

UPTOWN

Staff changes underway in preparation for leadership transition

With a new year comes preparation for the staff transitions that will take place when long-time Executive Director Howard Duvall retires on September 30. When Duvall announced his plans to retire, the Municipal Association board made the decision to name his successor at that time to ensure a smooth leadership transition.

"We are fortunate that Howard gave us ample notice to identify and hire a new executive director who could have substantial time to prepare to take on this new role," said Doug Echols, mayor of Rock Hill and immediate past board president who led the selection process.

In February 2006, the board named Miriam Hair to succeed Duvall. Hair is

deputy executive director of the Association and has been on staff since 1985. Under Hair's leadership, the Municipal Association has seen tremendous growth in its programs and services. She led the development of the Association's 10 affiliate organizations and created the Municipal Elected Officials Institute, a certification and training program for the state's municipal elected officials.

Hair took the lead in creating a unique partnership with a private technology firm to cost-effectively provide technology services to South Carolina cities and towns. She guided the development and growth of the Association's collection programs, which are essential

to the financial strength of both the Municipal Association and its members.

"Miriam has been involved in the development of every major initiative and program at the Association over the past 20 years," said Fred Cavanaugh, Association president and mayor of Aiken. "She has a tremendous depth of knowledge about the challenges South Carolina's cities and towns face, and our members are fortunate to have her leadership to carry on the strong tradition of customer service and member support established by Howard and his predecessors."

At the December 2007 board meeting, Hair announced she was appointing

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The countdown to *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day

Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day is just around the corner, and the countdown is on to February 20 when more than 500 local leaders will swarm to the State House to promote the importance of strong cities to the state's economic competitiveness.

The morning session features a keynote address by noted national columnist Neal Peirce whose

commentary on issues related to the growth of cities and towns will set the stage for a discussion of the Association's "Supporting Competitiveness" legislative agenda. The briefing on the municipal legislative agenda will focus on how proposed legislation supports or hampers our hometown efforts in South Carolina.

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Reba Campbell, the Association's director of advocacy and communications, to move October 1 into the position of deputy executive director.



Reba Campbell

"Reba came to the Association in 2005 with more than 20 years of experience in government relations, communications and policy development in South Carolina and

Washington, D.C. and her background has been a perfect fit for our leadership team," said Hair.

Prior to joining MASC, Campbell held leadership positions at SCETV for 10 years where she directed state and federal lobbying efforts and communications. She also served as the ETV interim president for a year. Most recently, Campbell was the executive director of a statewide non-profit foundation. She also has 10 years of experience on Capitol Hill.

At the Municipal Association, Campbell has led development of *Hometown, SC*, the long-range initiative to promote the value of South Carolina

cities and towns. She also oversees the Association's media relations, communications and community outreach. In early 2007, Campbell took on responsibility for the Association's lobbying and technical assistance programs.

"Reba's experience in communications, advocacy and community outreach has been invaluable in leading the development of *Hometown, SC*," Hair said. "We are already seeing results from our new approach to grassroots outreach and lobbying by involving community leaders to advocate on behalf of strong cities. Reba's diverse experience at the state and federal levels plus her proven ability to develop community partnerships will continue to be a real asset to the Association going forward."

Hair and Campbell will work closely with Duvall over the next eight months to ensure a smooth transition in all areas of the Association's operations. Over the past year, the Association already has made several new hires to get the right team in place for this transition.

Duvall's depth of knowledge on municipal issues has long been a tremendous asset to the Association's technical assistance program and at the State House. To support these areas after his retirement, the Association hired Warren Harley as government affairs liaison in 2006 and Ed Schafer as legislative counsel in 2007. Harley, former assistant

city administrator in Orangeburg, has now been given the responsibility to lead the Association's technical assistance program. Schafer, with previous experience lobbying on behalf of local government issues, will also provide technical assistance support while taking the lead on legislative issues.

"Recognizing technical assistance support is an important member service, we have added a field service position for the Upstate and assigned Wayne George, the current field services manager, to the Lowcountry based out of the Mullins area," Hair announced. The new field services manager will be based in the Upstate.

