Duvall said.

Part 2 will appear in the September issue of *Uptown*.



Association honors municipal achievement

Each year, the Municipal Association honors outstanding local government projects in South Carolina. In 2008, 39 municipalities entered the Achievement Awards program. This represents the largest number of entries in the program, to date. The following are descriptions of winning projects and other entries.



The Island's four-legged residents and their owners meet and greet at the Bark Park.

Isle of Palms: Bark Park Award Category: 1,001-5,000

Residents flocked to the Isle of Palms Recreation Center to play and relax. The ball fields at the Center especially became a popular place for people to exercise their dogs. Dogs can run on the beach off-leash from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. Other than that limited time, residents had no public place on the Island for their dogs to exercise. City officials had a messy problem on their hands until they created the Bark Park, a designated area just for the Island's four-legged friends.

A significant amount of fencing was left over from the Center's initial construction. Recreation Department staff suggested using it to create a dog park. City Council embraced the idea, giving the staff the "go ahead" to work on the project. Staff surveyed dog parks in other municipalities,

asked residents for input, identified an appropriate site, drafted a plan and constructed the park. With all the work done by employees, the City efficiently used taxpayer's dollars while improving the quality of life.

The Bark Park has many features which have proven to be a hit. Bleachers outside the park's perimeter allow people without dogs to watch the action. An information center at the entrance keeps visitors informed of activities at the Recreation Center. An acquaintance gate allows dogs to sniff and be introduced safely before they play, while a special area is reserved just for smaller dogs. Inside the park, owners can sit on benches and meet other dog owners while watching their pets.

The park provides tennis balls for play as well as scoopers, trash bins and cleaning stations for owners to clean up after their pets. City officials added rakes, at the dog owner's request, to fill holes dug by the dogs.

City officials proudly point out the Bark Park has been a big success for the island. Reports of dogs running loose have dropped significantly since the park was created. In 2005, 417 reports were made of dogs running at large. By 2007, the number dropped to only 116 reports.

The Bark Park has helped raise awareness about the importance of getting licenses and rabies vaccinations

for dogs. Thanks to the Bark Park and a special event called the "Annual Doggie Day at the Rec," more dog licenses were sold in the first two months of 2008 than in the entire previous year.

The Bark Park has become an important part of the community, providing pets and people on the Isle of Palms with a place to visit and play. Contact Emily Dziuban at 843.886.6428 or Emilyd@iop.net



Volunteers navigate the Sampit River looking for trash.

Georgetown: Waterfront Cleanup Award Category: 5,001-10,000

Georgetown is an historic seaport city, with a charming waterfront walk, popular shops and beautiful views of the Sampit River. Over the years, however, trash, abandoned boats and other debris began to ruin the scenery.

River cleanups had been held annually to pick up litter, but volunteers

soon became overwhelmed by the amount of trash. The city's Keep Georgetown Beautiful program stepped in and challenged the entire community to get involved in a one-day event called the Sampit River Sweep. Residents, students, corporate and city employees all contributed to the effort. City employees from many departments helped clean up debris, and city equipment was used in the effort. The first River Sweep involved more than 100 volunteers, collecting 7.5 tons of debris from the river and its shores.

Although the annual event was successful, it still did not completely remove all the litter from the river. Abandoned boats remained in the river, due to the expense and potential liabilities of removing them. Other large objects, such as loose timber and dredging pipes, simply were too difficult to remove.

The abandoned boats and large marine debris created not only an eyesore but also posed a navigational and environmental hazard. The City developed the Abandoned Vessel and Marine Debris Removal Project to deal with the problem. With funds by the Department of Health and Environmental Control, a marine contractor removed the marine debris in an environmentally safe manner and disposed of it in approved landfills.

The City worked with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Coast Guard to identify owners of the abandoned vessels. Officials also passed an abandoned vessel and vehicle ordinance to penalize owners who left their boats in the waters for an extended length of time. City officials began tagging abandoned boats and treated the vessels in the same manner as junk or abandoned vehicles. The Keep Georgetown Beautiful group also created a publicity campaign to educate the public about proper disposal procedures.

After the successful River Sweep and Abandoned Vessel Project, the City launched a Beach Sweep/River Sweep to run concurrently with the Sea Grant Consortium's statewide event. The City partnered with state, county and local agencies, as well as business and private groups, for the clean-up event. Volunteers took to the waterway in canoes and kayaks. Participants also were encouraged to use their own boats. Finders of the most unusual items were rewarded with prizes.

The clean-up efforts have proven successful in beautifying the river and protecting the environment. With complete community involvement, the City has made strides in conserving and promoting its most vital asset, the waterfront.

Contact Cynthia Howard at 843.545.4005 or howardc@cogsc.com



A strong partnership between Orangeburg and Claflin University speeds up drug testing for the region.

Orangeburg: Crime Lab

Award Category: 10,001-20,000

With violent crime rates reaching a dangerous high, Orangeburg officials worked with state and local agencies to develop a regional drug analysis laboratory to speed up the prosecution of offenders.

In the late 1990s, South Carolina was listed as having one of the highest violent crime rates per capita in the United States, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting System. The report showed Orangeburg County had the highest number of violent crimes per 10,000 residents, more than any other county.

Chief Wendell Davis of the Orangeburg Department of Public Safety urged other local law enforcement and government officials to participate in a pilot program to address the growing crime rate. The South Carolina Violent Crime Reduction Project involved a three-year study of the criminal justice system in the First Judicial Circuit.

The study discovered a significant portion of violent crimes committed in the area were associated with the illegal drug trade. Local law enforcement had consistently complained that violent drug offenders were not being prosecuted as quickly as necessary. Many times, offenders would be out on bond and continuing to commit crimes while awaiting prosecution.

The delays were primarily caused by the delays in getting a certified drug analysis for trial. The State Law Enforcement Division, which handled the drug analysis for Orangeburg and all law enforcement agencies in the region, was overwhelmed and couldn't keep the requests from stacking up. Based on a suggestion from the report, the Orangeburg Department of Public Safety worked with Claflin University to develop a regional law enforcement forensic laboratory with drug testing capabilities.

In 2003, Orangeburg received funding through the Drug Control and System Improvement Program to hire an independent forensic drug chemist. In the interim, both the City and the County began submitting their drug samples exclusively to the Lexington County Drug Lab for analysis. This was a first step in expediting drug analysis.

Once hired, the Orangeburg chemist continued to work at the Lexington County laboratory until a suitable local facility could be found. Meanwhile, plans for a new Public Safety headquarters began to take shape. The plans included a drug-testing laboratory and office space for the chemist. This was the first official

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drug-testing lab specifically designated to analyze drug evidence from the First Judicial Circuit.

The South Carolina Violent Crime Reduction Project recommendations have helped the Orangeburg region improve its crime fighting efforts. The Orangeburg area recorded a total of 1,032 violent crimes per 10,000 residents in 1999. In 2006, the violent crime rate dropped to 275 violent crimes per 10,000 residents. Orangeburg County went from being ranked first in violent crime to 38.

The City wants to expand its partnership with Claflin University and develop a freestanding, full-service laboratory on campus. The City wants to conduct DNA and ballistic analysis at the local lab, thus relieving its dependency on the SLED laboratory. *Contact John Yow at 803.533.6000 or jjow@orangeburg.sc.us*



Getting the word out about "Liberty Idol" brought thousands to downtown.

Liberty: Liberty Idol

Award Category: Communications

The City of Liberty used a unique twist on a well-known television phenomenon to communicate the attributes of this small town. Liberty developed a strong communications plan to promote and publicize its "Liberty Idol" event.

In 2005, the mayor and council voted to build a gazebo in the city square. That little addition led to a big idea from a resident, resulting in thousands of people visiting the square and putting the spotlight on downtown. Leaving a local restaurant one evening, Liberty resident Roy Costner walked with his family downtown and was disheartened by the lack of activity. He wondered what it would take to bring life back to downtown in the evening hours. He came up with the idea of a singing competition, modeled after the popular "American Idol" show.

He formed a partnership with the mayor and local chamber to hold "Liberty Idol" at the gazebo. City officials thought the contest would be a good way to bring Liberty citizens downtown, as well as people from surrounding areas.

The "Liberty Idol" is a karaoke contest with cash awards offered to the top five contestants. The first "Liberty Idol" began June 24, 2006, and ran each Saturday night for 13 weeks. The pool of contestants competed

down to the top five, with winners each week selected by audience vote. Sponsorship participation determined the amount given as cash prizes.

Thanks to a strong local promotion effort, more than 500 people came to watch the first "Liberty Idol." The event was advertised in newsletters and on the radio. Brochures promoting the event were placed in shops and

restaurants. Press releases were sent out each week with updates on the event as well as b-roll for local television stations. Local newspapers, radio and broadcast stations all covered the story.

More than 4,000 people crowded into the downtown and witnessed the finale of the second annual "Liberty Idol." The event fulfilled the goals of city officials, with spectators coming from Liberty, Pickens, Easley, Central and from as far away as Greenville, Anderson, Seneca, Clemson and even North Carolina. People began reserving their spots by bringing chairs to the courtyard and leaving them, as early as two days before the first performance.

