

UPTOWN

Local officials gather in Columbia to show "Cities Mean Business"

Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day 2008 will celebrate the relationship between cities and their local business community in building the state's competitiveness. Under the banner of "Cities Mean Business," local officials will gather on February 20 at the Columbia Marriott.

Dr. Jim Rex, South Carolina superintendent of education, will address the group as the luncheon keynote speaker. Recognizing that all local government funding issues are closely related, Rex will share school funding recommendations from his *Task Force on Resources for a Competitive South Carolina*. Strong schools, like strong cities, are critical to the state's competitiveness.

After lunch, the first afternoon panel will examine the relationship between city leaders and their local higher-education institutions to help develop the type of community the workers of the knowledge economy are seeking. College and university leaders will discuss how their type of institution (research university, technical college, private college, small public college or other) collaborate to support a healthy and vibrant hometown.

The final afternoon session will review the ongoing plans for the "Cities Mean Business" campaign — part of the long-range *Hometown, SC* initiative. Participants will learn more about what they can do in their own cities or towns

to make the most of this *Hometown, SC* outreach initiative.

The Municipal Association will mail registration information and have information available online in early January. Make hotel reservations by January 24 at the Columbia Marriott by calling 803.771.7000 or 1.800.627.7468 to receive the group rate of \$132.



Jim Rex

Hot issues anticipated for 2008 General Assembly

by Warren Harley, Governmental Affairs Liaison

As the second session of the 117th General Assembly approaches, the Municipal Association will continue promoting its "Supporting Competitiveness" agenda launched during the 2007 session. The agenda focused on legislation promoting economic growth, enhancing a – positive quality of life, and encouraging accountability and fiscal

responsibility. Visit www.masc.sc for a full listing of the 2008 agenda.

Legislators held hearings on several issues on the Municipal Association's radar during the fall recess. State and local spending caps, annexation, and immigration reform were topics of discussion that will continue into the session.

HOT ISSUES continued on page 3

December 2007

Inside This Issue

Trees provide much more than just shade to communities
page 5

Building relationships through Hometown Connections
page 7

2007 SCMIT Safety Awards and Safety Idea Contest
page 8

Join the "Cities Mean Business" celebration

It's not too soon to get geared up for the statewide observance of "Cities Mean Business" Month scheduled for February 2008. As part of the *Hometown, SC* initiative to raise hometown voices to a new level of influence, the celebration of "Cities Mean Business" Month is intended to encourage new and stronger collaboration between local elected leaders and their local business community.

The February "Cities Mean Business" Month is the kick-off of a multi-year campaign celebrating the important relationship between strong cities and towns and the state's economic competitiveness. The campaign will focus on the many ways strong cities and towns support the growth of existing businesses and attract new businesses. The campaign will be in full swing at the *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day February 20.

The "Cities Mean Business" message will hit the airwaves and newsstands across the state in February. The Municipal Association will advertise in statewide business publications and on public radio. Local officials and Association staff will give interviews on television and radio talk shows. "As with other *Hometown, SC* initiatives, we will place great emphasis on partnerships," said Reba Campbell, the Municipal Association's director of advocacy and communications. "We will partner with statewide business organization to focus their members on increasing collaboration and communication around the competitiveness issue."

The Municipal Association staff will distribute a comprehensive toolkit of events, media ideas, proclamations and other resources to all cities and towns in early December. Items in the Municipal Association – provided toolkit include:

- "Cities Mean Business" ads that can be localized.
- Value of cities ads that can be localized.
- Talking points for a joint opinion column in your local paper written by the mayor or a councilmember with the local chamber president or other local business leader.
- Sample speech for civic club presentations.
- DVD of the latest *Hometown Network News* for use on PEG/local access channels or in civic club presentations.
- Suggested classroom activities for school visits.
- Generic "Cities Mean Business" brochure provided in various file formats so cities can add their logo or name.

Magnets for good living

Quality of life is an essential element in attracting new businesses. No wonder our state is experiencing significant growth.

The good life. In this state, you only have to look as far as our cities and towns to find it. A pro-business attitude, diversified economies and a commitment to enhancing overall quality of life are the cornerstones of the almost 300 hometowns across our state.

People and businesses are drawn to the positive quality of life strong cities and towns offer...from the arts to recreation to quality city services.

