

UPTOWN

Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day just around the corner

The countdown is on for the 2007 *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day – Making the Connection – on February 28.

The keynote speakers are in place: Dr. John Daly of the University of Texas at Austin and Joel Smith, dean of the University of SC’s Moore School of Business.

The Municipal Association of SC’s legislative platform is finalized (see related story on page 7), the trip to the State House is scheduled, and both chambers will recognize the day as *Hometown, SC* Day.

Attendees have their homework assignment (see related story on page 7), and the afternoon sessions are planned. There are two general

sessions for the afternoon, “Key Influencers Strengthen the Connection” and “Making the Connection Success Stories.”

The afternoon sessions will dig deeper into the legislative relationship-building topics covered in the morning sessions and keynote address.

First, WIS-TV’s David Stanton will moderate a panel of state business leaders (and business leader-turned-mayor). Panel members are Mayor Bill Barnet of Spartanburg; Steve Benjamin, attorney; Paula Harper Bethea, former chair of the SC Chamber of Commerce and Joel Smith. The four panelists serve on the boards of the major statewide business organizations and have all been

MASC will offer Sessions A and B of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government on Tuesday, February 27. Session A covers personnel, planning, zoning, conducting public meetings, goal setting and team building. Elected officials completing Session A can enroll in Session B. Session B covers municipal finance, annexation, liability, business licensing and ethics. Use the *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day registration form to register for the Institute sessions.

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HSCLAD helps members think locally on state issues

During *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day, members will be encouraged to think about how state issues affect them on a local level.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina will hold a legislative review during the opening session on February 28. MASC representatives will brief members on their top legislative agenda items – the community unification act and spending caps – and ask members to participate in an exercise designed to help put the issues in a local perspective.

Using a fun worksheet, the exercise will teach members the ABCs of how to influence top decision makers, said MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall. It will cover how to learn about an issue, relate it to one’s hometown, figure out a plan of action and – through that plan – influence state policymaking.

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important supporters of MASC's efforts to increase communication between local elected leadership and the local business community.

Second, attendees will have a chance to hear about best practices in

action when a panel of mayors and others convene to talk about their success stories when engaging local key influencers. From holding local "engagement sessions" with key influencers to involving business

leaders in the city's decision-making process, these mayors will discuss how this type of outreach is making a difference.

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"The best way to influence your legislative delegation is to have local officials armed with local examples," Duvall said. "If we can get local examples, legislators are more apt to understand our point of view."

A worksheet is enclosed with this issue of Uptown. If you will not be attending the *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day, fax your completed sheet to MASC at 803.933.1299 so that MASC can use your local examples.

Duvall said the exercise will focus on two important issues for municipalities: the Community Unification Act – formerly known as enclave annexation – and spending caps.

The Community Unification Act is important because there are many pockets of unincorporated areas surrounded by property located within a

municipality, Duvall said. This leads to confusion about who provides services,

"For governmental efficiency, it makes sense to allow unification and bring these pockets of unincorporated areas into the cities," Duvall said.

especially when residents call police or fire departments and officials aren't sure which unit should respond, he added.

Unincorporated residents also cannot receive city services like trash pickup, but some slip through the cracks or simply take advantage of these services.

"For governmental efficiency, it makes sense to allow unification and bring these pockets of unincorporated areas into the cities," Duvall said.

Local leaders will be encouraged to think of examples of similar unincorporated areas in their municipalities

and to consider how the areas affect the city and residents.

MASC also will review spending caps. Some taxpayer and business groups are pushing lawmakers to impose caps on local government spending, saying fees and millage increases are making the state less competitive. MASC has always opposed spending caps. They are an intrusion on Home Rule, Duvall said. The millage cap passed in the last legislative session is already affecting municipal growth, he added.

"Spending caps make it impossible for cities to provide services," Duvall said.

Members will be asked to consider what services will be disrupted or eliminated by the proposed caps and how these limits will affect their towns. Following this exercise, HSCLAD participants will turn in their worksheets so MASC can compile the examples for use in its lobbying efforts.