Based on the first year's success, city officials agreed to make "Liberty Idol" an annual event, and Charter Media is broadcasting the third season and includes an introduction piece focusing on the history and landmarks of Liberty.

With more visitors to Liberty and the prospect of having them return to eat and shop, the competition will continue to have a positive impact on tax revenue by increasing the amount of the city's hospitality tax proceeds. The event also boosts quality of life by providing wholesome, free entertainment to residents of Liberty and surrounding areas.

The communications plan helped make Liberty Idol a regional, small town success story. The contest shows no sign of losing interest. Crowds are estimated to reach 5,000 to 6,000 people this year.

Contact Sue Woods at 864.843.3177 ext 4 or swoods@libertysc.com

Charleston: Palmetto Artisan Program

Award Category: Economic Development

Youth in Charleston were creating a problem with aggressive and unacceptable behavior as they tried to earn money by peddling their handmade wares on downtown streets. Rather than prohibit the children's business



Rose Kids have a blooming business in Charleston.

venture, city officials decided to help encourage their entrepreneurial spirit and teach them business skills through the Palmetto Artisan Program.

Known as “Rose Kids” for selling roses made from palmetto tree fronds, the children caused complaints from business owners, local residents and visitors because they littered, blocked sidewalks, took fronds from private property and operated in areas off-limits to peddlers.

The Palmetto Artisan Program includes a week-long after-school program called BIZ Camp. Taught by National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship professionals and Youth Entrepreneurship South Carolina (YEScarolina), the camp serves children between the ages of nine and 16 who wish to become Palmetto Artisans.

BIZ Camp teaches customer service, marketing techniques and social skills. It also gives the children real-world reasons to learn reading and math skills.

After graduating from the BIZ Camp training program, the youth can apply for and receive a Palmetto Artisan permit. The “Rose Kids” then become legally permitted to sell downtown in areas that are specific peddling zones. Also, the

City provides a downtown recreation center for program graduates to receive free fronds for their roses, healthy snacks and mentoring.

Numerous city agencies have a hand in running the program.

The Recreation Department oversees the camp and manages the artisans. These officials have developed unique relationships with the children and their par-

ents, allowing them to monitor the children and the program. School and home responsibilities are considered priorities; therefore, the children are permitted to sell their roses only on Fridays after school, weekends, holidays, summer breaks and other non-school days. The Police Department is aware of the schedule and helps watch out for the children.

The program began in January 2007. By the end of the year, 77 children had graduated from eight BIZ Camps. Of those graduates, 57 received Palmetto Artisan permits. So far, 30 children have renewed their permits in 2008.

As the program evolves, the goal is to allow these youth to continue their rose business and use their earnings and knowledge to become future business owners. With continued monitoring from the City and support from the community, these bright and eager children can one day become business owners who positively impact the economy of the city.

Contact Susan Griffin at 843.724.3796 or griffins@ci.charleston.sc.us

Aiken: First Responders

Award Category: Public Safety

Getting first responders quickly to the scene of a medical crisis often can mean the difference between life and death. The need becomes even more acute in a city with a growing elderly population like Aiken. Realizing this, the Aiken Department of Public Safety trains its police officers as first responders, to deal with medical emergencies.

The city’s population has grown rapidly, fueled mostly by retirees. That has meant an increased number of emergency calls for heart attacks, strokes, diabetic comas and chokings.

Emergency responders for the city have been stretched thin. The County provides ambulance service and must cover an area more than 1,000 square miles, larger than the state of Rhode Island. There are only seven ambulances to cover this vast territory and respond to almost 16,000 emergency calls received each year.

If an emergency call is made from downtown or the south side while the ambulances are responding elsewhere, an emergency medical technician may not get to the scene for 20 to 40 minutes.



Aiken requires all patrol officers to be nationally certified first responders.

Aiken Public Safety Chief Pete Frommer, with the backing of his city manager, mayor and council, made it a policy to have every sworn officer pass a 32-hour course for national certification as a first responder. An additional eight hours were added for instruction in CPR and the use of the automated external defibrillator, and another four hours to learn the basics of blood borne pathogens. All certified officers also must pass annual refresher courses.

The officers are equipped with defibrillators, oxygen tanks and an emergency kit containing items such as a stethoscope, bandages, blood pressure cuff and obstetric kit.

Most police officers have first-aid training, but no other South Carolina city requires all patrol officers be nationally certified first responders.

When an emergency call comes in, police officers already are nearby, patrolling neighborhoods. They can arrive, on average, within three to five minutes. These officers can help in the critical first minutes of a medical emergency, armed with their training and the medical equipment they carry in their patrol cars.

Because of the positive reception, the department also is training employees as certified EMTs to handle extreme medical emergencies and provide an even higher level of care.

Contact Chief Peter Frommer at 803.642.7624 or pfrommer@cityofaikensc.gov

Florence: Juvenile Crime Prevention (photo above)

Award Category: Public Service

In late 2003, violent crime among young people rose in the City of Florence. Evidence showed that gangs might be behind the surge. City officials decided to get the community involved and tackle the problem head on with the formation of the Mayor's Coalition to Prevent Juvenile Crime.



Mayor Frank Willis talks with children in the after-school program.

Work first began on the coalition in June 2004. The group is made up of government officials, private citizens, municipal, county and state government agencies, educators, business leaders and human service agency representatives. The initiative was based on the knowledge that a successful coalition requires the support and involvement of the entire community.

This collaboration went beyond just typical pooling of resources. It built on the strengths of participating groups. If one group had an idea but no facility, another would supply that. If one group had funds that had to be spent in a particular way, the coalition would find ways to make that work. The true spirit of partnership was the backbone of the success of this coalition.

To create a viable, results-based program and to identify and use all available community resources, the coalition worked with an outside consultant. The consultant recommended a 10-step empowerment evaluation model called "Getting to Outcomes." This model has helped guide the partnership between the coalition and the collaborating agencies.

Focused on preventing, not punishing, youthful offenders, the Coalition established four goals: reduce juvenile crime and violence; increase awareness of violence prevention and the results of violence in the

community; evaluate each component of the program; and improve the health and safety of youth in Florence.

Some of the coalition's most successful strategies have been after-school programming, job placement services and parenting tips on how to discuss difficult issues with children.

In 2007, the state Department of Juvenile Justice provided the program with a special \$500,000 appropriation. Prior to that, the Coalition funded its activities by sharing resources (financial and in-kind). These resources involved federal, state, local and private sector funds, as well as staff time.

The coalition continues to grow and will modify its plans as the needs of the community continue to change. So far, the efforts have been paying off. The Florence Police Department reported a 44 percent decrease in juvenile felonies and a 54 percent decrease in juvenile misdemeanors since the program's inception.

Coalition members are committed to continuing that success and supporting the group's unofficial motto of "Children First."

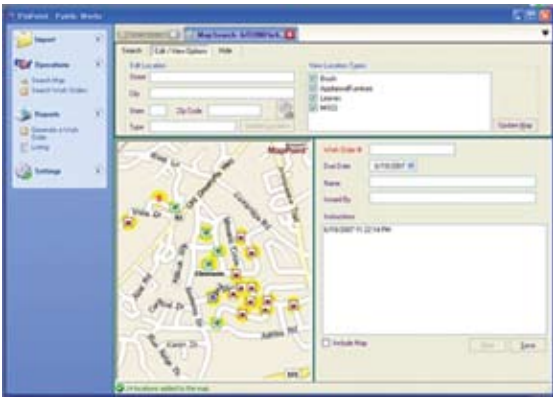
Contact Tom Shearin at 843.665.3113 or tshearin@cityofflorence.com

Clemson: GPS for Public Works

Award Category: Public Works

Clemson public works crews are serving the public more efficiently and saving money at the same time, thanks to some innovative technology added to their city vehicles.

City of Clemson officials first met with local businessmen Jim Oswald and Taj Richardson in 2006 to discuss a way to simplify how departments, particularly public



The Clemson public works administrator's screen allows a quick look at areas needing follow-up.

works, could handle debris pick-up. The city and the two businessmen worked hand-in-hand to develop a technology that would decrease the number of miles driven by pick-up crews, reduce the time it takes to serve the community's needs and more efficiently serve taxpayers.

The original focus was to make curbside debris removal more efficient. However, these public-private partners further developed the technology to include applications for codes enforcement, post-disaster information collection, municipal risk aversion and documentation, and many other data collection scenarios.

The system has three main components: a GPS, Wi-Fi and a touch-screen enabled PDA; a common Wi-Fi access point; and a desktop mapping and reporting application. The public works employees helped design the screens to be easy for anyone to use, regardless of their computer skills. The unit can be set up to show two, four, six or nine touch-screen buttons. Each of these buttons is assigned a category for data collection.