This is a proven formula for success and a primary reason cities and towns are strong catalysts for growth and prosperity. But this doesn't happen by accident.

Hard work, vision, regional cooperation and a favorable tax structure have helped make our cities and towns the centers of commerce they are today.

And the best is yet to come.



MASC Cities Mean Business
Municipal Association of South Carolina™

To learn more about how strong cities contribute to the state's economic prosperity, visit www.hometownsc.org.

Visit www.masc.sc to learn how to get a co-branded "Cities Mean Business" ad to use in local publications or city newsletters.

- Sample resolution declaring “Cities Mean Business” Month – invite local business leaders to the meeting where the resolution is passed.
- By the numbers lists illustrating the value taxpayers get from city or town services.
- Ideas for hosting (or co-hosting with the local chamber) an open house at city hall or another municipal venue.
- “Cities Mean Business” stickers and note cards that can be used as leave-behinds on visits to local businesses.

Attendees at the public information officers’ workshop November 29 received a briefing on the toolkit. Municipal Association staff provided a similar briefing through a conference call December 19.

“We challenge each municipality to participate in at least one “Cities Mean Business” related activity,” explained Campbell. “If the toolkit doesn’t spark ideas for a local tie-in, I encourage city officials to give us a call so we can brainstorm with them. This campaign is intended to work with all cities and towns regardless of their size or types of local businesses.

“Our goal with all of these activities is to create a buzz around the idea of strong cities so that when *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day rolls around on February 20, legislators and key influencers will already have heard the message that “Cities Mean Business.”

For a copy of the toolkit, visit MASC’s Web site at www.masc.sc or contact Michelle Willm at 803.933.1259 or mwillm@masc.sc.

Celebrate “Cities Mean Business” month in your hometown by:

- hosting a “business after hours” with your local chamber at city hall or municipal recreation facility
- co-authoring an editorial column with a business leader in your local paper or business journal about the important relationship between a strong city and a strong business environment
- speaking to a local civic group about the important relationship between a strong city and a strong business environment
- visiting local businesses and leaving a note and sticker (available from MASC) saying thanks for being part of your city
- passing a proclamation and inviting local business leaders to be on hand, or
- appearing on a local radio or television talk show with a community business leader to discuss the importance of strong cities to the state’s competitiveness.

Hot issues continued from cover

Several organizations attending the Senate study committee hearing on a constitutional amendment to limit state spending supported adding local government to this proposal by Senator Glenn McConnell. Mayors and city managers from a number of cities and towns spoke in favor of comprehensive tax reform, rather than a local spending cap, as the best way to manage spending. Members of the study committee include Sens. Greg Gregory (chair), Robert Ford, Jim Ritchie, Joel Lourie, Vincent Sheheen and Kevin Bryant.

Discussion at a House Special Laws Subcommittee hearing on annexation centered on comprehensive annexation legislation. The usual groups were represented, including the Coastal Conservation League and the SC Association of Counties. The Coastal Conservation League hopes to include in any annexation legislation a mechanism that allows the county where the annexation occurs

to have legal standing to challenge the annexation. The SC Association of Counties raised concerns of density and demands on infrastructure. The Municipal Association will submit suggestions for a comprehensive annexation bill to the study committee. Committee members include Reps. Ben Hagood (chair), Garry Smith, Karl Smith and Walt McLeod.

Immigration will be another hot issue when the General Assembly reconvenes in January. A Senate study committee held hearings across the state to discuss the issue. Hometown leaders noted at the hearings that the responsibility of managing immigration is too great for local government to handle alone. The resources are not available for local government to successfully manage immigration. Study committee members include Sens. Jim Ritchie (chair), Vincent Sheheen, Chip Campsen, Randy Scott, Kent Williams and Lewis Vaughn.

Municipal Association staff will continue to monitor the situation regarding state-wide and local smoking bans. Ordinances passed by the City of Greenville and Town of Sullivan’s Island have been challenged in court. A decision on the Greenville case is expected in early 2008. The Association will continue to defend municipalities challenged for enacting smoking ban ordinances. Our goal is to see statewide legislation that is strong, but does not preempt local government’s ability to address the issue locally.

The legislative section of the Municipal Association’s Web site contains detailed information about these and all other issues monitored during the session. Stay on top of the latest legislative activity through the Association’s legislative tracking system and its weekly legislative report, which will start again on January 11.