"Ideally this position will be filled by someone with city manager experience," Hair said. "The board's approval to have Wayne, a former mayor, and an experienced city manager on the road every day talking with our members expands further our ability to serve our members." George will continue to oversee the administration of the Association's supplemental insurance program.

"Cities and towns in South Carolina have a major role to play in the future prosperity of our state," Hair said. "We have a great team that will continue to support our members and help them achieve their long-term vision."

Uptown: Extreme makeover

Watch your mailboxes in March. The Municipal Association will debut a new look for the monthly *Uptown* with the March issue. Actually, the makeover is more than just cosmetic. We have made changes in how we choose the stories we publish and added new features to make the newsletter an even greater resource for municipal officials. We will preview the new look during the Opening Session at February's *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day.



Classifieds

■ The Town of Surfside Beach is accepting applications for a public works director. For more information, contact Jan Lewis at 843.913.6111 or JLewis@surfsidebeach.org.

the countdown continued from cover

Following the morning sessions, participants will travel to the State House to meet their legislators. A strong showing of municipal officials is important to reiterating that “Cities Mean Business.” Come prepared to talk with your hometown delegation about why your city or town is important to a strong local economy.

After the trip to the State House, *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day participants will hear from Dr. Jim Rex during lunch. He will address 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.

The afternoon first session of *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day will showcase the many ways colleges and universities of all types work with their local municipal leaders to help meet the goal of increasing the state’s competitiveness.

“Higher education institutions and cities mean business to our local communities,” said Fred Cavanaugh, mayor of Aiken and Municipal Association president. “This panel of heavy-hitting college and university leaders will spotlight how cities and towns of all sizes collaborate with their local higher education institutions and local businesses to help draw ‘new economy’ workers to their hometowns and their regions.”

More than a discussion on typical town and gown relationships, this panel will examine how collaborative efforts between South Carolina hometowns and their local higher education institutions can help drive the growth of the knowledge economy. The discussion will run the gamut from exploring the importance of the City of Columbia’s partnership with USC’s Innovista research campus to looking at the value a private institution such as Newberry College brings to the town to examining the importance of technical colleges to cities and the regions around them.

Panelists include Dr. Anthony DiGiorgio, president of Winthrop University; Dr. Caroline Whitson, president of Columbia College; Dr. John Parks, director of Innovista at USC; Dr. Barry Russell, president of SC Technical College System; and Dr. Mitchell Zais, president of Newberry College. The discussion will be moderated by Jim Reynolds, chair of New Carolina’s education committee.

The final afternoon session features an overview of the ongoing efforts to use the “Cities Mean Business” campaign as part of the Association’s *Hometown, SC* initiative to promote the value of strong cities and towns. Hometown leaders who successfully used the “Cities Mean Business” materials during the February kick-off month will showcase their best practices. Also, Municipal Association staff will discuss plans for the ongoing campaign.

Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day concludes with the traditional reception at the Marriott, always one of the best attended events of the legislative year. When you meet with your legislators at the State House remind them about the reception. Participants interested in taking legislators to dinner after the reception can find information about local restaurants on the Municipal Association Web site.

For more information about *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day, visit www.masc.sc; the deadline for registering online or by mail is February 7. On-site registration will be available for those who miss the deadline.

Don’t forget February is “Cities Mean Business” Month

Before *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day on February 20, the Municipal Association encourages all cities and towns to participate in creating a state-wide awareness about the important relationship between municipalities and their hometown businesses.

Five ways to celebrate “Cities Mean Business” Month, regardless of the size of your hometown:

- 1 Pass a proclamation declaring February as “Cities Mean Business” Month in your city or town.
- 2 Co-author an editorial for your newspaper with your local chamber president.
- 3 Host a breakfast for downtown businesses.
- 4 Spotlight a local business in your monthly newsletter.
- 5 Write a letter to your legislative delegation, explaining the strong relationship your city or town has with its local business community.



Visit the Municipal Association Web site at www.masc.sc/hometownsc/citiesmeanbusiness.htm for additional ideas to celebrate “Cities Mean Business” Month or to download a sample proclamation, press release or editorial.