A sanitation truck driver on his daily route also can watch for piles of leaves, brush, appliances and furniture, low-hanging limbs or potholes. If he sees any item needing attention, he presses the touch-screen button corresponding to the situation. The computer records the GPS position, along with the time, date and category selected. At the end of the day, the driver wirelessly uploads the data

to the public works administrator's computer. The administrator uses this information to plan the next day's debris removal routes.

Other departments could utilize the technology. Police officers could use it to document things that might pose a public safety risk, such as street light outages, potholes, signage issues or drainage problems.

The system helps crews optimize and minimize their routes, resulting in fewer miles driven. That prevents extra wear and tear on the vehicles, saves money on fuel and reduces the risks of crews out on the road.

The PinPoint remote computer and field camera also can help with code enforcement. These tools can photograph, categorize and map problem areas such as illegal dumping grounds, hazardous building conditions, vacant lots or facility infrastructure issues. In addition, the system could help in emergencies by accurately locating, categorizing and quantifying damage.

PinPoint – Public Works™ is a win for taxpayers, city employees and administrators.

Contact Christin Harrison at 864.653.2030 or charrison@cityofclemson.org

Other Entries

City of Anderson

Recruiting police officers can be a difficult task for any city. Anderson's police department partnered with the city's communications team to find a creative way to recruit more police officers. A brainstorming session resulted in the idea of producing a recruitment video. Officers were interviewed for the video about their motivation for becoming an officer, real life aspects of being on the police force and insight as to why others might want to pursue the same career.

Anderson created two, three-minute promotional videos for the city's Web site, public access station and public speaking events. The videos show officers talking about their work and their life at home. This portrayed both the career and "human" sides of police life. The introduction features an original music track, while the ending lists employment benefits such as competitive salary, uniforms, retirement, vacation and a clear call to action. Clips from patrol, the canine unit, SWAT team and school resource assignments keep the videos lively.

Produced at a reasonable cost, this new tool is getting rave reviews and proving to be a valuable resource. Employment inquiries and applications have come from as far away as Florida, Illinois and Alaska. Residents offer positive comments about the videos, and a local middle school partnered with the department to help with education and recruitment efforts. The videos have boosted morale and are a template for collateral media, such as brochures, radio spots and much more. The template video has paved the way for other city divisions and departments to produce their own versions, with the fire department next on the agenda. Contact Linda McConnell at 864.231.2200 or lmconnell@cityofandersonsc.com

City of Belton

During a council retreat in January 2007, Belton city officials determined economic improvement was their most pressing issue. They developed a plan to publicize the grand opening of businesses and create opportunities for business owners to interact with each other and other leaders in the community. On January 11, city officials took an important first step by hosting a business appreciation breakfast.

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Officials knew cooperation among merchants, corporate, non-profit and city officials was essential for creating an environment conducive for economic growth. Staff sent more than 200 invitations for the breakfast. Despite a cold, rainy Friday morning, the breakfast was a hit. A local restaurant hosted the breakfast and a local non-profit organization donated money to pay for the food. Officials kept the formal program short to maximize the amount of time guests could spend networking. Many were so pleased with the event that they asked city officials to schedule this type of event more frequently. Several small business owners wrote letters of appreciation, stating the breakfast helped expand their list of contacts and increase their level of comfort in the community.

Contact David Watson at 864.338.7773 ext 206

City of Bennettsville

Bennettsville launched an aggressive marketing campaign as part of a multilayered downtown improvement project. The City partnered with the Marlboro Civic Center, Marlboro Players and the Marlboro Arts Council to provide an inclusive promotional package to visitors. The group used the state's welcome centers and the Cotton Trail initiative to help distribute materials.

Bennettsville began its campaign with a tourism Web site, then added advertising in *Southern Living*, *Preservation Magazine*, cable television and interstate billboards. Continually highlighting Bennettsville's rich history and architecture, the campaign also included sending press releases and articles to magazines and newspapers.

Bennettsville manages and operates the campaign with a committee that meets monthly. A consultant assists with updating the Web site and developing the marketing materials. The city's Hospitality Tax Fund finances the efforts. All of the hard work has paid off. The campaign is credited with bringing in more than 4,000 inquiries from advertisements and 2,000 visitors to

the Bennettsville Visitor Center.

Contact Max Alderman at 843.479.9001 or malderman@mecsc.net

Town of Chesterfield

After a devastating fire in April 2004, the Town of Chesterfield lost a beloved civic center. While the building was covered by insurance, the payout didn't come close to covering the cost of replacing it with another building with comparable facilities. Faced with few choices, officials quickly realized they couldn't proceed alone. They had to reach out and develop partnerships to make significant progress.

Town leaders contacted the Chesterfield County School District to acquire a former middle school and surrounding property. The district agreed to sell both for \$81,000—well below market value. Officials then contacted the YMCA of the Upper Pee Dee about another partnership. After many meetings, plans to open the Chesterfield Family YMCA in the former school emerged. The Town committed funds to renovate and equip most of the first level.

As the time drew closer for the building to open, Chesterfield and the YMCA brokered another arrangement. Instead of spending \$125,000 annually to provide recreational services, the town officials contracted with the YMCA to provide the same services, but for \$75,000. In addition, Chesterfield residents would receive a 20 percent discount on memberships. People come from all over the county, neighboring counties and even from North Carolina to use the Chesterfield Family YMCA. Membership at the facility is nearly 1,300 in a rural town whose population is 1,400. The project was so impressive it was chosen as one of 18 YMCAs from across the nation to participate in the Pioneering Healthier Communities program and has even lured developers back into the area. Accommodating young and old, rich and poor, the Chesterfield Family YMCA has been

a boon for the area physically and economically.

Contact John Douglas at 843.623.5530 or ftmayor@shc.net

City of Conway

Faced with several neighborhoods in need of rehabilitation, Conway officials developed a multi-phased, multi-year initiative to revive and stabilize them, transforming what was once an eyesore into a safe, clean part of the city. City council partnered with the Rebuild Conway Committee to identify neighborhoods most in need. Two were chosen for their diversity and specific rehabilitation needs. The needs ranged from landscaping to resurfacing roads. The City also partnered with lending institutions to offer loans to low/moderate income residents for home improvements. This made the improvement efforts accessible to individual residents.

Not willing to stop at buildings and roads, Conway also addressed crime problems. Officials refocused using community oriented policing strategies, created and expanded neighborhood outreach programs, and formed a partnership with county schools to target "at risk" students through the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance and Training) Program.

Dilapidated houses in the chosen areas have been either removed or renovated. In addition overgrown lots have been cleared. To further encourage community interaction, the City hosted an official "Citywide Day of Caring" to raise awareness and support for the clean-up, rehabilitation and crime prevention efforts. The program is funded annually at one-half of one percent of Conway's budget. There are plans to expand into additional neighborhoods.

Contact Bill Graham at 843.248.1760 or bgraham@cityofconway.com

City of Darlington

A city that once housed two national chains and one local department store was left staring at 31 empty



Darlington buildings get facelift.

storefronts and seven commercial buildings in such disrepair they were condemned. In 2005, Darlington began a partnership with the Landmark Group to build 28-loft style apartments with five new retail spaces. By October 2007 work was completed on four commercial buildings and one residence. The \$4.5 million endeavor was the largest investment in downtown since the early 1960s.

In May 2007, Darlington was awarded one of four Kellogg Foundation grants to hire a micro-enterprise director for its downtown area. Since that time, the director has contacted more than 65 businesses, with 18 of those asking for assistance. Twenty-two potential entrepreneurs have contacted the director, specifically asking for assistance with starting their own businesses.

Darlington has also been proactive by renting 54 billboards and charging businesses within city limits only for the artwork for the billboards. To promote the city itself, Darlington rented several billboards touting its old-world, Southern charm. With an increase in visitors and the opening of 18 new businesses on or within one block of the public square, Darlington serves as a great example of small town adaptation and revitalization.

Contact Howard Garland at 843.398.4000 or howardgarland@email.com

City of Denmark

Five years ago, Denmark faced bankruptcy. By cutting expenses and improving management, the city has

not only bounced back but has also made significant improvements in its downtown with two major projects - building a new fire station and renovating the Denmark Train Depot.

Officials recognized the need for a fire station for some time.

Through volunteer labor, donations, loans, grants, public funds and a tax anticipation note, construction was finally possible. The land was donated, and the South Carolina Highway Department removed light poles and improved drainage and curves so a driveway could be installed. The city's public works department ran water and sewer lines, while fire department volunteers installed plywood and painted. Asphalt for a driveway, sinks and flag poles were all donated. The station boasts epoxy floors, an apparatus room, living quarters, offices, and an exercise room.

The Demark Train Depot also needed renovating. The downtown depot, located on the Heritage Corridor, serves as a visitor's center and multipurpose facility. A SC Highway Department enhancement grant, a SC National Heritage Corridor grant and the City funded the renovation. A new roof, floor, heating and cooling system, security system, handicapped accessible bathrooms, doors, lighting, cabinets, as well as many other amenities, were installed. The local garden club assisted with landscaping. The visitor's center now welcomes guests and locals with a more pleasing, up-to-date atmosphere.