The legislative exercise aims to get participants thinking about how legislation in the General Assembly will matter at home. It also asks municipal officials to consider their allies who support the municipal side and to understand the arguments of opponents.

Duvall said he hopes participants learn to look at all state issues with a local perspective to make a bigger impact on legislative decisions.



SCORBIT will help members with GASB 45

December 15 marked the beginning of the phase-in process for GASB 45 compliance. To assist municipalities in meeting GASB 45's fiscal requirements, the Municipal Association of SC is forming a trust, SC Other Retirement Benefits Investment Trust (SC ORBIT). The trust, open to all political subdivisions, will help lower the overall liability and annual contributions required from each municipality.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement 45, "Accounting and Financial Reporting by Employers for Post-Employment Benefits Other Than Pensions," which changes the way municipalities report employees' retirement earnings. GASB 45 requires employers to report other post-employment benefits (OPEB) which include retiree health, dental and vision insurance, prescription, long-term-care insurance, life insurance and other benefits.

The MASC-sponsored irrevocable trust will focus on benefit levels rather than other post-employment benefit coverage. For example, each member municipality will continue to contract with its current health care provider for health care coverage. The trust will pay a portion (or all) of the benefits chosen by the employer directly to that provider. Members will have control over the benefit levels they purchase.

"Complying with the GASB 45 regulation will be a difficult and costly process for our municipalities," explained MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall. "We are committed to providing as much support to our members as possible. Heather Ricard, chief financial officer for Risk Management Services, has the responsibility of developing the GASB 45 trust. This trust and the support from MASC in complying with GASB 45 is another example of how Association members can cut their costs and provide a service by working together."



Each member will share in the administrative and investment related expenses of the trust, lowering the overall costs to each municipality. Also, each will receive an actuarial valuation that will meet the financial reporting needs of GASB 45.

"We project to have the trust up and running by July 2007," said Ricard. "Members will receive information about participating in the trust in March."

Visit the MASC Web site to learn more about the GASB 45 and SCORBIT informational meeting on February 27 from 1 – 3 p.m. at the Columbia Marriott.

News Briefs



■ MASC promoted Heather Ricard to chief financial officer for Risk Management Services. Ricard, who has spent more than a year with MASC as financial manager, will oversee the financial management of MASC's three self-funded insurance programs and the GASB 45 trust.

■ Wayne George is MASC's new manager of field services. He has been with MASC since November 2004, responsible for development of the Municipal Insurance Service programs. In his new

capacity, George will take on the responsibility of providing members with information on additional programs and services offered by the Association.

■ MASC promoted Amy Lindler to risk and safety services consultant. Lindler joined MASC in 2002 as an administrative assistant and was promoted to staff associate for Risk Management Services in 2005. Lindler and Phil Cromer will provide loss control and safety services to SC Municipal Insurance Trust and SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund members.

■ MASC promoted Melissa Lance to junior staff associate for collection programs. Lance joined MASC in 1994 as an administrative assistant and has worked for the last seven years in the Collection Department. Lance will manage the Brokers Tax Collection Program and assist with the Setoff Debt, Insurance Tax and Telecommunications Tax Collection Programs.

■ *Risk & Insurance* magazine named Greenville one of the 10 safest cities in the U.S. The list is based on relative risk from hurricanes, earthquakes, severe thunderstorms, winter storms, wildfires and terrorism for U.S. Metro Statistical Areas with at least one million inhabitants.

Court cases make workers' comp reform even more critical

By J. Hubert Wood, III
Wood, Porter & Warder

Workers' compensation laws, enacted in South Carolina in the 1930s, were based on the fundamental premise that industry should bear the costs of injuries resulting from workplace accidents. A no-fault administrative process replaced civil lawsuits.

The process was designed to provide for prompt payment of medical and disability benefits to injured employees and a limit on employer liability. While the fundamental premise is almost universally accepted, developments have challenged the other basic tenets of the system leading many to call for comprehensive reform.

