

UPTOWN

MASC to encourage municipal officials to speak with "One Voice"

Fall has finally arrived, and this means it is time to start thinking about the 2006 Hometown Legislative Action Day (HLAD). Don't miss this opportunity to become better informed and more involved in the issues affecting your municipality and the state of South Carolina.

The theme for this year's event is "One Voice." As MASC President Elouise James said at the 65th Annual Meeting, "There is one message ... one song ... I am asking you to learn the words and sing it out loud and as often

as possible." Use this occasion to join the chorus as we take our hometown voices to the Statehouse. The key legislative issue this year is property tax reform. During the morning's general session, this issue and the impact it will have on your city or town will be addressed.

"Dr. Holley Ulbrich, alumni professor of economics with Clemson University, is a property tax expert and will discuss the property tax situation in South Carolina and the alternatives being discussed by the legislature," said

Howard Duvall, MASC executive director. "She will make us aware of the unintended consequences of some of these proposals."

Marilyn Mohrman-Gillis, director of policy and federal relations with the National League of Cities, will discuss key federal legislation during an afternoon general session. HLAD will wrap up with the legislative reception — your chance once again to speak with one voice to legislators about municipal concerns.

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SC municipalities respond to hurricane victims

With residents either evacuated, settled into shelters or hunkered down in their homes, government officials, citizens and the media anxiously await a major hurricane to come ashore in the port city. As the eye wall passed just east of the city, it cut a deep path of destruction for miles and miles inland.

Current images of the Gulf Coast readily come to mind, but South Carolina officials remember their own



anxious night awaiting a major hurricane. Hurricane Hugo slammed into the Lowcountry in September

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Successful event planning

by Angie Prosser, City of Greenville Program and Event Administrator

Virtually every community is experiencing an increase in the demand for special events and festivals. Special events are an expression of the community and its culture and have the ability to bring citizens together. They allow for social and cultural experiences beyond the ordinary. The desire to experience something that is not commonplace is driving our communities to request these distinctive social gatherings. Local governments should recognize festivals and special events as vital contributors to local economic development and as an opportunity for our citizens to participate in public celebration.

The City of Greenville has taken on this challenge by successfully hosting an array of special events ranging in scope from Fall for Greenville (a taste of the town) to Ritmo Tropical (a Latin music festival). Hundreds of annual events fill the calendar, with year-round free activities for the community to enjoy. The city's widely acclaimed downtown revitalization has been matched with the careful planning and development of special events. This pairing has created a unique sense of place, making Greenville a cool city in which to live, work and play. The City of Greenville has proven its versatility and commitment to making special events of all kinds successful and memorable.

A unique blend of hospitality, a beautiful tree-lined Main Street and professional event staff make Greenville an attractive host for event organizers and their participants. A successful model for facilitating a wide range of events taking place on public property is a key tool for Greenville's event planning department. Regardless of the situation or

circumstance, Greenville consistently applies two other tools: established policies and a permitting process that provides equal treatment. Local governments should assign at least one staff member to manage these tools.

Site layout

Take into consideration the slope of the event site. Will the site drain well if it rains? Will tents be susceptible to wind at that site? We take into consideration all those things most people don't until they get to the event. It's important to appraise everything that could happen at an event when choosing site location.

Alcohol control

If an entity wants to serve alcohol at its event, the City requires liquor and general liability from the event sponsor. Event organizers must post signs prohibiting "alcohol beyond a certain area" at the event. Only trained servers who will ID underage drinkers and discontinue service to anyone appearing intoxicated are allowed to serve alcohol. Knowing the state law as it pertains to serving alcohol is imperative. Ensure your police department is scheduled to patrol the event and the officers understand what has been required of the event organizers.

Traffic control

Part of Greenville's event application process includes making preparations for pedestrian and vehicle traffic control. You don't want your event to be divided by a major highway. Think of your audience and what



The City of Greenville's Ritmo Tropical Festival is held at Falls Park.

they will need to enjoy the event. Parking a long distance from the site may not be a good option for a children's event.

Site cleanup

The City of Greenville makes cleanup after every event its responsibility. We recommend local governments make cleanup after the event their contribution. Greenville prides itself on being a clean city. We want to ensure store owners wake up to clean streets after an event, like it didn't happen at all. This should be every town's commitment.

Other things to consider are risk management, security and setup/tear down. Particular attention must be placed on helping ensure events operate legally and the organizers are knowledgeable in local and state laws, codes and regulations.