Getting to the root of selecting the perfect trees for your city

The December observance of Arbor Day is a good time to consider adding trees to your municipal landscape. Picking which types of trees to plant in public spaces can be a challenging endeavor. Take into consideration characteristics of both the site and tree. A poor selection could lead to a maintenance nightmare, trees that die young or liability.

When evaluating the site, consider potential above-ground and below-ground conflicts. Are there awnings, storefronts or signage the trees might obstruct? Are there other trees in the vicinity or overhead power lines that will restrict the trees' growth? Consider the sidewalks and buried utilities. Some trees can have an extensive root system.

Determine how much light and reflective heat the trees will be exposed to. In recent years, the City of Columbia had to replace its honey locus trees on Assembly Street because they were receiving too much reflective heat from an adjacent glass building.

When choosing the type of trees to plant, consider how much space the trees will need when they are fully mature. "Mature height, crown spread, trunk flare, and root space are all important factors to consider before planting," according to the SC Forestry Commission's Web site.

Do the trees produce berries or nuts? If so, they might attract wildlife. "The

holly tree is known to attract a lot of birds," said Liz Gilland, community forestry program coordinator with the SC Forestry Commission. Also think about on-going maintenance. Will the trees need extensive pruning for good branch growth? Do they shed berries, nuts or large leaves that require cleaning up?

The SC Forestry Commission has a comprehensive guide on its Web site (www.state.sc.us/forest/urbmsg04.htm) detailing site and tree selection criteria. The guide lists recommended trees with information about the mature height, growth rate, sun/shade requirements and other helpful information about each tree.

"We strongly encourage local governments to get public input during the process," Gilland said. "Narrow down to a handful of trees that would do well meeting the site characteristics, then get public input."

The City of Conway recently used a public input process when faced with having to replace honey locus trees in the downtown. "Trees are a critical aspect to the worlds of pedestrians, vehicular traffic, merchants and residents in our downtown. We needed several, varied viewpoints to be able to know all of the factors that would impact our decision," said Barbara Blain-Olds, assistant administrator for Conway. "We were able to walk away from the table

PalmettoPride 2008 Municipal Tree Grant Winners

City of Aiken	City of Manning
City of Chester	Town of Allendale
City of Camden	Town of Chesterfield
City of Fountain Inn	Town of Jackson
City of Easley	Town of Williamston
City of Johnsonville	Town of Pageland
City of Lake City	
City of Seneca	
City of Mullins	

For more information, visit www.palmettopride.org.

knowing that everyone's viewpoint had been acknowledged and we had a broad (although not total) acceptance of the final decisions. Consensus building is important."

Urban foresters are available to help municipalities with their tree selection process. Visit www.state.sc.us/forest/scurban.htm for contact information.

Guidelines for choosing public trees

Provided by Jay Hiers, landscape architect, City of Orangeburg

Root confinement and structure

Will the tree do well in a compact area?

Will the roots invade the street or concrete causing buckling?

Life expectancy of a tree

Does the tree have a short life? If so, it is not a good fit for downtown.

Canopy Density

How thick is the tree?

Is its canopy broad?

Will it block vision and sight lines of traffic?

Will it block the view of buildings?

Irrigation

Will the landscaping require irrigation?

Maintenance

Will the plantings require much maintenance?

Trees provide much more than just shade to communities

By Amy Geier

Over the years, several large highway improvement projects in the Town of Irmo had required the removal of trees. That resulted in some barren landscapes and views for residents and motorists.

“When you rode through town, all you saw was gravel, red clay and rock along the railroad tracks,” said Whitt Cline, director of public services for the Town of Irmo. “The idea was to take the worst-looking areas of town and make them the best-looking.”

Irmo took on a project to plant more than 1,000 trees across town, including crapeyrrtle along the railroad tracks. Irmo’s \$1.8 million Ozone Clean Air Program, designed to meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s ozone clean air standards, has been paid for with a combination of federal, state and local funds and private donations.

“It makes a huge difference in the atmosphere of town,” Cline said. “It makes people feel good about where they live.”

So far, the town has planted close to 1,500 trees of different varieties, Cline said, and has plans to plant even more.

