

UPTOWN

MASC board puts succession plan in place

During its February 7 meeting, the Municipal Association of South Carolina board gave unanimous approval to a succession plan as the first step toward a leadership transition when longtime Executive Director Howard Duvall retires in September 2008. The Association's deputy executive director, Miriam Hair, was selected to take the lead upon Duvall's retirement.

Duvall, who has been executive director of MASC since 1992, notified the board in 2005 of his intention to retire at the conclusion of five years in the state's Teacher Employee Retirement Incentive (TERI) program. His retirement date is September 30, 2008.

"The TERI program was just too good of a personal opportunity for me to pass up," Duvall said. "This time

frame gives the Association substantial time to prepare for a seamless transition to the next leadership team."

MASC President Elouise James said, "The board was in the fortunate position of being able to select a highly qualified successor well in advance of Howard's departure. Miriam has worked side by side with Howard for many years. We are confident she will continue on the path set by Howard to provide exceptional services for our members and promote the value of cities and towns to the state."

Duvall's leadership in municipal government spans more than 30 years and goes back to 1974, when he was sworn in to serve on Cheraw's city council. He was elected mayor of Cheraw in 1980. In 1986, Governor



Howard Duvall



Miriam Hair

Richard W. Riley tapped Duvall to serve as special assistant on his staff; Duvall consequently resigned as mayor and as vice president of the Municipal Association board to accept the position. After a brief stint on the state tax commission, Duvall was recruited in July 1987 to be director of intergovernmental relations for MASC by then-executive

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MASC's new Communications Department to lead new focus of Association

Expect to see increased outreach activity from MASC with the creation of a new Communications Department at the Association.

"As MASC has grown and its services expanded, we have increasingly seen the need to pull our communications efforts under one umbrella to better focus our messages for our members, the news media, the

Legislature and the general public," said Howard Duvall, MASC executive director.

MASC has long employed several communications professionals on its staff in different areas of the organization. By pulling everyone together in one department, the Association's communications efforts can be more

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director Don Wray. In 1992, Duvall became the Association's executive director when Wray retired.

James said the board has been studying and evaluating a succession plan since its retreat in October. "We were very disappointed when Howard came to us with his retirement plans," she said. "His depth of knowledge about issues important to cities and towns can't be replaced. Howard's leadership has put MASC and the cities and towns it serves on a progressive and successful path over the past 14 years. We feel extremely confident that Miriam is the right person to continue the good work Howard has started."

"This is a great association with an important mission, a dedicated board and membership, and a great staff that I know is the best in the country," said Hair. "I am truly honored to be selected as the Association's next executive director. With two-and-a-half years to

make the transition, the board has given us the opportunity to be deliberate and thoughtful in this process."

Hair joined the Association in 1985 after working in economic development for two years with the Upper Savannah Council of Governments. She was promoted to deputy executive director in 1998.

Under Hair's leadership, MASC has seen tremendous growth in its programs and services. She led the development and fostered the growth of MASC's nine affiliate organizations. She was also responsible for initiating the Municipal Elected Officials Institute and creating the South Carolina Municipal Achievement Awards.

Hair took the lead in creating a unique partnership with a private technology firm to provide cost-effective technology services to South Carolina cities and towns. She guided the development and growth of the Associa-

tion's collection programs, which are vital to the financial strength of both MASC and its members. She was also project manager for the planning and construction of the Association's offices at 1411 Gervais Street, bringing the project in on time and under budget.

As deputy executive director, Hair oversees the operations of several of the Association's departments: Risk Management Services, Information Technology, and Education and Training. She also directs the Association's collection programs and provides staff support for the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems and the Technology Enhanced City Hall program.

Hair earned both a bachelor's degree in recreation and parks administration and a master's degree in agricultural economics with an emphasis in resource and regional economics from Clemson University.

Talk to your legislator about the need for workers' compensation reform

Workers' compensation claims costs continue to rise, and so does the cost of coverage. This is happening at a time when the Legislature is looking to eliminate or restrict property tax revenue and limit the amount of property tax revenue local governments can collect.

South Carolina is no longer regarded as one of the lowest-cost workers' compensation states. On a national level, South Carolina is losing ground and

does not compare favorably with its neighboring states of North Carolina and Georgia. This challenge is affecting the cost of doing business and is making it more difficult for local governments to balance their budgets.

Legislation to reform the state's workers' compensation laws was introduced in both the House and the Senate. These bills are the result of the hard work of the South Carolina Civil Justice Coalition, which is composed

of representatives from business, industry, self-insurers (like the SC Municipal Insurance Trust) and the commercial insurance industry.

