

# UPTOWN

## S.C. House studying tax structure

In an effort to implement “a fair and equitable tax structure that promotes economic development,” the General Assembly created a House Ad Hoc Tax and Revenue Study Committee chaired by Rep. Bobby Harrell, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

The Study Committee is examining state and local governments’ tax structure and will develop recommendations to present to the General Assembly in January 2003. The Committee is gathering data about economic development incentives, sales tax exemptions, existing tax structures and revenue sources of state, county, school districts, municipalities and other involved entities.

In August, representatives from municipalities, counties and school

districts testified before the Committee to describe their existing taxing authority, point out problems with the existing structure and suggest changes to improve the system. MASC President Dan Breazeale, mayor of Lexington; Florence Manager David Williams; and Mount Pleasant Administrator Mac Burdette represented municipal government.

The municipal representatives stressed the importance of diversifying the tax base to maintain a stable revenue stream for municipalities.

“While property tax revenues for municipalities have continued to grow, the percentage of property tax revenues to the total revenues collected by cities has declined from 38 percent

in 1993 to 29 percent in 1998,” said Breazeale. “We believe this trend is a result of increased uses of other sources of revenue, such as local option sales tax, business license fees and local accommodations and hospitality taxes.” MASC believes this is a positive trend. With some flexibility in revenue sources, reliance on property taxes has declined significantly.

Breazeale explained the state’s 269 municipalities are diverse, so a one-size-fits-all approach to taxes will not work.

Williams pointed out several ways the General Assembly had adversely affected municipal revenue, such as raising court fine assessments. In many cases, this increase has led judges to lower the municipality’s portion of the fine to keep the overall cost lower for the defendant. He also discussed the ongoing reduction in vehicle property

**STRUCTURE continued on page 5**

### Are you ready for the Stormwater Phase II deadline?

Many officials are cloudy on new requirements

Announced in December 1999, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System’s (NPDES) Phase II goes into effect March 10, 2003. Phase II mandates pollution-control activities for municipalities located in urbanized areas with a combined population of at least 50,000 and that have municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). Currently, this applies to more than 70 municipalities in South Carolina. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is determining the final list based on criteria including:

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# Grants help fight tight budgets

by Laura D. Whitlock, administrator of Juvenile Justice Grant Programs, S.C. Department of Public Safety

Most states are combating challenging economic times, and South Carolina is no exception. But local governments can supplement tight budgets by applying for grant funds.

The first step — and the one that should guide the entire process — is to identify the problem your community needs to address. Use data collection to identify the problem, rather than applying for a popular grant program that may not fit your needs. Identifying one of the more serious problems in the community maximizes the chances of securing grant funding. Examining data from many areas allows a municipality to focus its efforts on the most appropriate problem.

Consider county (or school district, if applicable) rankings or ratings in a particular area, such as domestic violence, teen pregnancy, violent crime, youth tobacco use or drunk driving. Another meaningful statistic is the rate at which a problem has worsened over a period of time, such as a 150-percent increase in truancy referrals within the specific time period of 1999 to 2002.

If you target a particular population, such as a neighborhood or age group, be prepared to justify the selection with data demonstrating the problem is more severe in that population than in others. Additional research will allow you to develop or select a program to address the identified problem.

Considerable information about best practices and model programs for a wide variety of issues is available on the Internet and in numerous publications. Informational Web sites include [www.secapt.org/science6/science6\\_alphabetical.html](http://www.secapt.org/science6/science6_alphabetical.html), [oijdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/jjpubs.html](http://oijdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/jjpubs.html) and [www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/171676.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/171676.pdf).

After identifying the problem and proposed program, locate federal, state

or community agencies that provide grant funding for your issue. The most comprehensive and quickest way to search is through the Internet. If you do not have access, visit your local library — most libraries have computers available with Internet access.

Be sure to note the types of agencies eligible to apply for a particular grant program. Municipalities are generally eligible for the majority of funding programs, and they often are eligible to receive grants directly from federal agencies.

When searching for a funding source, review the funding solicitation — also called a Request for Proposal — carefully to see if your project fits within the program area the organization seeks to fund. The more closely your problem and the program fit, the better your chance of success.

After determining which funding sources might fit your needs, begin preparing the applications as soon as possible. Each application format will differ, so read the instructions carefully to ensure you meet the required criteria and provide the necessary information. The following guidelines will help you write a better application.