Beside the beautification aspect, planting trees helps improve the environment. Trees help to trap particulate pollutants – such as dust, ash, pollen and smoke – that are harmful to people. They absorb carbon dioxide and other dangerous gases and replenish the atmosphere with oxygen, according to the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Trees reduce surface runoff of water from storms, and help to cut back on soil erosion and sedimentation of streams. Trees also help save energy by helping to keep homes cool in the hotter months and by providing a windbreak in the winter.

That’s not all trees do. They also increase property values and have a positive impact on economic development. Studies have shown that communities with trees attract businesses and tourists, and apartments and offices in wooded areas rent more quickly, have higher occupancy rates and tenants stay longer. In addition, healthy trees can add up to 15 percent to residential property value, according to the forestry commission.

Cline said that has been the case in Irmo. Since the town has landscaped and added trees to its centrally-located park, an office complex and town homes have been built nearby, he said. “People feel it’s a nice part of town.”

The Arbor Day Foundation helps cities nationwide establish their own community forestry programs through its Tree City USA initiative. Being a Tree City USA is significant because it helps cities to show they care about quality of life for residents and attracts people to live and work, according to the group’s Web site.

More than 30 cities across South Carolina proudly bear the distinction of being a Tree City USA. “From the days of our town’s inception, trees have played a vital role in the success of our community,” said Patrick Goodwin, administrator for the Town of Turbeville, in announcing his town’s award of the title for the fourth year.



Town of Irmo

“Our goal to beautify our town began with the planning for, planting of and care of our natural resource – our trees,” Goodwin said in a press release. “Today, Turbeville continues its commitment to our greatest natural resource – trees. Trees in our town help clean air, conserve soil and water, moderate temperatures and bring nature in our daily lives. Trees are a vital component of the infrastructure in our town providing environmental and economic benefits.”

Views of nature change the way we feel and function in the everyday world, reports Ellen Vincent, Environmental Landscape Specialist at Clemson University. Studies that measure psychological and physiological well-being indicate that stress levels drop in as few as four minutes if a view of nature is available. This can have a positive effect on drivers, shoppers, and workers.

Reprinted from SC Magazine. For subscription information, www.scmagazine.net.



Hometown Happenings

January

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.

MASC posted January *Hometown Happenings* information on its Web site in early November. Let MASC know if you participate in a *Hometown Happening*. Call Casey Fields at 803.933.1256.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday – Your city or other organizations may already have events planned on Monday, January 21, to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. If not, consider hosting an event celebrating the life of Dr. King with county government, businesses, churches or non-profit organizations in your city or town. Co-author an editorial with a community leader showing how your city or town will commemorate Dr. King's legacy.

YMCA Shrinkdown – The Shrinkdown is an annual event where local YMCA chapters, cities, colleges and universities, and local businesses sponsor healthy living challenges to residents. Get your city or town officials and employees involved, and let your local media know about it! There are already cities and towns across South Carolina partnering with their local YMCAs in this great initiative. Learn more at <http://www.scsrinkdown.com>.

News Briefs



■ The South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust workers' compensation program and the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund property/liability insurance program announced there will be no rate increase for either program in 2008. With a combined fund balance for the two programs of more than \$30 million, the programs continue to be a stabilizing influence for municipal budgets.

■ The Municipal Association received an Award of Excellence from the SC Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators. The Municipal Association was recognized for its Achievement Award entry brochure, winner booklet and video.

■ The City of Spartanburg has been named one of 31 founding cities of the Playful City USA initiative. Sponsored by the KaBOOM! National Campaign for Play, the initiative honors cities across the nation for their vision, plan and commitment to creating recreational opportunities for children and adults. Spartanburg was recognized for its long-range goals for parks and recreation, including creating a parks master plan.

■ In August, members of the Municipal Court Administration Association of SC elected their 2007-08 board of directors: President – Sally Phipps of Mount Pleasant; Vice President – Diane Anderson of Rock Hill; Secretary/Treasurer – Vicky Huggins of Loris; Members-At-Large – Amy Wilkerson of Isle of Palms and Kenneth Gunnells of Kiawah Island.

■ The City of Florence won the 2007 Golden Acorn Award from the South Carolina Urban and Community Forestry Council in November. The city also received the 2007 President's Circle Recognition Award from Keep America Beautiful in December.