Legislators need to hear from their constituents about this legislation. Go to the "Workers' Compensation Information" link under the "Featured Links" section of the MASC Web site, www.masc.sc, for talking points, sample letters and contact information for your legislator.

It's nice to have friends in high places

Early on Thursday morning, December 15, a massive ice storm covered the Upstate with up to an inch and a half of freezing rain, resulting in the loss of power to nearly 800,000 customers.

By daybreak, the sound of cracking trees was followed by emergency sirens, chain saws and diesel engines as municipalities began restoring power, clearing roads and ensuring public safety.

"Power outages are dangerous and inconvenient. It is up to us to get the power back on and people's lives back to normal as quickly as possible," said Joel Ledbetter, general manager for Easley Combined Utilities.

Of the 21 municipal electric systems in South Carolina, 12 experienced power outages. Ninety-five percent of Seneca's customers lost power. Westminster, the town's neighbor to the north, didn't fare much better, with 75 percent of its customers losing power and 85 percent of those served by Easley Combined Utilities losing power.

Other municipal utilities hit hard by the storm included Clinton, Laurens, Gaffney, Greer and Union. Customers of the municipal utilities in Abbeville, Greenwood, Rock Hill and Winnsboro all experienced outages, too.

Most remarkably, these municipal utilities, with the help of other municipal electric systems in the state, were able to restore power to homes and businesses in record time. Seneca restored power to its customers by Friday evening, as did others such as Laurens and Gaffney.

Without mutual aid agreements among the 21 members of the South Carolina Association of Municipal Power Systems and the willingness of municipal linemen from other utilities to help their sister utilities, the power would not have been restored so quickly.

Orangeburg, Newberry and Camden sent linemen to help. Then the municipal utilities in Greenwood, Union, Rock Hill and Gaffney sent crews once they restored power to their own systems.

"Mutual aid agreements with other municipal power companies are invaluable," said Greg Dietterick, city administrator for Seneca. "It doesn't make financial sense for each municipal power company to employ enough linemen and purchase enough trucks and equipment to handle major storms. Mutual aid agreements let us get the power back on quickly and keep our rates competitive."

Restoring power and clearing roads are the top priorities for affected areas with debris cleanup. The City of Greenville, with its beautiful, mature tree cover, faced an enormous cleanup job that lasted into February. Though not as formal as the mutual aid agreements among municipal power systems, crews from several South Carolina cities assisted in Greenville's cleanup.

Rock Hill, Greenwood, Aiken, Florence, Myrtle Beach, Lancaster, Mount Pleasant, Columbia and Orangeburg sent workers and equipment to Greenville. This additional support hurried the cleanup job and eliminated the need for private contractors.

By the end of January, seven Upstate counties were federally designated as



A lineman from Easley Combined Utilities works to restore power after the December 15 ice storm.

major disaster areas. This designation makes federal cost-sharing possible for post-storm cleanup. Officials estimate \$9.6 million in governmental funds to clean up these areas.

In addition to federal cost-sharing for cleanup, municipalities may apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds administered by the SC Emergency Management Division. This program is focused on reducing the impact of future disasters by locating structures outside of flood-prone areas, improving warning systems and numerous other projects. For more information, call 803.737.8665.

As was seen during Hurricane Katrina and our own ice storm, municipalities are the first responders for disasters. Police, fire, public works, utilities and other municipal departments are essential to public safety and rebuilding after disaster strikes.

For more information about mutual aid agreements and the South Carolina Association of Municipal Power Systems, contact Miriam Hair at 803.933.1204 or mhair@masc.sc.

focused and far-reaching. MASC has established a new position to lead these efforts.

Reba Hull Campbell joined MASC in November as communications director. Her primary charge is to develop and oversee long-range communications plans to support the Association's programs and member cities. Campbell has more than 20 years of experience in communications, policy, advocacy and fund raising and has worked with elected officials and political candidates at the federal, state and local levels.

"Reba's background is a great fit with MASC as we work toward our goal to better communicate the importance of cities and towns to the state's political and business leadership and its taxpayers," said Duvall.

A major focus for the Association and the new Communications Department will be to build a long-range initiative to demonstrate the value of South Carolina's cities and towns to their residents and illustrate to policy makers and opinion leaders the important role municipalities play in the state's economic prosperity.

More than a year ago, a group of 14 mayors from around the state came up with the idea of creating a long-range pro-active initiative, tentatively called Vision SC. "The group recognized if we are to change the attitude of opinion leaders about the value of cities and towns, we must chart a plan," Duvall said. "A lot of planning and discussion took place over the past year to get this initiative moving. We're very excited about the momentum going forward and that the newly configured Communications Department will lead the effort."