Contact Heyward Robinson at 803.793.3734 or heywardrobinson@bellsouth.net

City of Easley

After completing the Red Owens Complex, a 104-acre parks and recreation complex, city officials conducted community meetings and found its residents needed additional indoor facilities. The city began Phase II of its recreation complex with the construction of the Larry D. Bagwell gymna-

sium. The 48,000 square foot multipurpose facility includes a three court gymnasium that can be subdivided into six regulation volleyball courts, a walking/jogging track and multipurpose rooms. Now, all of Easley's youth basketball teams can play their games in one facility.

In March, the Bagwell gym served as one of several hosts for the Southern Volleyball Classic, one of the largest youth volleyball tournaments in the region. The tournament brought in more than 600 visitors. Also, North Greenville University has contacted Easley to host a men's and women's basketball festival.

To fund the project, Easley levied a 2 percent local hospitality tax. Generating more than \$1 million per year, the funds more than sufficiently covered the annual debt repayment. The facility is free to city residents, other than a one-time identification badge fee. Also it is affordable to non-city residents, who can purchase a yearly pass for \$50.

Contact Fox Simons at 864.855.7900 or fsimons@easley-sc.org

City of Fountain Inn

The City of Fountain Inn took an "extreme makeover" approach to revitalization revamping its Christmas Festival and city parks. The Christmas Festival had lost its luster because of empty buildings along the Main Street carriage route and a decline in storefront decorations.

The local Chamber of Commerce, merchants, garden club members, residents, area corporations and the City filled all of the store fronts along Main Street with vendors or decorated them to look like they were occupied. Businesses agreed to stay open after hours during the Festival; budgets were pooled to maximize advertising dollars; and an outdoor ice rink, complete with a professional ice show, premiered to give consumers options for activities. The city successfully brought people downtown with more than

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7,000 visitors taking carriage rides and more than 1,000 skaters enjoying the new ice rink. Shops saw record sales and even sold out of merchandise.

Fountain Inn officials then tackled revitalizing city parks. All were showing signs of serious disrepair, and some were unusable. Again, the city rallied support from residents, businesses and local organizations. Thanks to the enthusiastic response, all of the city parks were given a makeover and a new one was built – all with handicap accessible and special needs equipment. The City installed new play equipment, fencing and exercise tracks – one for wheelchairs and one for tricycles. The City financed the renovations through the hospitality tax, county and state grants. With resounding community support, Fountain Inn continues its extreme makeover.

Contact Eddie Case at 864.862.4421 or eddie.case@fountaininn.org

City of Greer

Greer's Victor Mill Community was once home to stable, working class families. When the mill closed, the community began its decline and was dominated by rental properties inhabited by a transient population. Problems such as drug sales, prostitution, code violations, broken sidewalks and curbs, inadequate street lights and damaged street signs eroded the sense of community and quality of life for longtime residents. When fire destroyed the former mill site, concerned citizens attended community meetings and vowed to assist city officials revitalize the community.

The Greer police department increased neighborhood patrols to address prostitution and cracked down on the drug trade, eliminating nearly all known drug locations in the community. City officials modified noise ordinances, relieving victims from having to appear in court. This led to more successful convictions.

The building and development standards department distributed copies of the city's property maintenance

code in both English and Spanish, conducted street-by-street nuisance inspections and began conducting random inspections to address overcrowding. Department officials conducted more than 500 nuisance-related inspections and condemned nearly 50 buildings.

The public services department installed and replaced streetlights and signs, repaired streets and curbs, cleaned storm drains, mowed curbs and sprayed weed control. The fire department went door-to-door ensuring smoke detectors were in place and working properly. The firefighters also tested fire hydrants. Additionally, the parks and recreation department planted trees and renovated two sports parks in the community. The department also hosted a Victor Mill Community Fair for residents and city representatives to celebrate the neighborhood's rebirth.

Contact Steve Owens at 864.416.0121 or sowens@cityofgreer.org

Town of Hampton

Hampton officials improved two areas of its community in hopes of revitalizing its downtown and encouraging tourism by using donations and a lot of volunteer help. The Town turned to the Hampton Museum and Visitor's Center, a group run solely by volunteers, for help. The volunteers sent letters, held yard and cake sales, designed and sold T-shirts, and recruited more volunteers. They raised more than \$10,800.

The first project involved town-owned land in the heart of the downtown. The two lots were separated by a wall. On one side was a lovely park; on the other lay a rough, abandoned field. The Center proposed blending the two areas into an Art Park. After the wall came down, donated fencing extended the existing park to include the new area. A sculpture, water feature, light fixtures, swings and bench were installed. A garden club member helped plant shrubs and flowers.

The second project involved paint-

ing murals on three buildings located at a major town intersection. After getting permission from the buildings' owners, residents and businesses pitched in to clean the walls, design the mural and paint it. Thirty-five to 50 people worked on the project.

Contact Marie Ellis at 803.943.2444 or mellis@ellisagency.org

City of Hardeeville

As Hardeeville's population grew, city officials knew their municipal court needed to expand as well. The court needed more than two part-time judges. The police chief, mayor and head part-time judge decided to hire a full-time municipal judge and update the court.

The new full-time judge presides over daily bond hearings with part-time judges available for holidays and weekends. The City modernized the courtroom and took on extensive security modifications. The court house got hand-held metal detectors, the entryway to the clerk offices was enclosed, a secure pay window was installed and a video/audio system was purchased for the courtroom. The City hired a Spanish speaking clerk of court to better serve the Hispanic community. A separate Hispanic court is held bi-monthly. Even with these improvements, Hardeeville still has its eye on the future and continues to work for a more secure, improved courthouse.

Contact John Carroll at 843.784.3366 or jcarroll@cityofhardeeville.com

City of Hartsville

By collaborating with Coker College, the Hartsville Kiwanis Club, residents and business owners, the City of Hartsville turned its deteriorating Pride Park into an upbeat, functional park.

A Coker College professor asked to use Pride Park for an image project for her graphic design class. The City agreed to her proposal. Coker students were soon roaming the park, examining the layout and interviewing local

residents. The class developed various icons and designs with an African-American flavor. The designs included landscaping, fencing, picnic tables, a pavilion and a small wooden stage area.

City council chose one of the logos presented by the class and accepted the Hartsville Kiwanis Club's offer to help implement the student's ideas. The Kiwanis repaired the pavilion's roof and rebuilt the stage. A local landscape architect and the parks and leisure services department planted new shrubs and placed mulch under swing sets. Coker students and the school's art department returned to help paint the fence, pavilion, picnic tables and new wooden stage. The four month project cost only \$1700.

Contact James Pennington at 843.339.2867 or jim.pennington@hartsville.org



Hilton Head Island uses electronic traffic tickets.

Town of Hilton Head

In 2004, The Town of Hilton Head Island wanted to launch a pilot project to electronically produce and process traffic tickets. At the time, however, South Carolina law did not specifically authorize or permit the use of computers or other electronic devices to issue traffic tickets. A group of representatives from the town, Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, the state highway department, South Carolina Highway Patrol, the Municipal Association and key state legislators successfully advocated to amend the state law allowing Hilton Head Island to proceed with the project.

Over the next few months, town officials worked closely with a software vendor to customize a ticket entry interface that would operate on officer's laptops in their patrol cars. The pilot project was launched in late 2006 with a four-member traffic team. The results have been overwhelmingly positive. The officers and court personnel save a great deal of time in the ticketing process. Officers no longer need to pick up ticket books. Time for a traffic stop has been reduced by 30 - 50 percent.

The manual data entry of tickets and post-court processing delays has been eliminated. On average, the rejection rate at the highway department for unreadable handwritten tickets is 20 percent. Over the project's first six months, none of the 3,000 electronically produced tickets were rejected. Because officers spend less time on administrative functions, they have more time to enforce traffic safety which means safer highways for residents and visitors.

Contact Tom Fultz at 843.341.4791 or tomf@hiltonheadislandsc.gov

Town of Irmo

Faced with a growing population and no increase in budget, the Town of Irmo looked for ways to help officers be more efficient in their duties, thereby giving them more time on patrol.

Irmo implemented the Technology Assisted Patrol program designed to give each officer all the information needed while in his vehicle. The program eliminates mountains of paperwork, repeated calls to acquire information and the need to spend shift time at a desk completing reports. Irmo installed laptops, printers and software in 16 patrol cars. Using a cellular network, the laptops connect to the station and access information in real time. Once the officer makes a traffic stop, he enters the person's information into the computer, while also searching the database for stolen property, wanted persons, and sus-

pending driver and vehicle licenses. Because the information is only entered once, the integrity is protected, dramatically decreasing human error resulting from repeatedly entering information. A copy of the citation is printed and given to the violator while the data is uploaded to the court system, building the docket automatically. The Town specifically chose a software compatible with its accounting and municipal court software.