■ In November, members of the SC Business Licensing Officials Association elected their 2007-08 board of directors: President – Benny Genwright, MBL, of Dillon; Vice President – Deborah Paulson, MBL, of Hanahan; Secretary/Treasurer – Tami Fralick, ABL, of Charleston County; Members-At-Large – Blake Foster, ABL, of Belton; Ken Mullinax, MBL, of Anderson and Sonya Lee, MBL, of Lexington.

■ In October, members of the SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association elected their 2007-08 board of directors: President – Fran Strickland of Abbeville; Vice President – Kelly Lovette of Goose Creek; Secretary/Treasurer – David Seifert of Greer; Members-At-Large – Vanessa Turner-Maybank, CMC, of Charleston; Dora Perry of Tega Cay; Becky Hildebrand of Lexington and Patricia Brown of Marion.

Building relationships through Hometown Connections

By Claire Spilde, MASC Intern

The second half of the state legislative session kicks off on January 8. Each day, the Municipal Association's advocacy team will cross Gervais Street to lobby on behalf of South Carolina's 269 municipalities with populations ranging from 59 to more than 100,000 residents. Ed Schafer, legislative counsel, and Warren Harley, governmental affairs liaison, spearhead the Association's proactive, hometown-centered agenda.

To be successful, local officials need to add their voices to those of Schafer and Harley. The issues are heard clearest when voiced by those directly affected. Schafer is quick to point out that "legislators pay the most attention to their constituents back home. Continued lines of open communication do more to influence a vote than approaching the legislator when you need him to take a specific action."

The Municipal Association recommends year-round, regular meetings between local officials and their legislators. These relationships provide an opportunity to understand a wider or more detailed point of view and will benefit both when controversial issues

arise. Most importantly, the hometown residents benefit when neither party hesitates to talk to one another, share information and get a better understanding of the issues that impact their city or town.

One way to build these relationships is through the Municipal Association's Hometown Connection events held during sessions of the General Assembly.

Hometown Connection days are set aside for cities and towns grouped by counties to visit the State House together. (See box below for the 2008 schedule.)

On these days, local officials meet at the Municipal Association's office for a briefing on that week's scheduled legislation impacting cities and towns. Staff accompanies the group to the State House and helps the local officials find their legislators' offices and committee meeting rooms. Local officials use the time at the State House to meet with their legislators, attend committee meetings and listen to the floor debates.


After the State House visit, Municipal Association staff encourage local officials

to schedule lunch with their legislators prior to coming to Columbia. This ensures individual face time to communicate concerns and talk more in-depth about specific issues and local concerns.

During the visit, Municipal Association staff take photographs of the local elected officials with their individual legislators to submit to hometown papers along with a press release. This gives local officials an opportunity to show their residents they are working with state officials to make a positive difference in their hometowns.

Over the years, the Hometown Connection program has proven to be a highly successful and invaluable tool for bringing local and state leaders together. "The bottom line," said Casey Fields, manager of municipal advocacy, "is constituents matter the most. Constituents back home are the ones who make the difference."

For more information on Hometown Connection, visit www.masc.sc/legislative/hometownconnection.htm, or contact Casey Fields at 803.933.1256 or cfields@masc.sc.

 <p>2008 Hometown Connection MASC Municipal Association of South Carolina</p>	<h2>2008 Hometown Connection schedule</h2> <p>Municipal officials meet at the Municipal Association's office at 10:30 a.m. on their county's designated date.</p>	
	January 29	Cities in Aiken, Anderson, Calhoun, Cherokee, Chester, Fairfield, Greenville, Lancaster, Lexington, Oconee, Orangeburg, Pickens, Richland, Spartanburg and York counties
	February 20	All municipalities for MASC's <i>Hometown, SC</i> Legislative Action Day
	March 25	Cities in Abbeville, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Edgefield, Greenwood, Kershaw, Laurens, Lee, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Saluda, Sumter and Union counties
	April 29	Cities in Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Marion and Williamsburg counties

2007 SCMIT Safety Awards and Safety Idea Contest

The Municipal Association of SC and the SC Municipal Insurance Trust (MASC's self-funded workers' compensation program) will recognize the 2007 Safety Award and Safety Idea Contest winners during the *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day on February 20.

Safety Award

The SCMIT Safety Award recognizes local government entities for their safety efforts based on OSHA and loss-ratio data. The award is open to all SCMIT members with at least 10 full-time employees in two or more of the following operations: administration, public safety, public utilities or public works.

