

UPTOWN

Collect tools to build stronger cities at MASC's Annual Meeting

Special program targets first-timers

Sometimes, local government officials need heavy tools, such as annexation ordinances, to construct appropriate municipal boundaries. At other times, a councilmember may need a precision tool to whittle numbers into a balanced budget. Additional tools, found in sharp legal advice, are required when it comes to law enforcement ethics or following new privacy laws.

These tools and more can be obtained by attending the First-Timers' Program during MASC's 63rd Annual

Meeting, July 10-13 at the Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. As a first-timer, you will also receive an Annual Meeting overview, when MASC staff will review key logistics to make your stay at the meeting productive and comfortable.

The program for first-timers begins Thursday, July 10 at 3:45 p.m. and continues until 5:00 p.m. Enjoy light refreshments while you open your toolbox filled with MASC resources necessary for building stronger cities

and towns. Designed just for you, this program is highly interactive, so bring the top challenges facing your local government for discussion. We'll recommend the best gear to use when you return home to tackle these challenges.

Better yet, you just may find additional tools to add to your collection during other Annual Meeting sessions. If you find budgets an overwhelming challenge in your municipality, attend Thursday morning's "Preparing a Budget from Scratch" and learn basic budgeting techniques, from the planning process and research to building the budget document. Is your city challenged by poor annexation policies?

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Telecommunications questions unanswered as legislature adjourns

The General Assembly adjourned at 5:00 p.m. on June 5, ending the first year of its two-year session. When legislators reconvene in January, they can pick up where they left off on bills in committee or on the floor calendar. Below is a summary of bills of municipal interest signed into law and the status of several key bills MASC is tracking.

Telecommunications

Thanks to the efforts of Senator Tom Moore (Aiken) and the support of our municipal officials communicating with their senators, the Senate passed legislation increasing the telecommunications business license tax from .75% to 1.25%. It also eliminated the requirement for the Board of Economic Advisors (BEA) to conduct a study to establish the final rate. Unfortunately, the House referred the bill (H3530) to the House, Labor and Commerce Committee to consider when the General Assembly returns in January.

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■ In May, the S.C. Community Development Association elected its 2003-2004 board: **President** — Henrietta Woodward, Lowcountry Housing & Economic Development Foundation; **Secretary/Treasurer** — Harold Young, Orangeburg County; **First Vice President** — Carol Mason McMeekin, Catawba Regional Council of Governments; **Second Vice President** — Valeria Jackson, City of Columbia; **Third Vice President** — Howard Garland, City of Mullins; **Fourth Vice President** — Darryl Bullock, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments; **Immediate Past President** — Kimberly Herndon, Florence/Darlington Technical College; **Ex-Officio Members** — Bonnie Ammons of the S.C. Department of Commerce, Valarie Williams of the S.C. State Housing Finance & Development Authority, Larry Floyd of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Patricia Dixon of the Economic Development Administration.

■ In May, the S.C. Local Government Assurance Group elected its board members for 2003-2004. John Smithson, personnel director for North Myrtle Beach, was elected to a three-year term. Steve Thomas, administrator of Conway, and John Yow, administrator of Orangeburg, were re-elected for three-year terms. Olin Gambrell, administrator of Edgefield/Johnston, and Linda Tucker, administrator of Isle of Palms, have been re-elected as chair and vice chair, respectively.

■ Greenville is one of five cities to receive a 2003 Great American Main Street Award for its successful efforts in revitalizing its downtown area through historic preservation. National Trust for Historic Preservation honored the City for its work in revitalizing its downtown since the mid-1970s.

Tools continued from cover

Attend "Strategies for Stronger Cities" during Friday's opening session to hear annexation and smart growth theories from David Rusk, former mayor of Albuquerque, N.M. Are social issues affecting your workforce, business practices or police relations? Plan on bringing your fellow councilmembers to the Delegates' Luncheon or to "Diversity as a Community Asset." Discover why Jesse Washington, S.C. Human Affairs commissioner, thinks South Carolina's greatest asset is its people and their diversity. Is your town or city falling behind in the area of technology? Visit the Welcome and Technology Center for the latest in wireless communication

services that will continue to advance your municipality into the 21st century.

The First-Timers' Program wraps up Saturday with lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. You must attend the Thursday meeting to participate in Saturday's lunch. By the end of the conference, you will be on your way to making long-lasting, professional relationships with other first-timers and with MASC staff and board members. Networking is the greatest tool to have when working on challenges in local government, according to Howard Duvall, MASC executive director. Your phone list is your best asset.