- Provide specific, relevant data to convincingly demonstrate the problem.
- Provide specific detail about the program you propose to implement. If it is an afterschool program, where will your referrals come from? What are the criteria for selecting participants? Who will teach/train them? How many hours per day/week? At what location? What curriculum will be used? How will you track their progress? It is also a good idea to include a

## Grant workshop

The Juvenile Justice Grant Programs will hold its annual Application Workshop on Dec. 5 at Midlands Tech in Columbia. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the training lasts until 12:15 p.m. For more information, call Laura Whitlock at 803.896.8713 or e-mail [laurawhitlock@scdps.net](mailto:laurawhitlock@scdps.net).

detailed timeline for program implementation.

- Be specific about your objectives. What are the desired outcomes? Instead of saying that attendance will improve, say that unexcused absences will decrease by 30 percent. Also indicate the source of that data, who will track it and how often. Ways to measure progress include percentage increases or decreases, numerical increases or decreases, and surveys administered at the beginning and end of the project that measure participant changes in attitudes and/or increases in knowledge. Academic improvement can be measured by letter grades, standardized test scores and promotions to the next grade level.
- Ideally, you should collect the data to measure progress several times per year. This allows time to change the program design if it is not performing as expected.

**continued on next page**

## Grants continued from page 2

- The budget should be reasonable, and each item should be explained in a budget narrative. Remember to recheck your calculations for accuracy.
- Let other people unfamiliar with the proposed project read the completed application for clarity, grammar and syntax.
- Review all pages for completeness. Does the application address all the criteria discussed in the Request for Proposal? Are all required signatures included? Did you include letters of support?

Do not hesitate to call the funding organization with questions as you complete the application. You may want to take advantage of other types of assistance before you

begin developing a proposal, such as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Training and Technical Assistance Center, [www.nttac.org](http://www.nttac.org). This site offers best practices information, data, resource materials and links to other funding sources. The Juvenile Justice Grant Programs within the S.C. Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs also offers assistance. If you are preparing a Juvenile Justice Programs application, staff can review the application prior to the due date to provide recommendations for improvement.

If you apply for funding and are denied, contact the organization to obtain feedback about your application's strengths and weaknesses. This will help you improve the chances of being funded in the future.

## Federal, state and private grant sources

### Federal

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

U.S. Department of Education, [www.ed.gov/funding.html](http://www.ed.gov/funding.html)

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), [ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org)

### State

South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS), [www.daodas.state.sc.us/web](http://www.daodas.state.sc.us/web)

South Carolina Department of Education, [www.sde.state.sc.us](http://www.sde.state.sc.us)

South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS)

Office of Justice Programs:  
Juvenile Justice, Victim Services and Criminal Justice Grant Programs

OHS Highway Safety Grant Programs, [www.scdps.org](http://www.scdps.org)

### Private

[www.tgci.com](http://www.tgci.com)  
[www.agmconnect.org](http://www.agmconnect.org)  
[www.fundraiserguide.com](http://www.fundraiserguide.com)

### Education

[www.schoolgrants.org](http://www.schoolgrants.org)



## Classifieds

■ The Town of Cheraw is accepting applications for an assistant code enforcement officer. Position requires a high school diploma along with at least one year of technical training and two or more years' experience in building construction or related field. Send resumes to Town of Cheraw, PO Box 219, Cheraw, SC 29520. EOE.

■ The Town of Blythewood is accepting applications for a planning and zoning administrator. Duties include overseeing the preparation, adoption, maintenance and implementation of a comprehensive plan for the development of the Town and enforcing the Town's zoning ordinance. Submit resumes to Blythewood Town Hall, PO Box 49, Blythewood, SC 29016, or fax to 803.754.0563.

■ The Town of Ware Shoals is accepting applications for an administrator. Position requires experience in redevelopment, downtown revitalization, planning and financial management. Send resume, salary history and three professional references to Miles Hadley, PO Box 510, Ware Shoals, SC 29692. EOE.

■ The City of Conway is accepting applications for a city planner. Position requires knowledge of advanced principles and practices of urban planning, current planning programs/developments and general knowledge of the principles of building codes enforcement. Master's degree in planning or related field preferred, along with planning experience or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Send resume, cover letter and salary history by Nov. 14 to Rose Marie Hussey, City of Conway, PO Drawer 1075, Conway, SC 29528. EOE.

*For more information on these and other job opportunities, visit MASC's Web site at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).*

## Focus on Technology

# Canning spam

### Dealing with unsolicited e-mail is not an easy task

As e-mail use continues to grow, so do the number of unsolicited messages e-mail users receive. Also known as “spam,” these are the electronic equivalent of junk mail. In addition to being used to peddle pornography, chain letters and pyramid schemes, spam can crowd bandwidth, clog mailboxes and force municipalities to upgrade network servers to handle the e-mail overloads. Workers’ productivity can suffer if they must sort through spam to find relevant e-mails.