A number of new communications initiatives are already in development as part of the Vision SC planning. A group of municipal public information officers (PIOs) met in January to brainstorm and identify resources MASC can provide to cities and towns. A new PIO listserv was recently launched, along with stepped-up training and networking, an annual editorial/resource calendar and an online toolkit and resource center. Visit the MASC Web site, www.masc.sc/resources/about.htm, to access this information.

Over the coming months, the Communications Department staff will evaluate the Association's publications, Web site, listservs and other tools used to communicate with members, the news media, the Legislature and the public.

"The *Uptown* survey we're launching with this issue is one way readers can help the staff determine how we can better communicate with our members," Campbell said. "We're looking at a number of options, including moving to more electronic communications to supplement our print publications. As more and more cities and towns incorporate e-mail and electronic communications into their daily routines, we want to make sure we are communicating with everyone in the most effective way possible."

Sound off!

Go online and tell us how we can improve *Uptown* for you. Click on the "Uptown Survey" link on the "Featured Links" section of the MASC Web site, www.masc.sc, to give us your feedback.

Put those Achievement Awards entries on the front burner! Deadline is March 8

Do you smell the aroma of sweet success in your city? If so, share your recipe for success by entering the 2006 Municipal Achievement Awards and let others get a taste of what is happening in your municipality. MASC will recognize the winners at the 2006 Annual Meeting in July.

Winning entries are featured in a video shown at the Annual Meeting, in the Achievement Awards brochure, in *Uptown*, during Hometown Network broadcasts and on the MASC Web site.

For a copy of the Achievement Awards entry brochure, visit MASC's

Web site at www.masc.sc and go to the "Featured Links" section of the home page. Proposals must be submitted by March 8. Judging will take place April 3.

MASC to make its annual Compensation Survey more accessible and user friendly

The Municipal Association of South Carolina conducts an annual compensation survey for municipal governments in the state. In past years, MASC has sent a paper survey to each municipality to be filled out and returned to MASC. Once received, MASC staff entered the information into a database, proofread the data and compiled the information into a large report that was then printed and mailed to each city and town. This was a lengthy process and resulted in a 200-page publication that was difficult to use when comparing data from city to city.

“Comparing different municipalities and positions required paging back and forth through the large book,” said John Atkinson, human resource director for the City of Charleston.

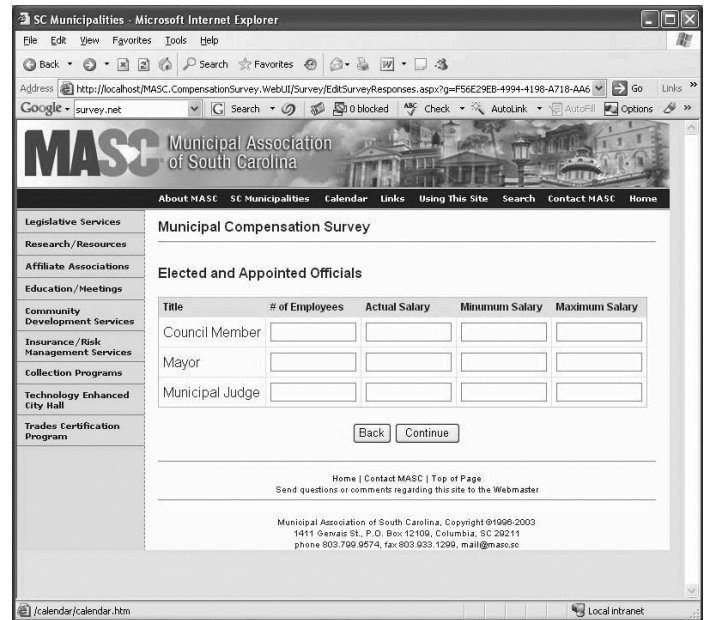
In late 2005, MASC turned to its technology partner, VC3, to create a more efficient process. MASC’s goals were to streamline the survey process and make the survey data more accessible and useful to its municipalities.

“The new system will get the results to the municipalities in a more timely manner and make the comparisons easier,” explained Natalie Viers, staff associate for affiliate services, who is managing the project for MASC.

In March, each municipality was able to log on to the MASC Web site to enter salary information on a secure server. MASC will review the information for accuracy and publish the results online. The most beneficial part of the online format is the ability to browse all data, search for specific data or select the data you want to review, such as municipality, position, salary

range, fiscal budget and much more. The data will also be available to export to an Excel file so further analysis may be conducted.