Annual Meeting special events

Opening Event — South Carolina Style

Thursday, July 10, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Sample a plentiful array of food and drinks, then dance under the stars to the music of the original Showmen, known for such hits as "Sweet Beach Music," "Shaggin' the Night Away" and the beach music classic "39-21-40 Shape."

Dance featuring The Rhondels

Friday, July 11, 8:00 - 11:00 p.m.

A Friday night at Myrtle Beach would not be complete without shagging to your favorite beach tunes. Hailed as a musical institution, The Rhondels are best known for their beach music hits "Hold Back the Night," "I've Been Hurt" and "What Kinda Fool Do You Think I Am?" Dessert will be served.

President's Reception and Banquet featuring the Magic of Mike Super

Saturday, July 12, 6:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Talented and versatile, Mike Super's magic and illusion production is the one stop for absolute amazement. Watch this captivating illusionist make it snow from his own hands, levitate an audience member and breathe life into a piece of paper, while making it dance in a stranger's hands.

Spiritual Breakfast featuring the Jarvis Brothers

Sunday, July 13, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

The Jarvis Brothers revive authentic and uplifting spirituals passed down through their family. The quintet has received numerous awards for its music, including the South Carolina Folk Heritage Award. These gentlemen excel at a cappella arrangements of gospel and traditional American music.

Legislature continued from cover

Current law dictates municipalities charge a .75% telecommunications tax effective January 1, 2004. MASC opposes the .75% rate and calculates more than 69 municipalities will suffer revenue losses.

The law also calls for the BEA to conduct an analysis and calculate the final telecommunications tax rate by using the revenues received by municipalities for the years 1999 through 2003. The final rate will be .75% or the BEA rate, whichever is less. If the study determines the rate needs to be higher than .75%, a joint committee from the House and Senate would review the rate study and introduce a joint resolution setting the final rate.

With the January 1 implementation date approaching and no BEA report, MASC is concerned about municipal liability for collecting at the .75% rate. If the BEA study settles on a rate lower than .75%, municipalities may be required to refund the difference.

During the next few months, MASC will work with the BEA, the telecommunications industry and the courts (if necessary) to reach an acceptable solution.

Budget

The General Assembly-approved budget included a 107.5% state assessment on municipal court fines and two new surcharges. The budget calls for a \$100 surcharge on all misdemeanor and felony drug offenses and a \$25 surcharge to all traffic offenses written with a uniform traffic citation. The surcharge on drug offenses will be used for drug treatment programs in the 16 judicial circuits. Municipal courts must add these new surcharges on all offenses written beginning July 1, 2003. Court administration will provide instructions for collecting these new surcharges and remitting them to the state.

The Local Government Fund was fully funded at 4.5% of the previous

year's General Fund revenues. However, the Local Government Fund amount will decrease for the 2003-2004 budget year to \$7,976,358 because of a decrease in state revenues.

Private Property Rights (S204, R91)

If requested by a property owner, appeals of decisions by the zoning appeals board and certain cases before the planning commission must go through a mediation process. The municipal council must approve the mediated settlement. Even if mediation is requested, the property owner retains his right of appeal to the courts.

In addition to mediated appeals, the law requires appointed officials and employees dealing with land use issues to receive training, six hours initially and three hours annually thereafter. The training requirement will be implemented in phases beginning January 1, 2005 for municipalities with populations greater than 70,000. Municipalities with populations of 35,000 to 70,000 must comply by January 1, 2006. Municipalities with populations of less than 35,000 must comply by January 1, 2007. The governor signed S204 into law June 2. MASC will develop appropriate training once the oversight committee develops specific educational requirements.

Utilities (H3429, R167)

A municipality can hold landlords responsible for their tenants' gas, electric, water, sewer or garbage charges if the property is a multi-unit building consisting of four or more units served by a master meter or a single connection. Last year, legislation passed preventing the utility from holding the landlord responsible in any situation.

Legislators will address the following bills of municipal interest when they return in January.

H3903 (Capital Project Sales Tax) allows a municipality to enact a one-cent sales tax for specific capital projects for a specified period of time. *MASC supports.*

H3555 (Hog/Poultry Regulations) requires a local government permit relating to the production of livestock and poultry must not impose a more restrictive or burdensome requirement than a state statute or regulation. *MASC opposes.*

H3448 (At-Will Employment) clarifies when a contract exists between an employee and employer and when it does not. *The current language protects municipal governments. MASC supports.*

H3291 (Bonded Indebtedness) changes the referendum requirements to increase the bonded indebtedness of a political subdivision or school district. *MASC opposes.*

H3558 (Vested Rights to Property Owners) clarifies when a property owner has a vested right to develop his property. *MASC opposes the bill with its current language.*