Congress is reviewing several pieces of anti-spam legislation that would give law enforcement and Internet service providers more tools to control unsolicited e-mails.

“We need to act because people are tired of this,” said Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, who introduced a bill in the Senate, along with Sen. Conrad Burns of Montana. But until regulations are in place, there are ways to reduce the spam received by your municipality.

### Anti-spam software

Although software is an option to help organizations filter spam and keep it from appearing in employees’ mailboxes, it is not a total fix. The software cannot always tell a legitimate e-mail from spam, so someone must review the filtered messages. This means hiring a new employee to manage the software or adding the software management responsibilities — which can be time consuming — to an existing employee.

“Spam-filtering software is not always the best option,” said Alan Tumey, MASC’s director of information technology. “In addition to requiring increased staff time, the software constantly needs to be managed.

People who send spam are similar to those sending viruses — once you begin filtering their e-mails, they will start looking for a way to get around the filters. When they find it, you need to reconfigure or update your software.”

### Internet use policy

As an alternative, Tumey suggests municipalities implement and enforce an Internet use policy. Internet use policies ensure employees know exactly what they can and cannot do and give municipalities a leg to stand on if employees abuse their Web privileges, explained Tumey.

“A policy will set expectations for responsible Web and e-mail use while limiting the municipality’s liability if an employee abuses them.” He said Internet use policies should restrict employees from visiting non-business-related sites, such as joke and greeting card sites. The policy should also prohibit employees from registering their work e-mail addresses to receive online items such as newsletters. According to Tumey, sticking to this policy will reduce employees’ exposure to sites that send spam or sell e-mail addresses to spammers.

Most Internet use policies also specify:

- The city owns the computers and anything related to the computers, such as Internet accounts and e-mails
- The city can monitor e-mails and Web usage
- Any sexually related material is prohibited
- What software can be downloaded/installed on users’ machines

### Enough e-mail?

Framingham, Mass.-based market research firm IDC predicts the number of e-mail messages will double from the current 31 billion per day to 60 billion per day by 2006. The research company expects the increase to come mostly from non-person-to-person e-mails, such as spam and alerts for information, such as sports scores or stock prices.

Tumey stressed that the policy should be signed by every employee.

He also offered some tips to help reduce the number of spams.

- Be careful when posting your e-mail address in a “public place,” including discussion groups and listserves. Make sure the listserves or groups are administered by a reputable organization that will not sell your address.
- Never reply to unsolicited e-mails. If you reply and ask to unsubscribe from the list, you have just confirmed the validity of your address for the spammer.
- Report fraud. The Federal Trade Commission is cracking down on deceptive e-mail schemes. Report this type of spam by visiting the “Consumer Protection” section of [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).

## MASC explores cutting-edge technology initiatives

At the recent Southern Municipal Conference's Information Technology Summit hosted by MASC, attendees witnessed a "historic" video conference. From his office in Oklahoma City, Danny George, executive director of the Oklahoma Municipal League, briefed the group on the League's wireless program. The video conference was significant because it used existing Internet infrastructure instead of a costly satellite feed or other technologies.

"The only items we needed to make this a reality were a Web cam and microphone, for a one-time cost of less than \$600," said Howard Duvall, MASC's executive director. "This was an impressive demonstration showing us the practical application of using the Internet for video conferencing."

Representatives from 12 Southern municipal associations attended the IT Summit. The participants shared

information about their associations' technology initiatives and heard presentations on topics including Web content management tools, Internet auctions and anti-spam software (see related article on page 4).

Attendees also heard James Assey, general counsel for the Communications Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, discuss federal initiatives for deploying high-speed broadband Internet access to rural areas.

"The IT Summits help keep MASC on the forefront of emerging technology so we can pass this information on to our members," said Duvall.

The Southern Municipal Conference provides opportunities for officers, directors and staffs of Southern municipal leagues to share mutual political, policy and management concerns with their counterparts throughout the Southern region.

## News Briefs



■ S.C. Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund members recently elected John Potter of North Augusta, Herbert Thompson of Central and Roy Whitehead of Summerville as new board members for three-year terms.

■ The S.C. Local Government Assurance Group board has appointed Sharon Boyles of Ridgeland to fill an unexpired term.

■ 1411 Gervais tenant NS&G recently announced a merger with Columbia-based Chernoff/Silver and Associates. The new marketing and advertising agency, Chernoff Newman Silver Gregory (CNSG), will lease the remainder of the fourth floor. Currently, the building is 88 percent leased.