All aboard for the 2008 Municipal Achievement Awards

Don't miss the train! Blow your whistle and share your hometown's success stories by entering the 2008 Municipal Achievement Awards.

Winning entries will receive statewide recognition and will be:

- Featured in a press release sent to their local media outlets
- Congratulated through an ad placed in their local newspaper
- Recognized at the Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast in July and given 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 2008 Achievement Awards winners' brochure
- Publicized in the Municipal Association's newsletter, posted on the Association's Web site and included in press 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.

The submission deadline is March 7. Judging will take place March 31. For more information or to view past winning projects, visit www.masc.sc/misc/achievement.htm.

Calling for Main Street inspiration!

Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members' achievement and success in downtown revitalization. Nominations for the 2008 Inspiration Awards is open to all Main Street South Carolina members. Award categories include design, promotion, economic restructuring, organization and service.

The Municipal Association will recognize Inspiration Award recipients with a video presentation during the Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast July 19. Also, winners are publicized in the Municipal Association's newsletter, posted on the Association's Web site and included in media releases distributed statewide.

Inspiration Award nominations are due March 28. For a nomination form, more information or to view past winners, visit www.masc.sc/affiliates/Main%20Street/msdescription.htm.



News Briefs



■ The National League of Cities is receiving nominations for the 2008 Awards for Municipal Excellence. The award recognizes outstanding programs that improve the quality of life in America's communities. Visit www.nlc.org, under "Resources for Cities" and "Awards and Recognition" for a nomination packet and more information. Nominated cities must be members of NLC. Nominations must be postmarked by May 1, 2008. For more information, call 202.626.3130 or e-mail awards@nlc.org.

■ The SC Budget and Control Board has released the guidelines for the 2008 Competitive Grants Program. Legislation passed in the 2007 session requires counties and municipalities to report annually on the expenditure of the funds received until the funds are expended. Learn more about the grant program at www.bcb.sc.gov/BCB/comp_grants/BCBcomp-grants.phtm.

■ The City of Aiken received the South Carolina Athletic Program of the Year award for agencies serving populations between 25,000 and 50,000. Among the programs of special note: the newly formed Girls' Youth Volleyball program, the Youth Baseball program, the 2007 Dixie Junior Boys World Series, and the Weeks Tennis Center. This is the second award in the past three years for the City of Aiken.

South Carolina cities aid others in need

By Amy Geier Edgar

When a city faces disaster, other cities often step up to offer assistance in their time of need.

After Hurricane Katrina tore into the Gulf Coast in August 2005, South Carolina municipalities sprang into action. Municipal officials in the Palmetto State recognized the need for help, having seen the devastation wrought by Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

City officials from across South Carolina traveled to Louisiana and Mississippi to help restore basic services.

Some municipalities sent law enforcement, firefighting and search and rescue personnel. Others helped to clear debris.

South Carolina officials also sought long-term ways to help. Horry County and its municipalities adopted the town of Waveland, Miss. Municipal employees from the Grand Strand helped to restore

water and sewer lines to the area and assisted with public safety needs.

Two years later, their involvement continues in the Gulf Coast. The clean-up assistance helped Waveland begin the process of rebuilding. But the neighboring town of Pass Christian, Miss., still suffers lingering effects from the storm.

“They’re still in bad shape down there. People are still living in trailers... houses are still in disrepair.”

Based on a recommendation from the International City/County Management Association, a team from Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, and Horry and Georgetown counties traveled to the small resort town to offer aid in October.

North Myrtle Beach heavy equipment operator Johnny Bruton helped on

the trip. “It’s hard to believe it’s two years later and there are still people who need help,” he told *The (Myrtle Beach) Sun News*.

Public works officials spent two weeks cleaning out the town’s drainage system. Pass Christian, located 55 miles east of New Orleans, had about 23

people in its public works department before Hurricane Katrina. Today the department numbers six, according to Doc Rehm, a member of the Myrtle Beach team.

“They’re still in bad shape down there,” said Rehm,

superintendent of the sewer division for the City of Myrtle Beach. “People are still living in trailers... houses are still in disrepair.”