Greenville requires all event organizers to assess and then minimize the event's elements of risk in order to safeguard people, property, reputations and assets. This is a process of anticipating, preventing or minimizing

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Auditing: A bad word but a good practice

by Steffanie Dorn, Finance Director, City of Greenwood

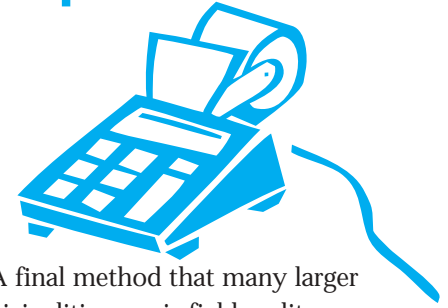
Business licensing is a complicated part of most municipal ordinances. In many cases, business license revenue accounts for about one-third of a municipality's revenues. For this reason, an integral part of the license ordinance is the ability to audit. No one ever likes to hear the word "audit" because it automatically brings negative images to mind. However, audits keep everyone on a level playing field. For all the businesses that report every single penny to the license official, the process of auditing keeps everyone honest. Most businesses that do attempt to report accurately appreciate the effort of having their reporting verified.

Once you have decided that you would like to begin auditing your business license holders, there are several items to consider. First and foremost, you should be sure that your ordinance contains a provision for conducting audits. Second, council and management should be supportive of the audit function. Finally, you should determine your method of auditing. For small municipalities, field audits may not be practical. There are several other methods of auditing that are available.

The State of South Carolina's Department of Revenue will provide a municipality a listing of sales taxable income reported by businesses in your municipality. This listing can be compared against what has been reported to the license official. If there are discrepancies, a letter can be sent asking for explanations or payment of the difference in license fees due.

Of course, not all businesses in your municipality pay sales tax. Another method to use is a listing of building permits obtained. These lists can be compared to gross receipts reported by contractors. A similar method is to require general contractors to provide a list of all subcontractors with the amount of the contract. This will not only provide gross receipts that should be reported, but will also help ascertain that all subcontractors obtain a license.

A method that is quickly gaining popularity is to require a business to submit a copy of the appropriate schedule of their tax return upon license renewal. This method normally encounters mild resistance the first year, but becomes more readily accepted in future years.



A final method that many larger municipalities use is field audits. The task of auditing the gross receipts of a business can become challenging. With the majority of businesses, the operator can present a tax return that can be quickly compared with reported gross receipts. However, a lot of small town businesses literally operate out of a shoebox. These types of businesses require review and compilation of invoices or other available documents.

When selecting businesses to audit, it is important to recall the equal protections guaranteed by both the South Carolina and the United States constitutions. It is best to use a random process to select potential auditees, such as all businesses in an SIC class or all businesses on particular streets. You can audit a business that you have a solid reason to believe may be reporting inaccurately, but you should be sure to have this documented. It is important that all audit selection is done in a non-discriminatory manner.

Event planning continued from page 2

potential costs, losses or problems for the event, organization and guests. Particular attention is placed on insurance, permit requirements, understanding the intended target audience, alcohol control, food service, health code regulations and noise compliance.

Greenville's event staff recognizes that the more time they spend planning items such as content, process, personnel selection, marketing

strategies, financial goals and evaluation process, the better the chances are for producing successful events. The more successful the event, the better image and benefit for the community.

The impacts and benefits of events on the community can be significant. Through special events, Greenville has experienced exposure for downtown businesses, attracted visitors to re-developed areas, benefited from fund

raising for local charities, promoted the preservation of local heritage, educated visitors on the area's history, local culture and architecture and provided the opportunity for its citizens to experience new activities.

It's all about creating an atmosphere for citizens and visitors to come together. Every town should provide an opportunity for events to promote pride and showcase their community.

Hometown Connection helps strengthen relationships

MASC is dedicated to promoting a pro-municipal legislative agenda in the General Assembly. The cornerstones of this effort are defining the value of cities/towns to the economic success of the entire state, forming partnerships with members of the General Assembly for a better South Carolina and advocating for municipalities to have the resources needed to meet their citizens' needs.

To succeed with a pro-municipal legislative agenda, local officials must work together with their state partners and establish a continuous dialog. Local officials should not call on their legislators only when they need action on an issue.

Local officials must first establish a relationship at home. MASC advises municipal officials to schedule regular meetings with their legislators to get to know them better and take the opportunity to talk specifically about how legislation will affect the constituents both represent. Doing so will demonstrate the commitment each has to building a strong partnership between municipal government and the state. Once a partnership is formed, both can work

together to better serve their citizens' needs.

For legislators to understand how valuable municipalities are to the state, they need to hear the message at the Statehouse and at home. Municipal officials can do their part by participating in the Hometown Connection in Columbia on the designated date (see box). Officials' participation shows their commitment to legislation that is in the best interest of their community and the state as a whole.

On Hometown Connection days, municipal officials are greeted by MASC staff, briefed on the pending legislation important to municipalities, given the General Assembly's schedule and even assisted in finding legislators' offices and committee meeting rooms.

To participate in MASC's Hometown Connection, municipal officials should come to the MASC office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 a.m. on their county's designated date.