## FAQ

**Must the mayor sign checks for the city?**  
Not necessarily. In every form of government, the council determines who has the authority to sign checks for the city. As a best practice, giving more than two people the authority to sign checks and requiring two signatures on all checks is recommended.

## Structure continued from cover

taxes and the Telecommunications Act of 1999, which replaced municipalities' right to charge franchise fees to telecommunication companies with a flat fee of 0.75 percent.

He suggested the Committee consider exempting municipalities from paying sales and use taxes, liberalizing annexation laws and allowing municipal option sales taxes, especially for capital projects.

Burdette explained the importance of charging new developments impact fees. He stressed that although impact fees would never be high enough to

pay for the full cost of a development's effect on a town, they do help diversify and stabilize municipal tax bases. He encouraged the Committee to allow schools to levy impact fees, too.

Committee members requested municipalities, counties and school districts provide a list of unfunded or underfunded mandates that have been imposed within the last eight years. They also requested a list of alternate taxes or other revenue sources the entities would suggest to improve service delivery in their respective entities. MASC has

gathered information from municipalities and is preparing the list for the Committee.

The Committee plans to meet with gubernatorial candidates and hear their ideas on tax restructuring. Harrell anticipates a written report will be ready in January 2003.

MASC will continue to follow the Committee's actions and will notify municipalities of any updates or decisions.

*For more information, call Gary Cannon at 803.933.1203 or e-mail [gcannon@masc.sc](mailto:gcannon@masc.sc).*

## Phase II continued from cover

- Amount of stormwater discharge into sensitive waters
- High population density
- High growth or potential for high growth

“DHEC will likely add municipalities near metropolitan areas that are on the same watershed to the list,” said Howard Duvall, MASC’s executive director. “We expect the final regulations from DHEC, including the total list of affected municipalities, in mid-December.”

### NPDES’s purpose

Polluted stormwater runoff is a leading contributor for many water bodies not meeting water quality standards. Over land or via storm sewer systems, untreated polluted runoff is discharged directly into local water bodies. When left uncontrolled, this water pollution can result in the destruction of fish and wildlife habitats, a loss in aesthetic value and threats to public health due to contaminated food, drinking water supplies and recreational waterways.

Mandated by Congress under the Clean Water Act, the NPDES Stormwater Program is a two-phase national program for addressing stormwater discharge that can adversely affect water quality. The Program requires municipalities to apply for NPDES permits. In the permit applications, municipalities agree to implement controls preventing stormwater runoff from washing harmful pollutants into local water bodies.

### Permits

Municipalities must apply for the stormwater permits from the state. Applications must describe what the

### Helpful Internet links

[www.masc.sc/resources/about.htm#policies](http://www.masc.sc/resources/about.htm#policies)

<http://cfpub1.epa.gov/npdes/>

[www.scdhec.net/eqc/water/html/npdespage.html](http://www.scdhec.net/eqc/water/html/npdespage.html)

[www.asist.net/](http://www.asist.net/)

municipality will do over the next five years in the following six areas:

- **Public education and outreach.**

Phase II regulations require municipalities to provide educational materials to citizens about how everyday activities can cause pollutants in stormwater discharges.

- **Public involvement.** At a minimum, citizens must participate in the stormwater management program’s development to the extent required by state or local law.

- **Illicit discharge detection and elimination.**

Illicit discharges are defined as dry weather flows resulting from improperly connected wastewater piping, illegal dumping of such fluids as motor oil or paint, or infiltration from leaking wastewater pipes. To comply with this requirement, MS4s must:

- develop a storm sewer system map indicating all outfalls and the waters in which they discharge
- prohibit illicit discharges and implement enforcement actions
- develop a plan to detect and address illicit discharges

- inform the public of hazards associated with illegal discharges and improper disposal

- **Pollution prevention and good housekeeping in municipal operations.**

Phase II municipalities must implement a training program for municipal employees to ensure their actions will prevent or reduce pollutants from stormwater runoff from municipal operations.

- **Construction site runoff control.**

Although this applies only to runoff affecting an MS4, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) encourages municipalities to apply the programs throughout their jurisdiction.

- **Post-construction stormwater management in new development or redevelopment.**

Municipalities must development, implement and enforce a program — usually by ordinance — to address stormwater runoff occurring after new or redevelopment construction activities.