Municipalities have a responsibility to assist each other in times of need, Rehm said. “It could happen to any one of us,” he said.



Hometown Happenings

March

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.

Let the Municipal Association know if you participate in a *Hometown Happening*. Call Casey Fields at 803.933.1256.

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 the week of March 16-22, open government and freedom of information are stressed in newspaper articles and television specials. Pass a council resolution or write a letter to the editor reiterating your city’s commitment to open government.

Read Across America Day - The recognized day is Monday, March 3, but the National Education Association encourages everyone to increase awareness of the importance of reading all month long. A great way to motivate children to read is by partnering with local schools to have mayors or councilmembers read in classrooms.

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

High-speed Internet access for all South Carolinians supported by Broadband Study Committee

By Miriam Hair, Deputy Director

The interests of South Carolina cities and towns were represented on a legislative study committee that assessed the state's broadband communications infrastructure and the need for additional broadband services in unserved and underserved areas around the state.

The Broadband Study Committee was established to evaluate how to best use excess spectrum licensed to SC Educational Television, Greenville Technical College and Trident Technical College.

If the General Assembly acts on the report by the Broadband Study Committee, a non-profit organization would promote the deployment and adoption of broadband services in South Carolina. In addition, South Carolina would lease excess spectrum capacity owned by the state to a commercial wireless Internet provider. This action would offer additional high-speed Internet access to all South Carolinians.

In 2004, the FCC mandated all educational instructional channel providers transition from analog to digital transmissions. This opened the spectrum to other uses. SCETV holds 67 licenses from the Federal Communications Commission to broadcast educational school programs statewide. Greenville Technical and Trident Technical Colleges each hold one license.

The FCC is encouraging license holders to the lease up to 95 percent of this spectrum to wireless Internet providers to increase the availability of broadband services. South Carolina must submit its plan to the FCC by January 2009 and implement it by fall 2010. The state will lose its ability to use the spectrum, and

the FCC will take control of the licenses if the state fails to meet these timelines.

The committee recommended the state contract with a national consulting firm to determine the most effective way to lease a percentage of the WiMax spectrum that will not be needed by SCETV as it transitions from analog to digital services.

Leasing the state-owned spectrum at fair market value is important to the committee to ensure that a new commercial provider to South Carolina is not given an unfair advantage over current providers.

South Carolina is unique because it holds licenses to spectrum that covers the entire state. The state can use the excess capacity to deploy high-speed Internet access to every corner of the state. Rural areas without access could be served more cost effectively with this wireless alternative and areas currently served could see lower prices for Internet service as another provider enters the market. The lower the price, the more South Carolinians could afford the service.

In addition to being an alternative to wired cable and DSL service, WiMAX technology can use the educational spectrum to provide mobile wireless access, which is the next revolution in broadband. Cities and towns could use wireless mobile access to read utility meters remotely and communicate with public safety personnel while responding to an emergency or patrolling the city. These are just a few of the advantages of wireless mobile services versus wireline access.

The committee's recommendation of creating a non-profit to receive data from all current Internet providers will help South Carolina determine what areas of the state are not adequately served. This non-profit will also facilitate discussions among state and local elected officials, businesses, broadband service providers and citizens. These conversations will help the state define its vision for broadband deployment not just for today but for years down the road.

While serving on the committee, I have been struck by the deliberate steps other states including North Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia and Tennessee are taking to ensure deployment of broadband services statewide while there has been no coordinated effort in South Carolina. Technology is changing quickly, and for South Carolina to successfully compete in the world economy, our citizens, schools, local governments and private industry must have access to the latest technology.

Mayors and councilmembers must begin to talk to state legislators and encourage them to pass both recommendations from the committee. Many citizens in our rural cities and towns don't have access to broadband service, while others cannot afford the service that is offered. School children have access while at school but don't have access at home. This must change. Adopting both recommendations is a good start to solving the problem.

Hair represented municipalities on the Broadband Study Committee.

Hometown budgets impacted by decreased state general fund

“Trickle-down economics” was the buzzword in the 1980s to describe economic policies perceived to primarily benefit the wealthy; today however, the term is still appropriate to describe how the national and state economies “trickle down” to affect hometown budgets.