Contact Bob Brown at 803.781.7050 or rbrown@townofirmosc.com

Town of Jackson

Jackson officials wasted no time addressing underground storage tanks contaminating the Town's drinking water. In an impressive display of city, state and federal cooperation, an environmental problem turned into an asset. A deserted Main Street service center had been shuttered for five years when an annual Department of Health and Environmental Control quality check found the contamination. The underground tanks beneath the abandoned station were leaking a petroleum-based chemical into the water supply. DHEC promptly applied for and received an assessment grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to remove the tanks. Municipal, county, state, and federal officials worked together to clean up the site.

At the time of the clean-up, the station owed \$20,000 in delinquent taxes to the county school board and the state. In a stunning show of support, all waived the fees to allow the project to move forward.

Using the EPA grant money, workers from Aiken County and Jackson removed the storage tanks and refilled the empty areas.

The county gave the land to the town with a 25-year lease. Town officials revitalized the area, using grant money and sales tax funds, into a beautiful green space. What was once deemed a public health hazard is now

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a public park for the enjoyment of pedestrians and cyclists.
Contact Todd Etheridge at 803.471.2221 or tojclerk@aikenelectric.net

Town of Kiawah Island

Kiawah Island is more than a haven for beachgoers and golfers. It is a haven for the animals that make their home there. Endangered birds called Wintering Piper Plovers are the Island's most fragile resident, arriving in the fall from the Great Lakes to spend their winter in the sun.

When severe beach erosion threatened tourism and golf on the Island, a delicate give-and-take process began to off balance fixing the problem while protecting the piper.

A large sand finger had grown off the eastern end of the Island, and a tidal creek now separated the finger from the beach, preventing the vital deposit of sand. Two holes of the Ocean Course were in danger of falling victim to the approaching tide.

Town officials decided to mimic nature by diking the tidal creek and manually moving sand from the sand finger to the beach, thus completing the natural shoal bypassing cycle. Not everyone agreed with the plan.

The South Carolina Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society filed a petition to stop the project out of concern for the piper's habitat. In a display of compromise and partnership, the town agreed to reduce the project's scope by lessening the amount of sand moved, reducing the height of the dunes and carefully moving turtle nests from the work site each morning. The compromise also included a six-year piper monitoring and research aspect.

Work began on June 8, 2006, and finished three days ahead of schedule on August 1. Funded by organizations across the town, such as the Kiawah Island Community Association and the Kiawah Island Golf Resort, the project displayed the Town's commitment to its residents—both fair and feathered. The beach and the piper continue to

prosper together on Kiawah Island.
Contact Tumiko Rucker at 843.768.9166 or trucker@kiawahisland.org

City of Lake City

Florence County doctors showed great vision when they opened the Mercy Medical Clinic, offering free medical services to the poor. By improving the health of the community, the clinic also succeeded in improving the quality of life in Florence County as well. Healthy communities mean productive hometowns.

By September 2007, directors of the free clinic recognized the need to provide similar services in lower Florence County. The area is home for indigent and working poor who lack the transportation to see a doctor. A group of doctors and local officials solicited support for a new clinic in Lake City. The support they garnered was impressive.

In forming the Lake City Clinic, a web of partnerships was formed all around the county. The BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation committed \$70,000, the South Carolina Free Clinic gave \$25,000 and United Way of Florence gave \$10,000 to propel the project forward. Florence County also donated a building located in Lake City, previously used as a health clinic. Lake City Community Hospital offered use of its staff and equipment at no charge.

Local media outlets offered enthusiastic support. When the facility opened its doors on January 7, 2008, 100 people were on hand to celebrate.
Contact John Whittleton, at 843.374.5421 ext. 220 or jwhittleton@cityoflakecity.org

Town of Lexington

Lexington Middle School administrators go to great lengths to ensure the safety of their more than 1,000 students. Because the building has so many entrances and exits, the administrators needed a better security system to monitor who was coming into the school.

With a grassroots effort, corporate donations and a very special event, the Town of Lexington raised more than \$90,000 through its Cameras for Kids project.

The Town partnered with New 92 Country Radio and hosted the Cameras for Kids fundraising concert in the summer of 2007. Award-winning recording artists Mark Willis and Jamie O'Neal performed, free of charge. More than 60 corporate and private sponsors donated money to make the event possible. Proceeds from ticket and food sales bought the video security system for the school.

Lexington School District One recognized the Town of Lexington recognized as Business Partner of the Year for 2007 for demonstrating a commitment to student safety.
Contact Laura McMickens at 803.356.8238 or lmcmickens@lexsc.com

City of Manning

After the terrorist attack on September 11, Manning city officials took precautions to protect its water supply and system by creating a canopy video system. They mounted cameras, donated by Progress Energy, on 90-foot poles capable of recording the activities of nearly all the city.

Fortunately, there haven't been any terrorist attacks in Manning, but the surveillance system has turned out to be a major resource for the city and the police department.

Officials have expanded the canopy system to provide a view of traffic, intersections and businesses. Police officers can access the streaming videos from their computers in their offices and patrol cars. This allows an officer to patrol more than one area at a time.

These recordings also enhance criminal investigations as well as provide crucial evidence in trials. Most importantly though, it protects one of Manning's most vital resources—local businesses. If business owners wish to have the police monitor inside their store and agree to provide the equipment, the police will monitor the business.

A surveillance system in city hall helps ensure the safety of councilmembers, employees and visitors. City council recently approved placing the security system within Manning schools.

Everyone in Manning feels a little safer these days, thanks to the canopy surveillance system. Contact Rebecca Rhodes at 803.435.8477 or manningadministrator@sc.rr.com

City of Mauldin

As youth basketball leagues continued to grow in Mauldin, gymnasium space for the ever increasing roster of games was not keeping pace. When the City purchased an old elementary school building in 2004 for a new cultural center, developing gymnasium space was a high priority.

Plans for the gymnasium quickly morphed into a cutting-edge sports complex for providing activities for every age group. An elevated walking track overlooks a 6,500 square foot cardio and weight space. A rock climbing tower was erected, along with plenty of classroom space and a double gymnasium for basketball.

The \$7 million sports center was funded using hospitality and accommodations tax money without using the City's general fund or affecting property taxes.

Beyond providing a gathering place for residents, the Center provides much needed recreation space for city employees—at no cost. The City of Mauldin's wellness program motivates employees for education, weight loss and physical health by offering incentives such as lower insurance deductibles.

The sports center has been a terrific resource for citizens and employees alike. The complex now boasts 3,500 members.

Contact Van Brannon at 864.335.4850 or vbrannon@mauldinrecreation.com

Town of Mount Pleasant

In an emergency, it can take the federal government days, sometimes weeks, to mobilize a recovery effort. The Town of Mount Pleasant chose to be proactive and participates in an



Mount Pleasant initiates an automatic aid agreement

between its sister cities, Greer and Rock Hill. In the event of a disaster, the city in distress will receive aid from the other two within 48 hours.

Mount Pleasant spearheaded this innovative program to ensure the safety of its citizens and property should a natural disaster occur. The three local governments all face distinctively different weather-related emergencies. Mount Pleasant is vulnerable to hurricanes, Greer and Rock Hill are more vulnerable to winter events. With this agreement, automatic aid can be invoked at the request of the town administrator.

The responding cities would bring equipment, manpower, food, water, gas, first aid supplies and even fire trucks if necessary. The responding cities would also serve as an information source, posting instructions and updates on its Web site. The receiving city would be responsible for reimbursing the assisting city for wages within six months of the assistance.

Though this plan has not been tested, the three cities are prepared. Emergency personnel have visited their sister cities to familiarize themselves with infrastructure, resources and personnel. Also, Mount Pleasant

has held practice events to simulate a real disaster.

This partnership among the three cities is the first of its kind in South Carolina. The automatic aid agreement cuts through the red tape of state and federal aid and builds on the strength of South Carolina communities working together.

Contact Martine Wolfe-Miller at 843.884.8517 or publicinfo@townofmountpleasant.com

City of Myrtle Beach

It's not surprising that a city as warm and beautiful as Myrtle Beach would be a haven for the homeless. By some counts, the Grand Strand is home to nearly 1,000 itinerant individuals. To alleviate this growing problem, the community policing team communicates directly with those on the streets through a progressive program, Help Us Help You.

The first step was to deliver questionnaires to as many homeless individuals as possible. The answers helped the community policing team know exactly how to help the homeless. Most homeless people said their lack of a job, money and identification were the reasons keeping them on the streets.

The team organized the first Help Us Help You event as a one-stop resource for the homeless. The event provided a myriad of services with representatives from the Social Security Administration, the Office of Veterans Affairs, Alcoholics Anonymous, day labor agencies, public transportation services and many more. If homeless attendees visited five stations, they received a bag of toiletries and blankets.