Integral to the system is the delivery of health care. In addition to substantial increases in recent years,

there are more available health care services. Medical advances have allowed physicians to diagnose previously unknown conditions and develop treatment plans for the long-term care of chronic conditions.

Following the South Carolina Court of Appeals' 1999 decision in *Dodge v. Bruccoli, Clark, Layman, Inc.*, along with numerous other court decisions, the system has transformed into one that provides the potential for lifetime medical benefits in every case, eliminating any notion of limited liability.

Another compelling line of cases involved interpreting the term "accident" to determine if an employer needed to compensate an employee for an injury. There is no requirement for a specific

occurrence or "event accompanying" injury - merely an injury occurring unexpectedly without design or defect. This recently culminated with Supreme Court decisions confirming claimants can be compensated for repetitive trauma injuries or conditions but the decisions left lingering confusion.

Examples include inconsistencies in assessing the statute of limitations versus the notice requirement, uncertainty in determining which employer or carrier may be liable and the concept of non-work related repetitive

trauma as a contributing factor. Most significantly, conditions attributed to normal aging are being compensated in the workers' compensation system.

The General Assembly created the Second Injury Fund in the early 1970s to encourage employers to hire individuals with pre-existing disabilities without an adverse effect on the cost of workers' compensation insurance. Thirty years later, many believe the Second Injury Fund does not reach this goal.

Opponent also point to a recent Supreme Court decision, *Ellison v. Frigidaire Home Products*. Relying on a Second Injury Fund statute, the court allowed an injured employee to recover permanent and total disability benefits based on the combined effects of a work-related injury and unrelated pre-existing conditions. The Second Injury Fund adds another costly layer to the system while providing little, if any, benefit to most employers.

Reasonable people can disagree about the extent of benefits that should be provided through the workers' compensation system. The ongoing debate is complex and wide ranging. The different interests involved and the limit on what reforms can be achieved must be considered. Plus, expanded benefits create additional costs.

The General Assembly should define and set parameters for the compensability of repetitive trauma conditions; follow the lead of numerous states and abolish the Second Injury Fund with an orderly run-off of existing claims; and address the issue concerning the extent of an employer's liability for medical benefits in cases not involving permanent and total disability or prosthetic devices.



Greenville offers valuable downtime to MASC Annual Meeting attendees

If you haven't been to Greenville lately, you will be in for a treat when you attend the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting in July. *Southern Living* magazine named Greenville one of its three favorite cities. (Greenville shared the spotlight with Nashville and Wilmington, Delaware.)

The new Liberty Bridge, a 380-foot pedestrian walkway, overlooks a waterfall in the acclaimed Falls Park on the Reedy. The \$4.5 million Liberty Bridge does more than span the Reedy River — it serves as the focal point of Falls Park, showcasing man's creativity alongside nature's beauty. The unique design, created by architect Miguel Rosales of Boston, provides spectacular views of Reedy River Falls.

Falls Park on the Reedy and the West End Market anchor the West End Historic District, known as the arts and entertainment center of the city. While visiting the West End, you can browse through the shops in the West End Market and surrounding streets, dine in one of the area's unique restaurants or enjoy a theater performance.

Speaking of dining, Greenville is home to 600-plus restaurants from time-honored Southern fare, to Italian, French,



Liberty Bridge, a pedestrian walkway, overlooks the Reedy River and provides spectacular views of Reedy River Falls.

Japanese, Thai, Greek, Mexican and Dutch.

Greenville's walkable Main Street — featuring beautiful trees, attractive landscaping, public art and comfortable street furniture — gracefully hosts a variety of specialty shops offering antiques, high-fashion clothing, furniture and art galleries, along with rare and unusual gift items. This vibrant downtown won the prestigious 2003 Great American Main Street Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

While downtown, don't miss sculptures of Greenville's historic figures and whimsical works of art. The original

works of art honor Greenville's past and celebrate the American spirit.

Don't forget to look for the Mice on Main. Hidden downtown are nine bronze mice. The activity is based on the popular children's book *Goodnight Moon*. Start at the fountain in the Hyatt Plaza to locate the bronze book and mouse number one. The other eight mice are installed along a nine-block stretch of Main Street.