“It is important for municipal officials to be aware of changes occurring in either the economy or the tax code,” explained Melissa Carter, Municipal Association’s research analyst. “The impact on municipalities from the state general fund is multi-faceted.”

For example, a reduction in the state’s general fund causes a reduction to the Local Government Fund. The LGF equals four and one-half percent of the previous year’s general fund. It is an important revenue source for municipalities, especially in light of recent property tax limitations resulting from Act 388. “We are still watching for the unintended fiscal impacts Act 388 will have on us,” Carter said.

The growth rate for the state general fund is expected to decrease dramatically after a five-year high in fiscal year 2006.

The 9.7 percent growth rate in fiscal year 2006 reflected stock market gains and a booming real estate market. The state’s Board of Economic Advisors estimates an -0.2 percent revenue growth rate for fiscal year 2008 and only 3.2 percent growth for fiscal year 2009.

The estimated negative growth rate can be traced back to several State House actions in recent years. The General Assembly eliminated the sales tax on food, causing an estimated \$135 million decrease in state revenue. Legislators also added a provision to protect the revenue for the Education Improvement Act, resulting in an additional \$26 million loss. The state general fund took a final hit of \$86 million with the elimination of individual income taxes for the 2.5 percent bracket.

The modest 3.2 percent estimated growth rate for fiscal year 2009 is a reflection of a slowly recovering economy. The rebounding of the stock market and lowering of the interest rates by the Federal Reserve is behind some of this increase from the current year. South Carolina’s

chief economist, Dr. William Gillespie, said, “The value of the dollar has also fallen against many world currencies following the interest rate cut.”

The more federal and state coffers are squeezed; the more programs and services they will cut, leaving residents to turn to their government leaders closest to home – municipal officials – to fill the void.

State general fund growth rates for the past five years

FY 09*	3.2 %
FY 08*	-0.2 % Decrease in food tax to 0%, income tax cut
FY 07	8.2 % Decrease in food tax from 5% to 3%
FY 06	9.7 % Stock market gains, booming real estate market
FY 05	7.8 %

** estimate by the SC Board of Economic Advisors*

Budget preparation tip: Clearing up the revenue forecast

By Howard Duvall, MASC Executive Director

Good revenue forecasting is a combination of good data and good judgment often refined through years of experience. A close look at the revenue sources used by your city and the historical trends for each source should give you valuable information on what revenue you can reasonably expect for the next fiscal year.

Consider any expected fluctuations in revenues and look at new sources of revenue your city may have available. Most importantly, remember to be conservative in your projections!

Increasing millage

Property tax millage increases are now capped by state law. (SC Code 6-1-320) The millage may only be raised by the average rate of increase in the consumer price index for the last calendar year plus the percentage of increase in population for your municipality. The Board of Economic Advisors will set the CPI, and the U.S. Census Bureau will forecast the population increase. The Municipal Association will distribute this information as it becomes available and post it online at www.masc.sc.

For more information about municipal revenue sources, refer to the “Handbook for Municipal Officials” (www.masc.sc/resources/publications.htm).

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government will offer its core course – “Basic Budgeting” – on March 20 via satellite. For more information, visit www.masc.sc/Education/MEO.htm or contact Kili Gilmore at 803.933.1254 or kgilmore@masc.sc.



Educational Opportunities

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **March 4**, will hold its first quarterly meeting at the Columbia Conference Center. One of the topics will be standardizing M34 reporting.

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

■ **March 5-7**, will hold the its spring session at the Radisson Hotel in Columbia. Topics include business/written communication, advances in technology and human resource management.

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **March 12-14**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Myrtle Beach. Topics include internal customer service and customer service standards.

SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **March 20**, will hold the "Basic Budgeting for Municipal Officials" core course via satellite to the 10 regional councils of governments.

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 a.m.

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **April 1**, will hold a Legislative Reception at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia.

Hometown Connection

■ **April 29**, municipal officials from Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, 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.

Managers' Meeting

■ **May 2**, the Municipal Association will hold its quarterly managers' meeting at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia.

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



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