January 31

Cities in Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Marion and Williamsburg counties

February 22

All municipalities for MASC's Hometown Legislative Action Day

March 28

Cities in Anderson, Cherokee, Chester, Fairfield, Greenville, Lancaster, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg and York counties

April 25

Cities in Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Lexington, Orangeburg and Richland counties

May 30

Cities in Abbeville, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Edgefield, Greenwood, Kershaw, Laurens, Lee, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Saluda, Sumter and Union counties

"One Voice" continued from cover

MASC will offer Sessions A and B of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government on February 21. MASC will include MEOIG registration material with the HLAD registration information being mailed January 3. Individuals who have taken at least one MEOIG class will have their transcript included in the mailing. Session A is open to all municipal elected officials. Session B is open only to those officials who have completed Session A or are Institute graduates.

Hometown Legislative Action Day deadlines

This year's event will be held at the Columbia Marriott on February 22. Mark your calendar and make plans to bring your voice to Columbia for the 2006 Hometown Legislative Action Day.

HLAD information mailed — **January 3**

Hotel reservation deadline for the \$107 group rate — **January 31**

HLAD pre-registration deadline — **February 7**

Hurricane victims continued from cover

1989, but South Carolina municipalities as far away from the coast as Rock Hill felt the storm's overwhelming effects.

As Katrina came ashore this August (then later Rita), SC municipalities fell back into a familiar role. As they did with Hugo and later with Hurricane Andrew in Florida, municipal officials did what they do best. They prepared to restore basic services (security, water and other utilities) to devastated areas. Before anyone realized the full extent of the damage, SC municipal officials began making their plans to head to Louisiana and Mississippi.

"In many instances, our members had to overcome significant obstacles, from finding locations to send crews to receiving approval from gulf state officials to equipping the crews so they were self-sufficient," explained Howard Duvall, MASC executive director. "Our members knew from firsthand experience the importance of receiving help, and they persistently worked through the logistical maze."

Municipalities from Blacksburg to Charleston sent law enforcement, firefighting and search/rescue personnel. One after another, public works crews packed their chain saws, generators and other equipment to help clear the massive amounts of debris.

The City of Beaufort, in partnership with United Way of Beaufort County and several faith-based organizations, adopted Long Beach, Mississippi. Long Beach was critically short of fuel and needed help removing debris. The police department escorted a fully loaded fuel tanker truck (fuel was purchased with donations from the Beaufort community) to Long Beach. A team of almost 200 residents spent a September weekend helping the Long Beach community with cleanup (chain saw teams), fix-up (handyman teams/HVAC/electrical) and counseling.

The City of Lancaster plans to donate surplus vehicles, normally



Municipal employees from the Isle of Palms traveled to Moss Point, Mississippi, to assist hurricane victims.

auctioned to the public, to Mississippi local governments hit hard by Hurricane Katrina. "They're old surplus vehicles, and if you take them out in areas where they might get scratched up, it won't make much difference," said Steve Willis, Lancaster city administrator. "They should help out in the short term."

Several communities not only sent help, but they also opened their doors to evacuees. Appreciative of the Southern hospitality, some evacuees have decided to permanently call the Palmetto State "home."

Understanding the magnitude of the cleanup and restoration efforts, SC officials also looked for long-term ways to help.

Horry County and its municipalities adopted Waveland, Mississippi. Almost 40 municipal employees from five Horry County municipalities went to Mississippi in late September to help restore water and sewer lines to a campground where many Waveland residents were living. A few days later, law enforcement officers from the municipalities followed the public works crews to handle public safety duties in neighboring Harrison County. In a recent *Sun News* editorial, the editors wrote, "Grand Strand folks should be pleased to note how area governments and individuals are helping those who suffered in Hurricane Katrina. ... We appreciate the workers' efforts and the municipalities' generous leadership."

Georgetown County and municipal officials reached out to Abbeville, Louisiana, after Hurricane Rita. Georgetown officials are working with the mayor of Abbeville on determining the area's critical needs.

The City of Florence took a unique approach. City employees are holding a series of fund-raising events, with the proceeds going into a special account to be disbursed by the city clerk to City of Waveland employees on an as-needed basis. Florence's fund-raising events include direct contributions by employees through payroll, cash or check. The City will set up its Emergency Mobile Kitchen Unit at City Hall. For a \$5 donation, citizens will receive a grilled hot dog/bun, chips and a drink for lunch. City employees will also develop a special Christmas program for Waveland municipal employees and family members. "With all that they are going through, this holiday season may be difficult, and we want to make sure the spirit of Christmas is not forgotten," said Darene Stankus, Florence personnel director.

"Once again, South Carolina's cities and towns have responded to the needs of their sister municipalities," concluded Duvall. "We will never forget the generosity shown our state after Hugo. The skills of our municipal employees, from police to public works, are the first needs of a community after a disaster."