For more information, contact Natalie Viers, staff associate for affiliate services, at 803.933.1254 or nviers@masc.sc.



Classifieds

■ The City of Georgetown is accepting applications for the position of manager of water/wastewater/stormwater. Submit resumé to: Attn: HR Manager, City of Georgetown, PO Drawer 939, Georgetown, SC 29442 or via e-mail to sfulton@coqsc.com. For more information, visit www.cityofgeorgetownsc.com.

■ The Town of Caswell Beach, NC, is accepting applications for the position of town administrator. For more information, visit www.caswellbeach.org. Send resumé and cover letter stating salary requirement, salary history and estimated date of availability to Town of Caswell Beach, Attn: Mayor Harry Simmons, 1100 Caswell Beach Road, Caswell Beach, NC 28465.

■ The City of Goose Creek is accepting applications for the positions of planning

director and building inspector. Submit resumé to City of Goose Creek, Joellynn Robbins, HR Director, PO Drawer 1768, 519 N. Goose Creek Boulevard, Goose Creek, SC 29445 or via e-mail to jrobbins@cityofgoosecreek.com.

■ Marlboro County is accepting applications for the positions of county administrator and planning/zoning director. Submit resumé to Grover McQueen, Human Resource Director, PO Box 419, Bennettsville, SC 29512.

The International Downtown Association's Spring Conference comes to Columbia

South Carolina communities will have an opportunity to learn about community revitalization efforts from an international perspective as the City of Columbia hosts the International Downtown Association's (IDA) 2006 Spring Conference.

With a similar mission to MASC's Main Street South Carolina program, IDA is a driving force in creating healthy and dynamic centers that anchor the well-being of downtowns, cities and regions throughout the world.

"Downtown revitalization efforts are a major part of the Main Street South Carolina program," said Beppie LeGrand, Main Street South Carolina manager. "The IDA Conference will not only show us what has been going on around the world, but it will also give South Carolina an opportunity to show off some of the great revitalization efforts going on in our communities."

As the Main Street South Carolina representative, LeGrand serves on the conference planning committee and is assisting in volunteer recruitment.

"The IDA Spring Conference has been held in many larger cities around the country, and we are delighted they selected Columbia this year," said Matt Kennell, director of the City Center Partnership, one of the organizations that helped land the conference. "We

have so much to be proud of here in Columbia, and we look forward to showing off some of our successes to our peers around the country."

Conference participants from throughout the United States, Canada and Europe will attend sessions that present Columbia's successful downtown business incubator, farmers' market, growing urban residential market and public/private research initiatives.

IDA knows of Columbia's successes, since the organization has recognized two capital city projects for excellence. After its first year of operation, the City Center Business Improvement District (BID) was recognized by IDA for its exceptional success in attracting \$70 million in new development. Last year, the Vista's newly opened Publix grocery store received the IDA's Special Achievement Award for Economic Development, the top award presented at its 51st annual convention in Denver.

"I'm thrilled we get the chance to show off all the exciting things about Columbia to the members of the IDA," said Kennell. "While the City of Columbia is rich in tradition and history, it is also on the cutting edge of technology and innovation, thanks to savvy entrepreneurs and diverse partnerships."



International Downtown Association

Competition to land the conference is stiff, said David Feehan, IDA president. "Cities competing to host this conference see it as a unique opportunity to showcase a city's downtown for hundreds of opinion leaders throughout North America. It can create a real buzz about a downtown."

Located in Washington, DC, IDA is a world leader and champion for livable urban centers. Through its network of professionals, extensive knowledge base and capacity to strengthen community partnerships, IDA is a driving force in creating healthy and dynamic centers that anchor the well-being of downtowns, cities and regions throughout the world.

The 2006 IDA Spring Conference will be held April 22-24. Registration information is available online at www.ida-downtown.org. For volunteer opportunities, contact Beppie LeGrand, Main Street South Carolina manager, at 803.933.1231 or blegrand@masc.sc.

Visit the MASC Web site for past Hometown Legislative Action Day information

Do you wish one of your councilmembers could have heard Dr. Holley Ulbrich's keynote address about property taxes? Do you need more copies of the MASC legislative initia-

tives to give out at your next council meeting? Visit MASC's Web site to download streaming video of the keynote and luncheon addresses and to print copies of MASC's legislative ini-

tatives and other handouts distributed during HLAD. You can watch the "City Hall" video and even browse through photos taken throughout the day. Find all this and more at www.masc.sc.