S19 (Law Enforcement Workers' Compensation Presumption) establishes the presumption that a cardiac arrest suffered by a law enforcement officer within 48 hours of leaving work is work-related, therefore entitling the employee to file a workers' compensation claim. *MASC does not oppose the bill's current language.*

S280 (Cash Compensation For Non-Conforming Uses) amends the Comprehensive Planning Act of 1994 to require local governments to pay cash compensation to owners of property or structures that have been deemed non-conforming uses under the zoning ordinance. *MASC opposes.*

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Focus on Technology

Lancaster reaping benefits of outsourcing technology services

Court Administrator Helen Sowell was a little skeptical when the City of Lancaster decided to contract with an outside company for computer services.

"I had reservations at the beginning because we are a small town," she said. "I thought we would save money by doing everything internally." Two years later, Sowell is singing the praises of VC3, Lancaster's new technology management group.

"It was a turnkey job for us," she said. "The installation went very smoothly; we got the right things at the right time. VC3 gave us a better value for our dollar."

Lancaster hired VC3, on the recommendation of the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC), which collaborates with the technology group to serve member cities and towns.

"Our objective was to increase the level of technology within the City in order to increase reliability, efficiency and communication," said Jim Wilson, the City's finance director.

While City leadership knew it wanted to improve the way it used technology, it did not have a roadmap to do so. Based on the City's directions, needs and budget limitations, VC3 provided an assessment of the City's existing infrastructure and outlined a three-year timeline for implementation.

"What would have taken Lancaster five years, took two years because of the vision of their finance director and support from their city administrator," explained Karl McCollester, VC3's government accounts manager in Lancaster.

City Administrator Steve Willis said he sees savings in contracting externally for this expertise rather than building a department internally for information technology (IT).

"If I had hired a full staff to perform at the level and caliber of VC3, I would

have paid more," he said. "With VC3, we only pay for the specific hours we need their help." The relationship also gave Lancaster access to a wide array of expertise, from network administration to programming to IT project management.

"It cost us some money," Willis concluded. "But VC3 is definitely a worthwhile service that will continue to offer a positive, ongoing process for us."

Since contracting with VC3 for IT services, Lancaster has made great strides in moving its technology infrastructure forward. The City has upgraded its police department and courts administration software packages, connected City buildings by use of a virtual network, upgraded many of its computers and servers and has implemented a Citywide e-mail system. Together, these improvements have decreased

the number of computer-related issues within the City and have made communication between City departments easier and more efficient.

"We used to do memos; now we correspond by e-mail," Sowell said. "It's a whole new world."

Wilson agreed. "It's a real time-saver. The investment has been great."

In prior years, Lancaster outsourced computer support and allowed individual departments to contract this service on their own. In VC3's assessment, it was noted this led to varying levels of service quality without any coordination between departments. In an attempt to streamline this effort, Lancaster hired VC3 to provide support services to all departments.

"Doing so enabled the City to better plan where to prioritize service

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15-minute technology demonstrations

A diverse selection of mini-presentations will be offered throughout MASC's Annual Meeting in the Welcome and Technology Center. Through these demonstrations, attendees can get a snapshot view of the latest technology applications for local governments.

Thursday, July 10

2:15 p.m.
Has Your Web Site Changed Lately?

2:45 p.m.
Paperless Government

3:15 p.m.
Wireless Connection of City Facilities

3:45 p.m.
Wireless Mobile Technology: It's More Than What You Think

Friday, July 11

11:00 a.m.
Protecting the Public's Information

11:30 a.m.
Create a Technology Roadmap for Your Municipality

1:30 p.m.
Managing Technology on a Budget

2:45 p.m.
Paying Bills Online — The Next Step in Customer Service

Saturday, July 12

10:00 a.m.
Accepting Credit Cards: The Price is Right

11:30 a.m.
Ask MASC

12:45 p.m.
Serving Citizens 24-7

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and to begin to look at the City's technology from an organized standpoint," McCollester explained.

Communication has not only improved between City departments, but it has also improved with the county and other outside agencies.

"Access to the county's GIS is up and running, and staff can access a county map or a tax card now by using the Internet," Willis said. "Before, we lost staff time and energy in having to run over to the county offices, park the car and look up the information in their office."

With solid infrastructure in place, Lancaster is looking forward to improving communication with its citizens. The City seeks to implement its first Web site and a Service Request Module. The module will provide a mechanism for the City to receive inquiries and requests from its citizens online.

Building technology or improving it takes changing a mindset, according to Wilson: "You need to understand that a computer will not last for 10 years," he said.