Before or after the Annual Meeting sessions, you can visit museums, galleries, the Greenville Zoo and Shoeless Joe Jackson sites. Car enthusiasts can tour the BMW Zentrum, BMW's first

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plant outside of Germany. For science buffs of all ages, visit Roper Mountain Science Center. In Greenville and the Upcountry region, there are more than 500 historic sites as well as the Blue Ridge Mountains, with their pristine lakes and scenic forest trails.

“We are excited to show other municipal officials the things we have done that bring value to our city,” said Greenville Mayor Knox White. “We are confident our visitors will enjoy their downtown experience as much as our citizens do everyday.”

Join MASC in Greenville for the Annual Meeting on July 12-15 to discover firsthand why Greenville has earned the reputation of “a city that is sophisticated and down to earth, cosmopolitan and steeped in the traditions of Southern hospitality.”



Too tired to walk? Take a ride on the Downtown Greenville Trolley to see the sights.



Hometown Happenings

Hometown Happenings is a new service to municipalities as a part of the *Hometown, SC* initiative launched in the summer of 2006.

Each month, municipal officials can 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 nonprofit organizations and policy makers.

The packet includes sample press releases, sample letters to the editor and guest editorials, suggested events and Web site links. Other information as noted below will be posted to the MASC Web site in early February.

March 2007 Hometown Happenings

- **Women’s History Month** - Many local organizations have special events planned to recognize Women’s History Month. Partner with those organizations to spotlight female municipal officials who have dedicated themselves to the prosperity of your city or town.
- **Sunshine Week** - This week recognizes the public’s right to know what government is doing and why. During March 11-17, open government and freedom of information are stressed in newspaper articles and TV specials. Write a letter to the editor reiterating your city’s commitment to open government. Participate in a satellite training refresher seminar on the Freedom of Information Act on March 15 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Visit www.masc.sc for viewing locations. (See article on page 9.)
- **Read Across America Day** - The recognized day is March 2, but the National Education Association encourages increased awareness of the importance of reading all month long. Having mayors or council members read in classrooms is a great way to motivate children to read while commemorating this important day in the education of our state’s young people.

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

New approach to communicating legislative issues

The Municipal Association's legislative agenda has a different look this year. In addition to the expected "laundry list" of legislative issues MASC will track, the MASC board approved a set of legislative principles to help promote the Association's goals of building partnerships and coalitions that focus attention

on the value cities bring to the state's economic competitiveness.

"By communicating our priorities within the context of issues the state's business leadership is focused on, we can better position cities as the valuable assets they are," says MASC President and Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols. From workers' comp reform to restructuring

our tax system and affordable housing to safe roads, our issues this year reflect many of the top priorities the business community has identified as critical to our state's competitiveness."

The 2007 MASC legislative agenda has three focus areas. A complete list of legislative issues is available on the MASC Web site.

Promoting economic growth

South Carolina hometowns are the core of economic growth and prosperity for our state. Cities and towns work in partnership with business and industry to provide the necessary infrastructure to assist in their growth and support their competitiveness. The success of our state's economic development efforts depends on the strength of our cities and towns to provide the quality services and amenities taxpayers and businesses demand. South Carolina hometowns support legislation that encourages economic growth by making our state competitive within the global economy.

- Support comprehensive tax reform to ensure predictability in revenue streams and fairness to businesses and taxpayers.
- Support revisions to laws regulating city boundaries to reflect the realities of today's patterns of growth and development by including areas surrounded by a city.
- Support changes to the workers' compensation statutes to reduce costs.
- Support highway construction/transportation funding.
- Support affordable housing.

Enhancing positive quality of life

Businesses repeatedly point to "quality of life" as one of the determining factors in making a decision where to locate. South Carolina's hometowns are the primary source of the valuable elements that create a positive quality of life supporting tourism, public safety, recreation, the arts and cultural activities. South Carolina's cities and towns support legislative efforts to provide residents and businesses with cost-effective and efficient programs and services that support a positive quality of life.