The competition has four categories

Division I	10 to 50 employees;
Division II	51 to 150 employees;
Division III	51 employees and above,
Division IV	Non-municipal (ex. commissions of public works)

Only members with law enforcement operations can participate in Divisions I-III. First, second and third place winners receive monetary reimbursement for safety equipment.

To be eligible for the competition, SCMIT must receive entry forms and OSHA 300 data by February 1. Staff will mail entry forms to SCMIT members in December.

Safety Idea Contest

The Safety Idea Contest recognizes SCMIT members who have helped make their workplace safer with an innovative idea. Selected by the SCMIT board of trustees, the winner receives a \$500 check. SCMIT must receive entry forms by February 1. For more information or an entry form, visit the RMS Web site at www.masc.sc/misc/rms.htm or contact Phil Cromer at 803.933.1210 or pcromer@masc.sc.



Classifieds

■ The City of Columbia is accepting applications for a police chief. Detailed job description and application requirements are available at www.columbiasc.net or at City Hall, 1737 Main St, Columbia, SC, Mon - Fri, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Application deadline is January 9, however, the city reserves the right to close at any time. EOE

■ The Town of Mount Pleasant is accepting applications for a senior purchasing agent. For more information, visit www.townofmountpleasant.com. Mail application to Town of Mount Pleasant, PO Box 745, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29465, Attn: Personnel.

■ The City of Greenville is accepting resumes for a compensation manager. E-mail cover letter and resume to resumes@greenergreenville.com, or complete an online application at www.greenergreenville.com. EOE/AA

■ The City of Tega Cay is accepting applications/resumes for the position of part-time clerk of court. Send resume to HR Department, PO Box 3399, Tega Cay, SC 29708. Position is open until filled. For more information, call 803.548.3512, ext. 122.

■ The City of Tega Cay is accepting applications for a planner. Send resume to HR Department, PO Box 3399, Tega Cay, SC 29708. Position is open until filled. For more information, call 803.548.3513, ext 130.

Municipal Financial Report due January 15

In October, the Budget and Control Board's Office of Research and Statistics sent each municipality its 2007 Annual Municipal Financial Report. The report requires the municipality to provide information about its revenue sources, expenditures by category, debt and other information. The state may withhold 10 percent of a municipality's state aid if the report is not filed by the January 15 deadline.

SC Safe Home Grants available

The South Carolina Department of Insurance is offering grants to property owners to retrofit their houses to protect against wind damage incurred in wind storms or hurricanes.

The SC Safe Home Grant Program, created by the Omnibus Coastal Property Insurance Reform Act of 2007, is designed to improve coastal home stability and reduce insurance claims.

Qualifying mitigation improvements include creating a second water barrier, improving roof covering and upgrading exterior doors.

Visit www.scsafefhome.com for a listing of other approved mitigation improvements.

The department offers matching and non-matching grants and neither can exceed \$5,000. If a home is valued at less than \$150,000, the homeowner can apply for a non-matching grant.

Before applying, a homeowner must have the property inspected by an inspector who has completed and passed the Department of Insurance wind resistance training program.

Since the program began in June, 14 homeowners in Berkeley, Charleston, Horry and Dorchester counties received grants of \$5,000 each.

For more information contact Ann Roberson, public information officer, at 803.737.6207, or visit the South Carolina Safe Home Web site at www.scsafefhome.com.

The Qs and As of planning and zoning

Which cities need to have a comprehensive plan?

Every community that has zoning must have a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan is made up of nine elements: population, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, land use, transportation and priority investment.

What did the Priority Investment Act do?

The Priority Investment Act passed during the 2007 legislative session amended the comprehensive plan's housing element and added two new elements: transportation and priority investment.

What specific changes did the Priority Investment Act make to the housing element?

The PIA requires an analysis of local regulations to determine if there are any that may hinder affordable housing development.

It also includes an analysis of market-based incentives that may be made available to encourage the development of affordable housing. Incentives may include density bonuses, design flexibility and a streamlined permitting process.

What does the transportation element cover?

Transportation facilities including major road improvements, new road construction and pedestrian and bicycle projects are covered under this element. Transportation elements must be developed in coordination with the land use element to ensure transportation efficiency for existing and planned development.