According to Lancaster officials, technology needs to be made an annual budgeting priority — not considered a one-time expense. Some other items may need to be put on hold to fund technology needs.

Business licensing training program graduates sixteen



2003 BLOA Training Program graduates (listed in alphabetical order): Betty Anderson, Town of Irmo; Deborah Blanton, City of Loris; Carrol Busbee, City of Aiken; Georgia Cohen, Town of Fairfax; Pat Essing, Town of Surfside Beach; David Hurt, Town of Mount Pleasant; Laurie Lane, City of Hartsville; Sonya Lee, Town of Lexington; Alma Maner, Town of Allendale; Crystal McGhee, City of North Myrtle Beach; Leonard Moore, Charleston County; Sharon Odom, City of Barnwell; Denise Reider, City of Hartsville; Tiffany Smalls, City of North Charleston; Donna Todd, City of Loris; Jewell Waters, Town of Batesburg-Leesville.

Sixteen people graduated from the S.C. Business Licensing Officials Association (BLOA) Training Program. The three-year program is designed to improve the professional and administrative skills of participating licensing officials through a series of educational sessions.

Completion of the program is a prerequisite for attaining the Accredited in Business Licensing (ABL) designation. Successful candidates must also achieve

certain experience/professional development levels and pass a comprehensive examination.

BLOA, an affiliate of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, helps members remedy the problems associated with administering and enforcing the local business and professional license tax. BLOA addresses these issues through its training sessions, listserv and newsletter.

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H4169 (DHEC Regulations — Septic Tanks) approves amendments to DHEC regulation R2830 of subdivision water supply and sewage treatment disposal systems. *MASC opposes.*

H3649 (Increase Taxes or Fees) requires a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly or any political subdivisions of the state before any

type of tax or fee can be imposed or increased. *MASC opposes.*

H3658 (Hazardous Recreation Facilities) amends the Tort Claims Act by defining hazardous recreation facilities and extending tort liability coverage to governmental entities responsible for these types of facilities. *MASC supports.*

H3223 (Alcoholic Beverage Establishments — Hours of Operation) hinders local governments' ability to impose more restrictive hours of operation on certain establishments. *MASC opposes.*

For more information on legislation of municipal interest, visit MASC's Web site at www.masc.sc.

SCCDA recognizes community development excellence

The S.C. Community Development Association (SCCDA) recognized excellence in community development by presenting its Hettie Rickett Award to Charles E. Gardner and its Award of Excellence to Oconee County during its Annual Meeting in May.

Hettie Rickett Award

Annually, the Hettie Rickett Award honors a community development volunteer, a staff member or an official who went above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference in their hometown. This year, SCCDA presented the award to Charles Gardner, a 30-year advocate for lower-income communities.

Growing up in a lower-income community in Greenville, Gardner has dedicated his adult life to empowering people in these communities. He has accomplished this mainly by providing access to affordable home ownership. He also worked to improve residents' lives by providing special programs within their communities.

Over the years, Gardner has mastered how to make this happen: pulling together community resources. He has collaborated with banks, realty corporations, churches, nonprofit organizations and the state. By doing so, he has helped create neighborhoods that empower their residents to grow their community and attract new residents. These successful community development efforts have become models of quality-built homes in the heart of low-income subdivisions.

As community development and relations director for Greenville, Gardner helped the City acquire a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Gardner worked to revitalize communities by providing quality social service programs and activities for residents within these neighborhoods. He helped establish programs for mental health and substance abuse services. He promoted

afterschool tutorial programs, youth summer programs, playgrounds and community gardens.

As one of the founding fathers and as president of the Affordable Housing Coalition of South Carolina, Gardner continues to help develop lower-income communities by advocating legislation aimed at preventing predatory lending. He has also initiated workshops to educate consumers about predatory lending.

Award of Excellence

SCCDA presents its Award of Excellence annually to organizations whose projects have significantly improved their community and have the potential to be a catalyst for further quality-of-life improvements. The project must involve diverse segments of the community, address the community's most important needs and involve creative use/leveraging of community resources. This year, SCCDA presented the award to Oconee County for its Newry Water/Wastewater Projects.

Within Oconee County is the mill village of Newry. Because of Newry's physical isolation from the rest of the county, the mill village was forced to be self-sufficient in many areas, one of which was its wastewater treatment facility. This became a problem when the plant owner was no longer able to maintain the facility. It was not uncommon for citizens to have muddy drinking water or, at times, no water at all. Conditions became hazardous when water pressure was so low that fire hydrants were inoperable, wastewater flowed down the streets and raw sewage leaked into Lake Hartwell.