So far the program has held five sessions and helped more than 250 clients. Myrtle Beach has found an inexpensive and effective way to utilize its many partnerships to help its neediest residents. Contact Mark Kruea at 843.918.1014 or info@cityofmyrtlebeach.com

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City of Newberry

Responding to concerns about Newberry's declining downtown, a group of residents led by council members proposed an aggressive downtown revitalization program. They revamped the Opera House into a first class arts center, improved public parks, beautified streetscapes and successfully negotiated the addition of a downtown hotel. This led to the renovation of many downtown buildings and the opening of several downtown restaurants. Riding high on success, council knew it must maintain momentum. Council set its sights on a derelict fire station located next to the Opera House to fulfill the need for a meeting and event facility.

A steering committee quickly formed, comprised of officials from the Opera House, city management, Newberry Parks and Recreation and a preservation specialist, to oversee the transformation of the abandoned building into a state-of-the-art conference center.

Money for the \$2.3 million project came from a myriad of resources: the SC Coordinating Council for Economic Development, local sales tax revenues, a local utility, lease-purchase financing and the City's local hospitality and accommodations fee.

The new conference center touts a board room, outdoor courtyard, catering facilities and a capable staff. It was rented 62 times in five months. Newberry has achieved its primary objective of encouraging groups based outside of Newberry to utilize the facility, frequent downtown retailers, dine in the restaurants, attend a performance at the Opera House and spend the night in an area hotel.

More importantly though, the cooperative spirit of the project has manifested itself throughout the city, as downtown revitalization projects continue. Contact Jeff Shacker at 803.321.1000 or jshacker@cityofnewberry.com

City of North Myrtle Beach

The development of North Myrtle Beach's new Heritage Shores Nature Preserve is the result of partnerships and compromise. When developers set their sights on a small island in the Cherry Grove marsh, the City acted quickly, in the best interest of its residents and wildlife, to save the land.

What is now Heritage Shores Park was very recently something rare in a coastal town, an undeveloped piece of land. Developers wanted to construct a bridge from the mainland to the island. Residents of North Myrtle Beach, concerned for their ocean access and the ecosystem, requested legal assistance from the SC Conservation League, SC Environmental Law Project and the Sierra Club. The City became involved and was able to mediate an agreement. Some plots would be developed, but most would not. Instead, they would be reserved for a new nature preserve.

City staff met with professors from Coastal Carolina's marine science program and hired a student from the university to help develop signage for the park. Staff also consulted with officials from Huntington Beach State Park and Brookgreen Gardens for advice.

The nine and a half acre park has walking trails, elevated boardwalks, open air shelters, observation decks and an access point for boaters. Fifty-three interpretive signs provide visitors with information about the plants, birds, fish and aquatic life in the park.



North Myrtle Beach creates Heritage Shores Nature Preserve.

Funding for the construction was spread over two years from an annual appropriation in the general fund's parks and recreation department budget for park improvements.

Heritage Shores is the culmination of city and statewide cooperation. Pristine land once slated for development has been preserved as a special destination for residents, tourists and wildlife alike.

Contact Don Campbell at 843.281.3713 or decampbell@nmb.us

City of Rock Hill

One of Rock Hill's most cherished landmarks, Glencairn Garden, is a place for residents to enjoy the great outdoors. In 2004, the city designed plans to expand the garden and began a marketing and fundraising campaign.

The most important aspect of the fundraising campaign was communicating with local residents and businesses about the enhancements planned for the gar-



Rock Hill communicates its vision for Glencairn Garden

dens and why the garden mattered. The City created a video for its government access channel and presentations to possible donors. Volunteers at the garden helped design the new plans, and some formed a marketing committee. One volunteer designed the new logo and membership brochure. The Rock Hill Park Foundation along with the City's parks, recreation and tourism department and the public affairs office provided staff and funding for promotional products such as a the video, newsletter and Web site.

The City also targeted groups for corporate donations. A private dinner was held for each bank that operates in Rock Hill. From that dinner and a second round of presentations, the City secured more than \$85,000 from the banking industry alone.

Through the fundraising process, residents and businesses were reminded of value of the Glencairn Garden. The efforts of the City of Rock Hill and all of its people, partners and businesses has preserved and improved a community treasure. *Contact Lyn Garris at 803.329.7009 or lgarris@ci.rock-hill.sc.us*

Town of Saluda

When it comes to making and keeping their town vibrant and competitive, officials in Saluda adopted a can do attitude. Many were inspired by a new mayor who promised to seek out new economic interests and housing for residents. In his first year as mayor, the Town completed a streetscape project to revitalize two downtown streets. The project was coupled with a new marketing strategy to promote the community and recruit new businesses.

Healthy businesses mean economic prosperity for Saluda. The Town holds ribbon cutting ceremonies for every new business that opens — 12 in the past year alone.

The Town is also taking a can-do approach to marketing. Officials created a new Web site and newsletter to keep residents informed and excited about what's going on in their town.

Additionally, a new clock was placed on the courthouse grounds, and a colorful town logo was designed. With their can-do attitude, folks in Saluda are finding out they can do anything.

Contact Randy Cole at 864.445.3522 or admincole@embarqmail.com

City of Spartanburg

The drug dealers and gang members who once frequented Carlisle Street in Spartanburg would no longer recognize their old stomping grounds. Located near downtown, the homes on Carlisle Street were vacant or condemned. It had become a hot spot for criminal activity. Not anymore.

It was important that Carlisle Street homes be restored, not only for public safety reasons but also because the street is a part of the only designated residential historic district in the city. It's also the only neighborhood within walking distance of the newly renovated Morgan Square and Spartanburg's historic district.

Realizing the need for partnerships to achieve its funding and sustainability goals, the City reached out to the Preservation Trust to help reverse Carlisle Street's decline. The new partnership led to the Carlisle Street Revitalization Project. This strategic plan was focused on improving the quality of life on Carlisle Street by acquiring the homes, restoring them using HUD HOME funds and attracting homeowners to purchase them.

The project fostered a high level of cooperation among many organizations. After the houses were refurbished, streetscapes and lighting

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became the focus, remedied by city departments and the Mary Black Foundation.

Once crime-ridden and bleak, Carlisle Street is now a safe part of a safe neighborhood, inhabited by proud new homeowners.

Susan Schneider at 864.596.2724 or sschneider@cityofspartanburg.org

City of West Columbia

The City of West Columbia operates the Lake Murray Water Treatment Plant that provides potable water for more than 50,000 customers in Lexington County. As the population of the county has increased at an incredible rate, the City was forced to expand the plant's treatment capacity. During the expansion, officials seized an opportunity to protect the environment and improve public safety.

Chlorine gas is the most common disinfectant used for water treatment. Until the expansion, it was the chemical of choice at Lake Murray. However, chlorine gas is highly toxic and can have deadly consequences if released into the air. Officials knew that if there was a chlorine leak, nearby homes, schools and shopping centers would be immediately affected. If the City decided to continue using chlorine after the plant's upgrades were made, more than 15 tons of gas would be kept on site. Plant engineers knew they could find a better way.

After much research and many trials, plant officials settled on a Miox system. This system generates disinfecting oxidants from a mixture of salt, water and electricity. Because it does not use any hazardous chemicals, the Miox system is safer than any other method, posing no threat to operators, businesses, residents or the environment.

Contact Mardi McKinnon at 803.939.8603 or mmckinnon@westcolumbiasc.gov

Town of Whitmire

The Town of Whitmire's nickname is the "Pearl of the Piedmont," but just a few years ago it seemed like a pearl that had lost its luster. The downtown was mostly vacant and in disrepair. A century-old textile mill had closed its doors forever.

In 2002, a committee formed with its mission to revitalize downtown. The mayor and several city councilmembers served on this committee along with concerned citizens and business owners. They began applying for grants that would make their revitalization plans possible.

After receiving a SC Department of Transportation grant, the Town repaired cracked sidewalks, added wheelchair ramps and installed peninsulas at crosswalks. Duke Energy provided decorative street lamps. These improvements helped make downtown safer. A sales tax referendum supplied the Town with enough money to acquire land adjacent to the community center and build a playground. Plans for a picnic shelter, walking trails and a festival area with outdoor stages are in the works.

In 2007, Whitmire was awarded a Community Development Block Grant to assist with restoring downtown buildings. Facades were revamped to resemble early 20th century storefronts. Main Street went from drab to fab in a few short months.

With an increase in visitors and a buzzing town center, Whitmire has reclaimed its pearly shine.

Contact Tim Carroll at 803.694.2356 or carroll2649@charter.net

City of Woodruff


When the B.J. Workman Memorial Hospital in Woodruff closed its doors, city officials mourned its loss. The healthcare provider helped thousands of residents in its 50 years of operation. Even after its closing, it would continue to be a vital resource for the city.

The Woodruff police department was growing weary of its headquarters in the basement of city hall, appropriately nicknamed, "the dungeon." Though the department had long searched for a replacement facility, limited funds and the lack of a suitable site prevented a much-needed move.

When the school district took ownership of the former hospital, district officials approached the City to invite the police department to move into the facility. Officials realized it wouldn't be as easy as moving a few filing cabinets.