“Most of the regulations require municipalities to monitor the stormwater system, such as gutters, catch basins, outfalls and retention ponds, for evidence of pollution or illicit discharge,” explained Duvall. “If a municipality discovers illicit discharge, it must investigate the source and take remedial action.”

Duvall encouraged municipalities to take advantage of their current resources when preparing the permit application. “The application and observation can be done by the municipal staff,” he said. “Municipalities should call in an engineer only if remedial action is required.”

**continued on next page**

# Seven graduate from Clerks and Treasurers Institute

In September, seven people graduated from the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute (MCTI), a three-year program designed to provide municipal clerks and treasurers with the skills critical to their profession: Paulette Belk of Ninety-Six, Debbie Floyd of Mullins, Linda Hammett of Sumter, Debra Herrmann of Surfside Beach, Linda Long of Pageland, Vickie Nichols of Mullins and Renee Woods of Edisto Beach.

To receive their certificates, participants attended more than 100 class hours in such topics as the role of municipal clerk, financial management, overview of government, public administration and conducting meetings.

During the fall Institute, Angie Ramsey of Walterboro received a three-year scholarship to attend MCTI. Hoping to further her education while preventing a financial strain on the City of Walterboro, Ramsey wanted to learn more about budgets, motivational skills, new laws and municipal legal procedures. The City of Walterboro will receive \$200 per session for Ramsey to complete the Institute. The scholarship is sponsored by the S.C. Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association (MFOCTA) and is underwritten by SCANA/SCE&G.



Seven people graduated from MCTI in September: Paulette Belk of Ninety-Six, Debbie Floyd of Mullins, Linda Hammett of Sumter, Debra Herrmann of Surfside Beach, Linda Long of Pageland, Vickie Nichols of Mullins and Renee Woods of Edisto Beach.



Anna Berger of USC's Institute of Public Services and Policy Research, right, presents Angie Ramsey of Waltersboro with a scholarship to attend MCTI.

Completion of MCTI satisfies the education requirements for certification from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks and the Municipal Treasurers Association of the United States and Canada. MCTI is cosponsored by MASC, MFOCTA and the Center for Governmental Services at the University of South Carolina's Institute of Public Services and Policy Research. The next MCTI session will be held in March.

## Phase II continued from page 6

Duvall added that MASC is reviewing a software program designed to help manage municipalities' Phase II programs. MASC will send more information to municipalities as it becomes available.

This topic and others will be covered at the S.C. Association of Stormwater Managers (SCASM) meeting Nov. 15 at the State Museum in Columbia. For a registration form, visit the "Affiliates" section of MASC's Web site at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc). SCASM offers quarterly training

sessions about stormwater management policies and best practices.

SCASM's meetings and its listserve provide members a forum for sharing ideas and keeping current on state and federal laws.

*For more information about NPDES Phase II or for a model permit application, visit MASC's Web site (under the "Research/Resources" section, click on "Model Policies/Procedures") or call Gary Cannon at 803.933.1203 (e-mail [gcannon@masc.sc](mailto:gcannon@masc.sc)).*

## Have you registered for the Community Builders Conference?

Register on site for one day or all three days. For more information on the conference, please call Community Builders at 803.933.1224 or e-mail [community@masc.sc](mailto:community@masc.sc).

**Nov. 13-15 Greenville Hyatt**

- Nov. 13: Revitalization Strategies
- Nov. 14: Community Design, Planning Tools and Techniques
- Nov. 15: Our Communities' Roads



## Educational Opportunities

### Community Builders

■ **Nov. 13-15**, will hold its Community Builders Conference at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville.

### S.C. Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **Nov. 15**, will hold its Quarterly Meeting at the State Museum in Columbia.

### S.C. Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund

■ **Dec. 3**, will hold its members' meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in Columbia.

### S.C. Municipal Personnel Association

■ **Dec. 4-6**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Myrtle Beach Wyndham Resort.

### S.C. Municipal Attorneys Association

■ **Dec. 13**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Clarion Town House Hotel in Columbia.

### Hometown Connection

■ **Jan. 29**, 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 in Columbia at 10:30 a.m.

### Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **Feb. 25**, Sessions A&B will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Columbia.

### MASC Winter Meeting and Legislative Conference

■ **Feb. 26**, will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Columbia.

### S.C. Utility Billing Association

■ **March 19-21**, will hold its Annual Meeting at Ocean Drive Resort in North Myrtle Beach.

### Hometown Connection

■ **March 26**, 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 in Columbia at 10:30 a.m.

### Hometown Network

■ **March 27**, the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government will present "Basic Budgeting." This 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](http://www.masc.sc)**

# UPTOWN

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