Newry's sewer and water system was more than 100 years old and had been poorly maintained for many years. Replacing the system would cost \$1.8 million. Newry could not afford to replace the system, nor could Oconee County. With assistance from the Appalachian Council of Governments and state legislators, a funding package was put together using Community Development Block Grant funds, Appalachian Regional Commission funds, state-appropriated funds and local funds. By pulling together these resources, water and sewer lines were replaced. Wastewater was routed to the sewer system serving the City of Seneca and was treated at the Coneross Wastewater Treatment Facility, operated and maintained by the Oconee County Sewer Commission.

Through meetings, cooperation among citizens and intergovernmental agreements, Oconee County not only agreed to take ownership of the collection lines and pump, but it also agreed to use its own funds to help pay for the project. The new system will eliminate health hazards to residents and to those who utilize Lake Hartwell for sports and recreational activities. This project could not have been accomplished with just the help of the City of Seneca or just Oconee County; everyone had to pull together to make this project a success.

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

MASC gets a green thumb up

Reprinted in part from *The State*, May 25, 2003

The Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) was honored by the Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission and by Columbia Green by receiving their Choice Award 2003. Presenting six awards, the groups honored local businesses, neighborhoods, schools and individuals that have made significant contributions to Columbia's environment through design, site development, landscaping or education. The awards offered a chance to reward businesses and individuals making the effort and spending the money to improve quality of life in the City.

In 1996, when the 60,000-square-foot office building at 1411 Gervais Street was being planned, "we wanted to do a project that would complement the development in downtown Columbia," said Howard Duvall, MASC executive director. "We wanted



Landscaping surrounding the MASC courtyard and building contributes to making downtown Columbia more attractive.

to set the trend for setbacks and landscaping on Gervais toward Harden Street."

The result is a building landscaped with the same type of trees as those used on the lower end of the Gervais Street corridor, along with courtyards on the side and at the rear of the building.

"Our association preaches all over South Carolina and elsewhere about the importance of landscaping," Duvall said. "It adds value to your property and to the public space. It should be a natural part of any downtown building to look as attractive as possible."

Drought declaration removed

Does not affect drought plan/ordinance requirement

The South Carolina Drought Response Committee has removed the drought declaration for all South Carolina counties. Almost all locations have received above normal or much above normal rainfall since last September. The rainfall's timing, amount and duration have brought all drought indicators back to normal levels. Long-range forecasts presented by the S.C. State Climatology Office call for a more normal precipitation pattern this summer than received during the previous four summers. The Drought Response Committee will continue to monitor drought conditions and will provide updates if there are any changes in the forecast.

The downgrading of the drought status in no way influences the South Carolina Drought Response Act of 2000 requirement. All water systems had to revise their Drought Response plans and ordinances to be consistent with the Model Drought Management Plan and Response Ordinance developed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the South Carolina Water Utility Council. Each water system had until June 2003 to submit to SCDNR its system's new plan/ordinance for consistency review.

More than 100 water systems missed the deadline to submit the required

information. In early July, the delinquent water systems will receive a notice from SCDNR. "If you haven't done so already, send your plans/ordinances in immediately," urged Hope Mizzell with SCDNR. Plans/ordinances should be submitted electronically via a secure Web site (<http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/pls/drought/login>). The Web site contains detailed instructions explaining how to upload your document for review. You may also download an electronic version of the Model Drought Management Plan and Response Ordinance from this Web site. Please contact Dorothy Phillips at 803.734.9100 to obtain your secure login and password or for more information.



Educational Opportunities

Municipal Association of South Carolina

■ **July 10-13**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. See related article on page 1.

S.C. Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **July 24-27**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort on Hilton Head Island. Members will discuss legal and legislative issues and will hear from a panel on security issues.

Setoff Debt

■ **July 25**, will hold a mandatory training for programmers representing new participants in Columbia.

■ **July 29**, will hold a mandatory training for new participants in Columbia.

■ **July 31**, will hold a mandatory training for 2002 participants in Columbia.

S.C. Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **August 1**, will hold its Quarterly Meeting at the S.C. State Museum in Columbia.

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

■ **September 3-5**, will discuss financial management, municipal law and personal development during its Fall Session at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Columbia.

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **September 4**, will present "Benefits and Pitfalls of Economic Development" and "Forms of Government" via the Hometown Network.

S.C. Business Licensing Officials Association and S.C. Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

■ **October 14-17**, will hold their annual meetings at the Greenville Hyatt.

Community Builders

■ **October 23-24**, will hold its Annual Meeting in Newberry.

S.C. Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **November 21**, will hold its Quarterly Meeting 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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