- Support improved resources for law enforcement to deal with criminal activity of gangs.
- Support local decision making for land use and development regulations.
- Support a portion of a cigarette tax increase earmarked for parks and recreation.
- Support statewide elimination of the "Blue Laws."
- Support flexible usage of the proceeds from local hospitality and accommodations taxes.

Encouraging local accountability and fiscal responsibility

Strong cities are necessary to support the economic development and growth of the entire area. Local municipal leadership must have the ability to provide resources in a manner that best supports each community's local needs. Research indicates residents want local control over the laws and regulations that affect the growth and development of their hometowns. With responsibility comes accountability. South Carolina hometowns support local fiscal accountability and resource management critical to supporting well-run cities.

- Support local decision making on financial priorities recognizing cities and towns need flexible resources to meet the demands of their residents.
- Support strong locally-directed fiscal accountability for municipal governments.
- Support open and accountable government.

MASC adds category to Achievement Awards

There's a new way for cities to be recognized by the Municipal Association of South Carolina's Achievement Awards.

The awards, which will be presented during the Annual Meeting in Greenville July 12-15, recognize successful and innovative municipal projects that improve the quality of life for citizens and add value to the community by establishing partnerships and building community support.

This year, a communications category has been added to recognize outstanding marketing, image campaigns, Web sites, electronic newsletters and public access channels. That's in addition to the previous population and subject categories of economic development, public safety, public works and public service.

"Effective communications are the key to everything we do in public affairs," said Rock Hill Public Information Officer Lyn Garris.

"With a new focus at MASC on communicating with one voice with our *Hometown, SC* initiative, we hope this new award category will encourage cities to share their successes with their

own efforts to reach out to residents, key influencers or policy makers," said Reba Campbell, MASC director of advocacy and communications.

Just as public safety plays a crucial role in the well-being of citizens, well-planned communications efforts help disseminate information and improve the quality of life for citizens. This can include everything from an innovative Web site or blog to communicating with residents to a successful communications plan for a disaster.

The City of Aiken was recognized last year in the economic development category for its comprehensive plan to revitalize its deteriorating north side neighborhoods.

"The most important thing is the added publicity it brings to what we're trying to do - not just to the



citizens, but to other cities in the state," said Assistant City Manager Bill Huggins. "It allows us to share what we're trying to do."

City staff members also are gratified by the recognition, Huggins added.

"It gives them a boost," he said. "It helps them to feel what they're doing is appreciated."

The award also is a boost to the public-private partners that often work together on major projects, said Jeff Shacker, assistant manager for the City of Newberry.

Newberry won last year in the 10,001-20,000 population category for its work converting a neglected former hospital into affordable senior housing. The project was completed with the help of

All winning municipalities will receive statewide recognition and will be

- congratulated in an ad placed in the local newspaper*;
- recognized at the Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast and receive four complimentary tickets to the breakfast;
- featured in a video shown at the Awards Breakfast and made available to winners after the Annual Meeting;
- spotlighted in the 2007 Achievement Awards Winners' brochure;
- publicized in the Municipal Association's newsletter, posted on MASC's Web site and included in media releases distributed statewide;
- given the winner's cup for one year, which is then returned to the Municipal Association for next year's awards presentation;
- given a plaque to keep permanently;
- honored during a local awards presentation* and
- spotlighted in SC Magazine and on ETV radio spots.

*new in 2007

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MASC and SC Press Association observe Sunshine Week

The Municipal Association of SC will partner once again with the South Carolina Press Association to mark Sunshine Week. The week is dedicated to recognizing the public's right to an open government.

During the week of March 11-17, television specials and newspaper articles will highlight the importance of freedom of information. MASC encourages all cities to participate in a refresher course on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in their cities. MASC will co-sponsor with the Press Association a one-hour satellite training primer on FOIA with ETV, SC School Boards Association and the SC Association of Counties. The seminar is March 15 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Visit MASC's Web site for viewing locations around the state.