Because the facility required renovation and there was no budget for the move, the police officers did the work themselves. They painted, demolished old walls and built new ones, rewired and cleaned. In all, they dedicated 250 man-hours to the renovation.

Woodruff has a history of using and reusing its resources. The former National Guard armory is now a fire station. Reuse and creativity have helped Woodruff move beyond its budget woes. The City has turned the loss of the B.J. Workman Center into a terrific gain.

Contact Scott Slatton at 864.476.8154 or sslatton@cityofwoodruff.com 

Started in 1987, the Municipal Achievement Awards program provides local officials the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina. For more information about the Awards program or to watch a video of the winning entries, visit www.masc.sc/misc/achievement.htm.

Main Street SC 2008 Inspiration Award Winners

Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members' achievements and successes in downtown revitalization.

Outstanding Promotional Event: 2007 Orangeburg Idol

Recognizing the best single promotional event, Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association drew on local talent for one of its most successful fundraisers. "Orangeburg Idol" showcased local talent in a fun-filled evening. The six finalists also released a Christmas CD with proceeds benefiting the Association.

Master Merchant: Cathy Little, Woods Edge Gifts, Main Street Laurens

Cathy Little's store welcomes shoppers and sparks their imagination as it displays how the products can enhance homes and gardens. Customer service is a priority and keeps customers coming back.

Gaines Jontz Rehabilitation Award: Century Park, Hartsville Downtown Development Association

Restoration of Century Park, a century-old department store, honored the commitment of the building's owners to rehabilitate it and maintain as much historical integrity as possible. Today, the property is home to a spa and luxury condominiums.

**Outstanding New Sign: Flossie Mae's, Hartsville
Hometown Hero: Patsy Adams, Main Street Laurens**

Adams has been a part of the Main Street Laurens since before its creation. She has served on the board, design committee and promotional committee. In addition to helping with office duties, she manages the volunteers for all Main Street Laurens events. She and her husband purchased and revitalized a downtown building, and she is a regular fixture at city council meetings, staying on top of issues that affect downtown.

Public Service Award: Butch Mills, Bennettsville Downtown Development Association

As executive director of the Marlboro County Economic Development Partnership, Mills understands what a major asset a vibrant, historic and revitalized downtown can be. He serves on the Association's board of directors and is chair of the economic restructuring committee. His background in finance and industrial recruitment has helped move Bennettsville's revitalization plans forward.

Main Street South Carolina is a service of the Municipal Association of South Carolina and is endorsed by the National Main Street Center and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Main Street South Carolina empowers citizens with the

knowledge, skills, tools and organizational structure necessary to revitalize their downtowns, neighborhood commercial districts and cities/towns into vibrant centers of commerce and community. Eleven South Carolina hometowns are members of Main Street SC.

For more information, contact Beppie LeGrand, Main Street SC manager, at 803.933.1231 or blegrand@masc.sc.



Cities need to guard against fraud

By Stephanie O'Cain, Chief Financial Officer, Municipal Association of SC

news BRIEFS

- Members of the **SC Community Development Association** selected their 2008-09 board members in May. President Valeria Jackson, Columbia; Vice President Barbara Mickens, Fairfield County; Secretary/Treasurer Joy Locke, Main Street Beaufort USA; Member-at-Large David Acker, Appalachian Council of Governments; Member-at-Large Erica Craft, Anderson; Member-at-Large Pam Davenport, Upper Savannah Council of Governments; Nora Sanders, Lower Savannah Council of Governments; Member-at-Large Virginia Stroud, Greenville and Chuck Wiegert, Historic Marion Revitalization Association

- The Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau awarded one of its Golden Pineapple awards to Charleston Police Chief Greg Mullen and Sergeant Dale Wilson for innovations in making **Charleston** a safe place to live and visit.

- According to the July/August 2008 issue of "Garden & Gun Magazine," **Aiken** is one of 20 southern small places "where the livin' is easy." Aiken was noted as the "Best Equestrian Town."

- At its annual business meeting, Government Finance Officer Association members elected David Vehaun of **Rock Hill** as a member-at-large for the 2008-2011 GFOA Executive Board.

- Reba Campbell, director of advocacy and communications for the Municipal Association, and Mayor John Douglas of Chesterfield graduated from the 2007-08 **Leadership SC** program.

Imagine a clerk accepting a payment from a citizen then pocketing the cash instead of recording the sale. Or perhaps there's a city employee falsifying meal and travel expenses to give himself a few more bucks. In both scenarios, fraud is taking place, and it could add up to thousands of dollars lost from city budgets.

Studies show that small businesses – those with less than 100 employees – suffer a disproportionate share of the national fraud loss because they typically do not have anti-fraud programs in place. Because 84 percent of municipalities in South Carolina have less than 100 employees, this means a majority of towns and cities are at a high risk for workplace fraud.

While large government fraud tends to involve corruption such as bribery, small businesses and municipalities usually face billing and expense reimbursement fraud. These can include submitting invoices for fictitious goods or services, seeking reimbursement for business expenses that were not incurred, altering checks or adding fake employees to the payroll.

To prevent fraud, municipalities (regardless of size) need to put in place internal controls to deter theft and fraud detection controls to find theft early.

There are many reasons people commit fraud. They must have opportunity and motivation. Opportunity occurs when people have the access to commit and conceal fraud.

Although most municipalities rely on their annual audits to detect fraud, audits are usually the least effective way to deter or catch fraudulent acts. Having additional staff to fully segregate duties may not be possible, but municipal officials can implement many other low-cost protections and deterrents.

The main challenge is to recognize the risks and begin to take action to reduce them. According to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, "The incidence of fraud is now so common that its occurrence is no longer remarkable, only its scale.

Any entity that fails to protect itself appropriately from fraud should expect to become a victim."

Municipalities should proactively identify fraud risks and

implement fraud prevention and detection processes. A good place to start is by taking the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners' fraud prevention checkup. This check list will help identify weaknesses so you can begin to look for specific fraud prevention solutions.

Download the ACFE's Fraud Prevention Check-up from <http://www.masc.sc/affiliates/mfocta/description.htm>. The Municipal Association has many resources available to help reduce opportunities for fraud.

Contact Stephanie O'Cain at socain@masc.sc or 803.933.1234.



Types of Occupational Fraud and Abuse

Category	Description	Examples
Asset misappropriations	Schemes involving theft or misuse of an organization's assets. Typically cash, but can include others such as identity theft, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billing scheme causing employer to issue a payment for fictitious goods or services. • Expense reimbursement scheme where business expenses are claimed and not legitimate. • Check tampering where check is altered in some form. • Payroll scheme where false compensation is claimed and paid.
Corruption	Scheme in which a person uses his influence in a business transaction for personal gain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting or paying a bribe. • Engaging in a business transaction where there is an undisclosed conflict of interest.
Fraudulent statements	Falsification of an organization's financial statements to make it appear more or less profitable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recording fictitious income. • Recording expense in the wrong period.

Road shows

revving up for 2008

The 2008 *Hometown, SC* regional road shows are back this fall. Municipal Association staff will be traveling the state sharing information and “best practices” about taking the Association’s *Hometown, SC* initiative to the next level.

Hear about the Association’s new initiatives, get insider information from the legislative staff on the upcoming two-year session of the General Assembly, learn the best way to engage key influencers in your community, get a sneak peek at the Association’s plans for interactive training, and, as usual, enjoy a chance to network with your fellow local leaders and Association staff.

Look for more information in the weekly “Uptown Update.”

Tuesday, October 7; 11:30 a.m.

Municipal Association training room, 1411 Gervais Street, Columbia

Thursday, October 9; 11:30 a.m.

Municipal Conference Center, Aiken

Thursday, October 16; 5:30 p.m.

Patriots Point aboard the USS Yorktown, Mount Pleasant

Friday, October 17; 11:30 a.m.

City Hall, Georgetown

Tuesday, October 21; 11:30 a.m.

Pavilion at Lawton Park, Hartsville

Wednesday, October 22; 11:30 a.m.

York Technical College Baxter M. Hood Center, Rock Hill

Thursday, October 23; 11:30 a.m.

Hub Bub, Spartanburg

Wednesday, October 29; 11:30 a.m.