Municipal Insurance Services celebrates one year of offering best-of-breed products to municipal employees

In just one year, Municipal Insurance Services (MIS), a voluntary supplemental insurance program offered through the Municipal Association of South Carolina and the South Carolina Local Government Assurance Group (SCLGAG), has enrolled 25 local governments.

"We are very pleased that over 1,100 employees have participated and taken advantage of our low-cost, best-of-breed products," said Harvey Mathias, director of Risk Management Services. "Our fast start would not have been possible without the tremendous support from our cities, towns and other eligible entities."

MIS offers the best-quality and lowest possible-cost supplemental products in the industry. Rather than limiting choices to just one company's products, MIS has grouped these "best-of-breed" products together for a convenient one-stop shopping approach.

"With escalating health insurance premiums, it is important for employers to contain the rising costs of employee benefits. It has been very rewarding for MIS to offer better benefits at costs 40 to 50 percent less than what employees are currently paying," said Wayne George, field services manager for MASC.

"Employees currently buying supplemental products immediately have more take-home pay when they purchase our products. Our employees are our most important assets, and this program is about helping our employees obtain the best coverage at the lowest cost."

MIS offers accident insurance, cancer insurance, short-term disability insurance, medical gap coverage, critical illness coverage, universal life insurance, term life insurance and long-term-care insurance (available on a group basis).

Products purchased through the employer are portable, meaning the employee can keep the products after retirement or when changing jobs. The MIS program is totally voluntary and employs a no-pressure, consultative approach to benefits counseling.

The voluntary supplemental insurance program is the result of a coordinated effort between MASC and SCLGAG, a MASC-sponsored health benefits program. A city, town or other municipal entity can participate in this program and not be a SCLGAG member.

For more information, contact Wayne George at 803.933.1242 or wgeorge@masc.sc.

Since March 2005, 25 local governments have enrolled. Participants include:

- Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC)
- City of Forest Acres
- City of Florence
- Town of Fort Mill
- City of Loris
- City of Mullins
- City of Seneca
- Town of Ware Shoals
- Fort Mill Housing Authority
- City of Isle of Palms
- Town of Moncks Corner
- Mount Pleasant Waterworks
- City of North Augusta
- Summerville CPW
- Town of Summerville
- Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority
- Town of Sullivan's Island
- Town of Pendleton
- City of North Myrtle Beach
- City of Westminster
- Town of Edgefield
- Upper Savannah COG
- City of Pickens
- Town of Mount Pleasant
- Town of Central

News Briefs



■ The National League of Cities announces its 2006 Awards for Municipal Excellence. The awards, formerly known as the James C. Howland Award for Municipal Enrichment, have a new name to reflect the higher stan-

dards that are being applied in evaluating excellence and creativity in municipal programs. Nomination forms will be available in March; the deadline for submission is June 21. Visit www.nlc.org/resources_for_cities/awards_recognition/7760.cfm for more information, nomination forms and to learn about past winners.

■ The Town of Port Royal's Neighborhood Enhancement Team was awarded the 2005 Housing Achievement Award by the South

Carolina Housing Finance and Development Authority. Port Royal won in the Organization category. The awards were developed to recognize prominent contributions to affordable housing for low- to moderate-income South Carolinians.

■ In December, Councilmember Anne Sinclair of Columbia was elected to the National League of Cities' Board of Directors during the League's annual Congress of Cities meeting in Charlotte, NC.



Educational Opportunities

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **March 8-10**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston. Topics include "Creating Customer Delight," "Large Meter Calibration" and "Meter Reading Blues."

SC Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

■ **March 15-17**, will hold its Spring Training Session at the Clarion Town House Hotel in Columbia. Topics include "ABCs of Municipal Law," "The Ethics Reform Act and the Public Employee" and "Negotiation Skills."

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **March 22**, will hold its legislative event at Seawell's in Columbia.

Hometown Connection

■ **March 28**, 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.

Managers' Forum

■ **March 31**, the managers' first quarter meeting will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the South Carolina Hospital Association in Columbia.

Hometown Connection

■ **April 25**, municipal officials from Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Lexington, Orangeburg and Richland counties visit with their state legislators. Officials should meet at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 a.m.

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

■ **April 10**, will hold its Spring Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Columbia.

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

■ **May 2**, will hold its Spring Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Columbia.

SC Municipal Human Resources Association

■ **May 3**, will hold its Spring Meeting at the Clarion Town House Hotel in Columbia.

SC Community Development Association

■ **May 21-23**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach.

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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Municipal
Association of
South Carolina

President: **Councilmember Elouise James, Clemson**
Executive Director: **Howard E. Duvall Jr.**
Managing Editor: **Reba H. Campbell**
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