As part of the week, historian Walter Edgar will discuss the roots of FOIA and talk with a journalist on his ETV Radio show at noon on March 9 (check listings at www.myetv.org). MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall also will write an editorial on the subject for distribution to daily and weekly newspapers. Cities will also receive a copy of the latest update of the SC Attorney General's FOIA guide.

Hometown Happenings, MASC's news service for municipalities as part of the *Hometown, SC* initiative, will include information about Sunshine Week in its

March packet. MASC encourages local leaders to write letters to the editor reiterating their city's commitment to open government. To assist them, the packet will offer resources for localizing Duvall's editorial.

During last year's event, municipalities across South Carolina observed the week in various ways. Duvall helped lead a discussion on FOIA and Sunshine Week during Spartanburg's City Council retreat. City councils in Georgetown and Lancaster both reviewed and discussed FOIA material provided by MASC.

William Rogers, executive director of the SC Press Association, said it is important for public officials to know the FOIA.

"First, it is an important law that is the underpinning of a democratic government. People need to know how public policy is made and how public dollars are spent. The FOIA guarantees this.

"Second, openness in government builds public confidence in government. By conducting business in public, a governmental body establishes credibility in the minds of the voters. When decisions are made behind closed doors, public confidence is lost," Rogers said.

Rogers said SC Attorney General Henry McMaster summed it up well when he said, "When in doubt disclose...when in doubt open the meeting."

Citizens must feel connected and have complete trust in their government, according to Duvall. "We're all in favor of doing the people's business in public," he said.

This is the second year the two associations have worked together to observe Sunshine Week. The Press Association and MASC have partnered on a number of training sessions and projects, Rogers said.

"We both share the common goal of good local government in South Carolina," he said. "Just as councils, boards and commissions have the role of making decisions for the public good, the press has the role of reporting on these actions to the citizens. And the press, dubbed the Fourth Estate, has the role of reporting on problems and making editorial comments."

Rogers noted that in the vast majority of cases, the Press Association and MASC agree on their interpretation of the state's FOIA.

"To have government of the people, by the people and for the people, the people have to know what is going on," he said. "Sunshine Week is a nationwide effort to focus on the importance of open government, not just for the press but for the people."



Classifieds

■ SC Appalachian Council of Governments is accepting applications for a GIS analyst. Submit letter of interest, resume and references to Carol Andersen, Director of Information Services, SC ACOG, PO Box 6668, Greenville, SC 29606, or e-mail andersen@scacog.org.

■ The City of Myrtle Beach is accepting applications for an assistant city attorney. Apply to the Human Resources Department located in the City Services Building, 921-A Oak St, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, call 843.918.1121. Applications are available at www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com.

■ The Town of Allendale is accepting applications for a police chief. Submit resume to DeWayne Ennis, Town Administrator, 1296 S. Main St, PO Box 551, Allendale, SC 29810.

■ The City of Clinton is accepting applications for a city manager. Send resume, salary requirements, three references and cover letter to Mayor Randy Randall, 404 North Broad Street, Clinton, SC 29325 by February 16, 2007.

Building positive working relationships with reporters

By Amy Geier Edgar

The relationship between reporters and municipal officials must be one of mutual respect and understanding to better work together and disseminate information to the public.

But how do we develop these positive relationships?

The key is being open and accessible. First, municipal officials should be prepared to provide basic information about their department or municipality.

“Know the basic facts of what you’re involved in,” said Jim Davenport, State House reporter for The Associated Press. “How many? How much? How long? What it does? I’m stunned when I ask someone who speaks for a group or company how many people work there, and they have to get back to me. A lack of basic product or service knowledge is a big problem.”

Still, it’s likely that there are times you won’t have certain facts at hand. In that case, find out the answers quickly and respond to reporters’ requests promptly.

Sometimes towns cannot afford their own public information officer (PIO), but they still need someone who can answer to the press.

Zane Wilson, reporter for The Myrtle Beach Sun News, recommends towns that cannot afford a full-time PIO should assign the duty to someone who is willing to do it as part of his job.