City Hall, Port Royal

Hometown

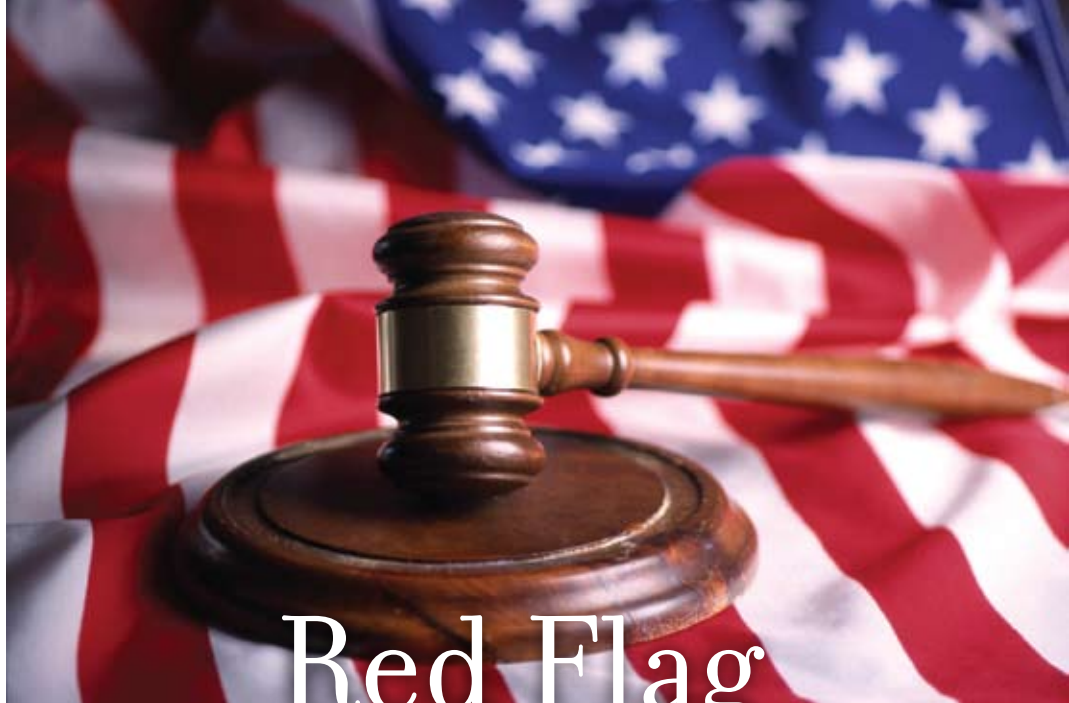
SEPTEMBER
HAPPENINGS

Each month, municipal officials have the opportunity to download materials that will help them share the value of cities and towns with the community and more specifically their key influencers. Through each suggested activity and corresponding materials, municipal leadership will form partnerships with the local business community, the media, local non-profit organizations and policy makers.

The Municipal Association posted September *Hometown Happenings* information on its Web site in early August. Let Casey Fields know if you participate in a Hometown Happening by e-mailing cfields@masc.sc or calling 803.933.1256.

Labor Day – September means the official end of summer, the beginning of football season and celebrating the important holiday of Labor Day. Take this opportunity to highlight the importance and contribution of municipal employees. Collect basic facts about your municipal employees to share with your residents and media. Use the “Cities Mean Business” service ads in your city newsletters to highlight the value of your employees.

Hispanic Heritage Month – Spotlight Hispanic residents in your city, both past and present, who have made a difference in your community. Partner with other local organizations to spotlight Hispanic individuals who have dedicated themselves to the prosperity of your city or town.



Red Flag Alert

Are you in compliance with the new federal Red Flag Rules that go into effect on November 1? If not, you are not alone.

The Red Flag Rules are a result of federal legislation requiring the protection of private information. These rules are part of the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act and enforced by the Federal Trade Commission. They specifically apply to utilities but also appear to apply to any business that uses social security numbers, account information and credit reports.

Another federal law often mentioned in conjunction with the Red Flag Rule is the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. While these are often grouped together, they are separate acts. Gramm-Leach-Bliley applies only to financial institutions and third parties supporting those institutions such as an auto dealer that takes a loan application on behalf of the financial institution and a courier service that delivers the information. Gramm-Leach-Bliley will only apply to municipalities that are performing a financial institution process.

South Carolina passed its own SC Financial Identity Fraud and Identity Theft Protection Act. The law makes businesses and governments safeguard information that is vulnerable to identity fraud. It protects most of the same information as the Red Flag Rules, but also includes driver license information. The Act contains several provisions with separate implementation dates.

Although some of this legislation may not apply to municipal government, it is clear all businesses have a duty to protect private information collected as part of its business process. The FTC has many resources available on its Web sites to aid municipal leaders in meeting the federal regulations. A particularly good resource is the FTC’s “Protecting Personal Information: A Guide for Business.” In addition, the FTC has a lot of great information from a consumer perspective and encourages community education.

Visit the Municipal Association Web site for links to these and other resources to help your city comply with these new regulations. The Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association will cover the topic at its Annual Meeting on October 3.

in public indoor facilities because of a SC Supreme Court ruling on the smoke free ordinance in the City of Greenville.

Copper Purchases (A260)

The General Assembly addressed copper theft by increasing regulations on the purchase and sale of copper and other specified types of metal. While this new law preempts local ordinances and regulations related to copper theft, the Association was able to get language included in the bill that exempts ordinances pertaining to zoning or business license fees.

Realtors and business license fees (H4554)

The Association took a proactive approach working with the SC Association of Realtors on a bill that would have hurt local governments' ability to charge Realtors a business license fee. Association staff worked with legislative staff and lobbyists from the Realtors Association to craft language that would clarify the bill's intent and not hurt cities and towns. Under the new law, the broker-in-charge is responsible for paying the business license tax, not the real estate agent.

When computing the license amount for any business, the municipality must deduct from the total amount of gross income any income received from activities in another county or a municipality to which a license tax is paid.

A last minute provision was added on the final day of the session that prevents local governments from imposing a license, occupation, or professional tax or fee on the gross proceeds of an auctioneer licensed under Chapter 6 of Title 40 for the first three auctions conducted by the

auctioneer in the county or municipality, unless the auctioneer maintains a principal or branch office in the county or municipality.

Governor Sanford vetoed this bill, but both the House and Senate overrode the veto.

GASB 45 (S463 and A195)

Last year, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board issued Statement 45 requiring state and local governments to report other post employment benefits similar to the way they report pensions on annual financial statements. In response to this ruling, the legislature passed a bill calling for a constitutional amendment to allow the state and political subdivisions to invest funds from the Post-Employment Benefits Trust Fund in equity securities and be subject to the same limitations as funds in the other various state-operated retirement systems. The referendum question will be on the ballot in the November general election.

On municipal side, the SC Supreme Court heard arguments in February in the *Thomas Frances O'Brien v. SC Other Retirement Investment Trust, the Municipal Association of South Carolina and the City of Charleston*. This case will decide if the Association's South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Investment Trust can invest in equities. At press time, the court had not issued an opinion in this case.


Net Metering (H3395)

A new law recommends a process for establishing net metering programs at all distribution electric utilities in the state, including municipal-owned electric utilities. The South Carolina Association of Municipal Power Systems is preparing a report to the SC Energy Office and the SC Office of Regulatory Services.

Fire Sprinklers (A357)

Municipalities can pass ordinances offering a 25 percent local property tax credit with a matching 25 percent state tax credit based on the cost of installing a fire sprinkler system. The new law caps fees at the actual costs associated with running a water line to the system. This bill was vetoed by the governor but overridden by both houses.

Public Safety

The police training reimbursement law allows departments to recover the cost of training an officer who leaves for another department within two years after the officer has completed training. (A269) Also in public safety legislation, a new law requires municipalities to wait 30 days before adding more fees to parking tickets. (A283) In addition, an abandoned and derelict vehicle bill passed that authorizes code enforcement officers to dispose of abandoned or derelict vehicles on public or private property. (A308) 

A complete list of bills passed during the 2007-2008 legislative session is available in hard copy for download on the Association's legislative tracking page at www.masc.sc. If you have specific questions about these new laws or others, call Ed Schafer at 803.933.1203 (eschafer@masc.sc) or Warren Harley at 803.933.1270 (wharley@masc.sc).

events

CALENDAR

AUGUST

5 Setoff Debt Collection Program

Annual Training Session - New Participant, Municipal Association of SC office, Columbia. Pre-registration required.

7 The Setoff Debt Collection Program Current Participants Training Session for New Employees Only Municipal Association of SC office, Columbia. Pre-registration required.

8 The Setoff Debt Collection Program Programmers Training Session Municipal Association of SC office, Columbia. Pre-registration required.

10-13 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting, Marriott at Grand Dunes, Myrtle Beach

29 Setoff Debt Collection Program

Annual Training Session - New Participant, Hilton Greenville, Greenville. Pre-registration required.

SEPTEMBER

10-12 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting Sheraton Myrtle Beach Convention Center Hotel, Myrtle Beach. Topics: Information Technology Infrastructure Library, business continuity planning, and practical and innovative applications for GIS.

11 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Quarterly Meeting, Columbia Conference Center, Columbia

Topics: post-construction best practices, stormwater system maintenance and long-term pond maintenance

11 SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government "The Forms of Municipal Government" and "Benefits and Pitfalls of Economic Development," via satellite

17-19 Municipal Court Administration Association of SC Annual Meeting, Sheraton Myrtle Beach Convention Center Hotel, Myrtle Beach

29 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting, Clarion Townhouse, Columbia

30-October 3 SC Business Licensing Officials and the Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association of SC Joint Annual Meeting, Embassy Suites, North Charleston

For more information about these meetings or other association meetings not listed, please call 803.799.9574 or visit www.masc.sc.



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