What does the priority investment element do?

The priority investment element analyzes projected federal, state and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next 10 years and recommends projects for those funds. These recommendations must be coordinated with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies (counties, other municipalities, school districts, public and private utilities, and transportation agencies).

Planning and zoning topics will be covered during Session A of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government on February 19. For more information, visit www.masc.sc/education/meo.htm.

Financing water and sewer projects doesn't have to be draining

Residents and businesses are drawn to the positive quality of life strong cities and towns offer. An important service that is often taken for granted is sufficient water and efficient wastewater service. As development takes place, the utility infrastructure is sometimes overburdened far above and beyond its designed capacity.

Some towns are being forced to turn away developments because they simply cannot support the projected service demands. Improvements can be pricey and small towns with limited budgets are hard pressed to find room in tight budgets to upgrade infrastructure that, while strained, is still working.

This is exactly the kind of situation the State Revolving Loan Funds (SRF) was created to address. According to the Budget and Control Board's Office of Local Government Web site, the SRFs "offer the most economical form of debt financing available in South Carolina for water and sewer projects." Over its lifetime, the SRF has authorized loans totaling more than \$687 million for local water and sewer infrastructure needs. In the past year, more than \$33 million has gone to the municipalities of Anderson, Lancaster, Moncks Corner, Seneca, Greer and Travelers Rest.

The Office of Local Government administers three distinct grant programs: Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund, Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund and the Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund.

The State Drinking Water Revolving Fund offers long-term, low-interest loans to construct public drinking water facilities to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The fund, jointly administered by the Department of Health and

Environmental Control and the State Budget and Control Board, is available to public water providers, including those with access to the bond market. Fiscal year 2008 interest rates range from 1 - 3 percent.

The State Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund offers long-term, low-interest loans to construct public wastewater facilities to comply with the Clean Water Act. The fund is jointly administered by the Department of Health and Environmental Control and the State Budget and Control Board. Fiscal year 2008 interest rates range from 1 - 3.25 percent.

The state recently reintroduced the Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund offering low interest loans to construct water and wastewater facilities that protect the environment and support economic expansion. The fund is used primarily for projects that are not eligible through the State Drinking Water Revolving Fund or the State Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund. With no federal requirements, this fund offers loans up to \$3 million each and provides small loans up to \$200,000 through a very streamlined process.

To receive a loan from the Clean Water or Water Pollution Control funds, the prospective project must be on the DHEC priority list for drinking water or wastewater. Projects may be added to either list at any time during the year by submitting a priority questionnaire. While the project may be added to the list throughout the year, loan applications must be turned in from October 1 to July 31 of each fiscal year.

The Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund offers four tiers: standard rate, small system rate, hardship rate or capac-

ity development rate. The most expensive, the standard rate, stands at 3 percent, down from 3.5 percent in fiscal year 2007. The loan closing fee, 1 percent of total project costs, can be included in the total loan amount.

Similarly, the Clean Water Revolving Fund has four rate levels: standard, small system, hardship or nonpoint source. Of these, the standard rate has the highest interest, 3.25 percent. This rate was reduced from 3.5 percent in fiscal year 2007. The loan closing fee, 0.5 percent, is not eligible for inclusion in the wastewater loan.

"Many municipalities don't realize that when water or sewer lines have to be moved due to highway widening, the project is eligible for State Revolving Fund financing," said Trish Comp, loan programs manager, Office of Local Government. "An increasingly popular use for the loans is to finance radio water meters, which in turn pay for themselves by reducing meter reading costs."

For more information, visit www.olg.sc.gov/info.aspx.



Getting to the Point

By Dr. Henry T. Price

Many businesses, even if they've never given a cent to charities, are deeply involved in philanthropy daily. They "give" their competitors an advantage, an edge, because they don't exercise enough care in the written messages they send out.

French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal once said in a letter to a friend: "I have made this letter longer than usual because I lack the time to make it shorter." He obviously understood the value of brevity in writing and knew that achieving it takes time.

There are many sins writers can commit. Some are major sins, such as an error in fact, or a grammar blunder, or a spelling mistake — all of which can make a reader question your "smarts." But one of the relatively minor problems can be just as deadly as a major one — and that is the sin of "pleonasm."