“For example, a fire captain in Georgetown is PIO for the entire city in emergencies, and he is always very open and honest and helpful,” Wilson said. “The towns do not have to have full-time people, but it would benefit them to have someone assigned so they can become familiar with their local press and know what is needed.”

Developing good relationships requires you to familiarize yourself with the reporter who will be covering your city or department. Newspapers and the wire service have reporters who specialize in certain areas, such as health care, education or government. You’re more likely to get coverage of an event if you pitch it to the appropriate person. And keep in touch with the reporter to maintain the relationship; give him a call even when nothing is going on.

It’s likely that there are times you won’t have certain facts at hand. In that case, find out the answers quickly and respond to reporters’ requests promptly.

It’s also very important to be available to the press. Provide your cell phone number, and get the cell phone numbers of the reporters who cover your issues, advises Aaron Gould Sheinin of The State. Don’t take hours to respond to a call; reporters have deadlines they must meet. When you’re out of town, let the reporter know who will be covering for you while you’re gone.

Public information officers also should be familiar with the Freedom of Information Act and how to comply.



Davenport says the public is entitled to see original versions of documents and select what might be copied. He also points out that state law requires only actual copying costs be charged for these documents. Davenport says it’s helpful for public officials to respond to FOI requests promptly, rather than waiting the full 15 days to respond just because the law allows it.

“Provide portions of the request that you can as quickly as you can,” he said. “It’s worth building that good will if you end up denying part of the request later.” The FOI law spells out what items a municipality cannot release, such as law enforcement records on informants, individuals’ social security numbers, contract for a property sale prior to being finalized.

Visit the research and resources section of the MASC Web site (<http://www.masc.sc/Resources/About.htm#FOIA>) for tips on working with reporters and complying with the FOIA. See story on page 9 for information about the upcoming FOIA training.

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

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strong partnerships with numerous local, state and federal agencies.

Shacker said the award brought further attention to the work of one of those partners, a developer who specializes in historic building renovations. The idea to renovate and reuse old buildings could benefit cities across the state, Shacker said.

In addition to bringing attention to Newberry and honoring the work of city staff, the award also recognized the contributions of the other governmental agencies that partnered on the project, Shacker added.

“It was a nice way to wrap up that project,” he said.

MASC mailed entry information in late January and placed the information on its Web site, www.masc.sc. The entry deadline is March 8. Judging will take place April 2 at the MASC offices in Columbia.