Now, there's a word that most people don't have in their vocabularies and would require them to resort to a quick dash to a dictionary to ascertain the proper definition. In fact, the preceding sentence is a good example of "pleonasm," which means "using more words than necessary." The first sentence could have read: "Don't know the definition? Check your dictionary."

Most people don't like to receive a document that goes on and on. Often, they'll drop it in the circular file rather than try to figure out what the point is. A little thought can keep your efforts from being tossed in the trash. Which of the following would you use?

- "despite the fact that" or "although"
- "due to the fact that" or "because"
- "during the period from" or "from"
- "for the purpose of" or "for" or "to"
- "in the event that" or "if"
- "a sufficient number of" or "enough"
- "at the present time" or "now"
- "in the immediate vicinity of" or "near"

And it's not just substituting a word for a phrase that saves space. Pay attention to the words you are using. When we talk, we use "buy," but when we write, it becomes "purchase"; we say "try," but write "attempt"; "ask" becomes "request"; "use" becomes "utilize"; "get" morphs into "obtain."

Whatever you are writing, the very best first step you can take is to lock firmly in your mind exactly what it is you want this piece of writing to accomplish. If you have thought carefully through what you want to say, it's a lot easier to be concise. In one of the courses I taught at the University of South Carolina, I used essay exams when I gave tests. Almost invariably, the answers from the students who really knew the material were **shorter** than the answers of those students who didn't have as good a command of it.

A friend of mine once received a mailing that had the following paragraph in the CEO's column: "As the Chairman of this year's Total Sustainable Resources Campaign, I am pleased to report to all members that we

have now exceeded this year's campaign goal of \$375,000! The final number was announced at the Victory Celebration on September 18 — \$391,000. It was the success of the Silent and Live Auction (Yes, that's the way it was spelled in the original) at this year's Annual Gala that has put us slightly above our goal."

That's 65 words. The paragraph could have said: "As the Chairman of this year's Total Sustainable Resources Campaign, I am pleased that we have exceeded our goal of \$375,000 by \$16,000! It was the Silent and Live Auction at the annual gala that put us over the top." That's 40 words. It's shorter; it's easier to read; and it gets to the point.

Words can help sell. A little attention to brevity by you and your writers might pay big dividends.

Dr. Price, a consultant with Sam McCuen and Associates, taught copy editing and writing for more than 30 years at the University of South Carolina. Article reprinted with permission from South Carolina Business, SC Chamber of Commerce.



Educational Opportunities

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

■ **January 23-25**, will hold its Spring Meeting and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks Region III Meeting at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville. Topics include ordinance and resolution preparation, cash management, GASB 45 and grants.

Hometown Connection

■ **January 29**, Municipal officials from Aiken, Anderson, Calhoun, Cherokee, Chester, Fairfield, Greenville, Lancaster, Lexington, Oconee, Orangeburg, Pickens, Richland, Spartanburg and York counties visit with their state legislators. Officials will meet at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 am.

The SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **February 7**, will hold its m at 10:30 a.m.ember luncheon at Seawell's in Columbia.

SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **February 19**, will hold its A and B sessions at the Marriott in Columbia. Officials must attend Session A before they can register for Session B. Session A topics include conducting public meetings, planning, zoning and personnel. Session B topics include annexation, business licensing, liability and finance.

Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day

■ **February 20**, will be held at the Marriott in Columbia. (See related story on page 1)

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **March 12-14**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Myrtle Beach.

SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **March 20**, will hold a "Basic Budgeting for Municipal Officials" session via satellite to the 10 regional councils of government.

Hometown Connection

■ **March 25**, Municipal officials from Abbeville, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Edgefield, Greenwood, Kershaw, Laurens, Lee, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Saluda, Sumter and Union counties visit with their state legislators. Officials will meet at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 am.

For more information about these meetings or other MASC meetings not listed, please call 803.799.9574, or visit our Web site at www.masc.sc.



1411 Gervais Street ■ P.O. Box 12109
Columbia, South Carolina 29211
Tel: 803.799.9574 ■ Fax: 803.933.1299
www.masc.sc

Prsrt Std
U.S. Postage
PAID
Municipal
Association of
South Carolina

President: Mayor Fred Cavanaugh, Aiken
Executive Director: Howard E. Duvall Jr.
Managing Editor: Reba H. Campbell
Editor: Mary M. Brantner, APR
Associate Editor: Christie M. Penzol