Tracking legislative activity - easy as 1-2-3

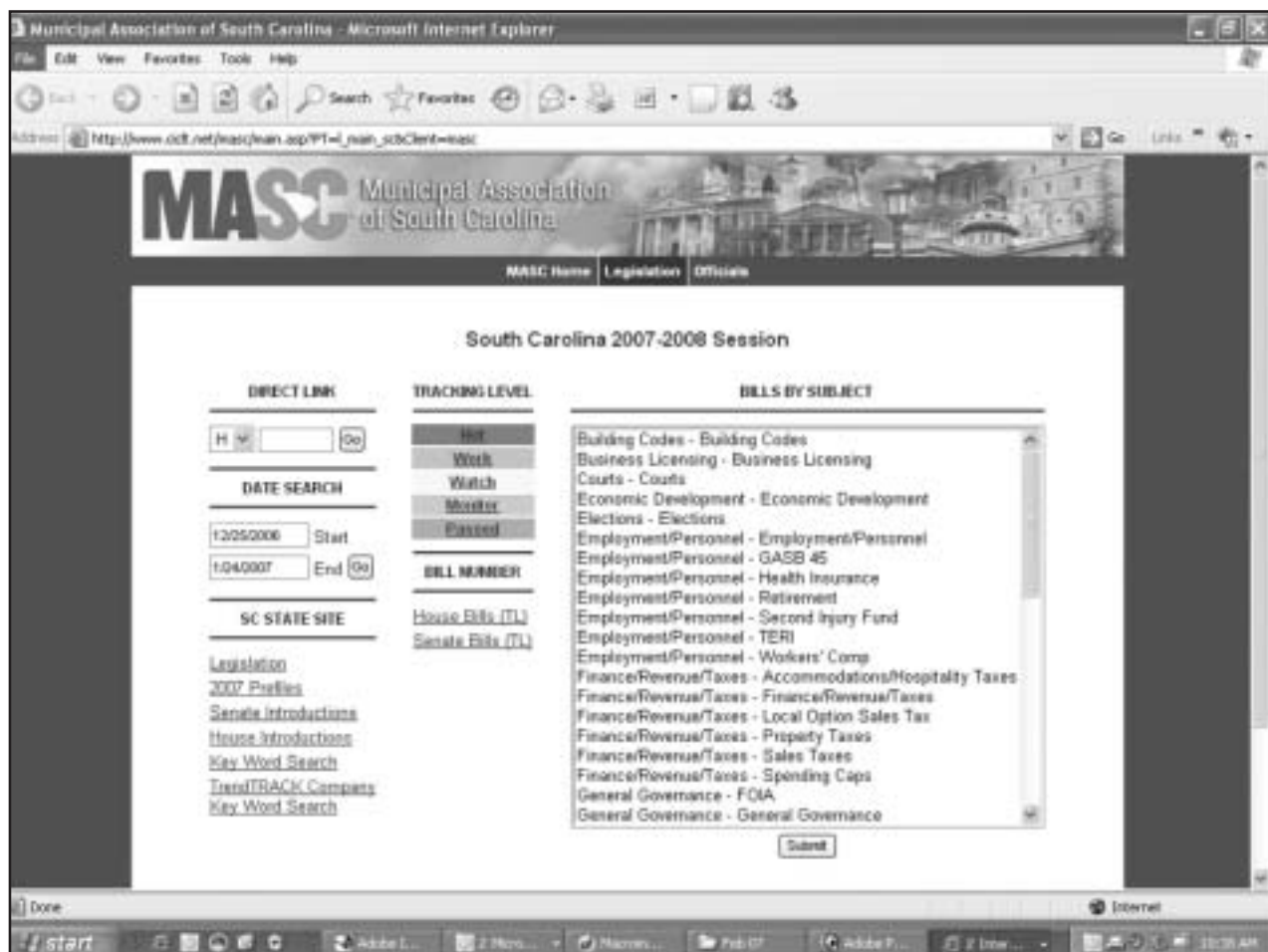
The Municipal Association of SC’s new legislative tracking system makes following daily legislative activities easier than ever!

In addition to the Friday reports with updates of each week’s activity, visitors to the MASC Web site can now sort

bills by topic, date, bill number and legislator who introduced the bill. The site is updated daily to reflect the most up-to-date information about what’s been introduced, committee action and floor activity.

Also, the new site has links to the state legislative Web site, Congressional activity and information about legislative actions in other states.

Visit www.masc.sc and click on the “Legislative Services” link.





Educational Opportunities

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **February 27**, will hold Sessions A and B at the Columbia Marriott. 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.

SC Other Retirement Benefits Investment Trust

■ **February 27**, will hold an informational meeting about GASB 45 and the new Trust at the Columbia Marriott from 1 – 3 p.m. (See article on page 3.)

MASC

■ **February 28**, will hold its *Hometown*, SC Legislative Action Day at the Columbia Marriott. (See article on page 1.)

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

■ **March 14-16**, will hold the spring session at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia. Topics include an overview of South Carolina government, the role of the clerk and procurement.

MASC

■ **March 15**, will co-sponsor a Sunshine Week Freedom of Information Act satellite seminar from 6 – 7:30 p.m. Visit MASC's Web site for viewing locations. (See related story on page 9.)

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **March 21-23**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Marriott Resort at Grand Dunes in Myrtle Beach. Topics include theft and fraud prevention, radio reads, rates survey and a customer service pre-conference workshop.

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **March 22**, will present "Basic Budgeting for Municipal Officials." The session will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of governments.

Hometown Connection

■ **March 27**, municipal officials from Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Marion and Williamsburg counties visit with their state legislators. Officials will meet at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 a.m.

Hometown Connection

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

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

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

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

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