Six graduate from Clerks and Treasurers Institute

In September, six individuals 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. The fall 2005 graduates are Trudy Martin, administrative assistant for the Town of Blacksburg; Dora Perry, assistant to the city manager for the City of Tega Cay; Amy Risher, finance/business licensing clerk for the Town of Walterboro; Amanda Shaw, assistant clerk for the City of Inman; Adrienne Thompson, clerk/treasurer for the Town of Chapin; and Felisha Woodberry, clerk/treasurer for the Town of Awendaw.

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

Completion of MCTI satisfies the education requirements for certification from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) and the Association of Public Treasurers.



The fall 2005 MCTI graduates are (in alphabetical order): Trudy Martin, administrative assistant for the Town of Blacksburg; Dora Perry, assistant to the city manager for the City of Tega Cay; Amy Risher, finance/business licensing clerk for the Town of Walterboro; Amanda Shaw, assistant clerk for the City of Inman; Adrienne Thompson, clerk/treasurer for the Town of Chapin; and Felisha Woodberry, clerk/treasurer for the Town of Awendaw.

During the fall Institute, Heather Fields, clerk for the Town of Ware Shoals, received a three-year scholarship to attend MCTI. The scholarship is sponsored by the Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association and is underwritten by SCANA Corporation.

MCTI is sponsored by MASC, the SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks



Heather Fields, clerk for the Town of Ware Shoals, receives a three-year scholarship to attend the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute.

and Treasurers Association (MFOCTA) and the Center for Governmental Services at the University of South Carolina's Institute of Public Service and Policy Research.



Classifieds

■ The City of Myrtle Beach is accepting applications for the position of project manager, a position contracted to the Downtown Redevelopment Corporation (DRC). Visit www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com for more details. Apply online or send

application to HR Department, PO Box 2468, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578 (City Services Building, 921A Oak Street). Call 843.918.1121 for more information.

■ 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 at sfulton@cogsc.com. For more information, visit www.cityofgeorgetownsc.com.

■ The City of Charleston is accepting applications for the position of police chief. Send resumé, salary history and five references in confidence to the City of Charleston Human Resources Division, 701 East Bay Street, MSC 1220, Charleston, SC 29403 or via e-mail at HR@ci.charleston.sc.us. For more information, visit www.charlestoncity.info or call 843.724.7388.

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Municipal News now available

News Briefs



In August, MASC launched a new service called *Municipal News*. *Municipal News* is an e-newsletter highlighting exceptional articles, editorials and other items of interest to municipalities.

"One of the hardest things to do is to keep up with what is going on in other communities so as to garner new ideas and insights," said Steve Riley, town manager for the Town of Hilton Head Island. "The *Municipal News* is a great service." Riley and other local officials want to stay abreast of current events relating to municipalities, and *Municipal News* helps them do this.

Content ranges from editorials on property tax legislation to human interest stories, such as the work of municipal personnel helping with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Weekly content varies depending upon the current issues.

"I am pleased that the Municipal Association is sharing articles about our sister cities from across the state," said Anne Sinclair, councilmember for the City of Columbia. "I like reading about other municipalities' issues and their solutions. The latest articles on affordable housing provided added information on [addressing] approaches ... a growing concern [in Columbia]. I look forward to more of the clippings."

Municipal News is sent to municipal elected officials and several of MASC's affiliate listservs. If you would like to start receiving the free *Municipal News* e-newsletter, e-mail Eric Meyer at emeyer@masc.sc and write "subscribe" in the subject line.

■ One of South Carolina's longest-serving municipal officials will not seek re-election. Councilmember Vincent Huckabee has served the Town of Swansea for 48 years.

■ MASC welcomes three new staff members. Reba Campbell is director of communications, a new position to MASC. She comes to MASC from serving as executive director of the Governor's School for Science and Math Foundation. Melanie Dozier accepted the position of staff associate for affiliate services. She previously worked for the SC Association of School Administrators, where she was director of training. Dozier will be the staff liaison for the Business Licensing Officials Association (BLOA), the Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association (MFOCTA) and the SC Utility Billing Association (SCUBA). She will also manage the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute (MCTI) and business licensing certification programs. Suzanne Jordan joins the MASC team as receptionist. After working as a temporary employee at MASC for six months, Jordan became a full-time employee in September. Along with providing front desk support, she assists MASC departments with administrative projects and handles daily property management issues.

■ The cities of Rock Hill and Charleston were named two of the "100 Best Communities for Young People" by the America's Promise organization. Approximately 1,200 cities applied. The award is based on the municipalities' efforts to provide youth with caring adults, safe places in which to learn and grow, a healthy start toward adulthood, an effective education that builds marketable skills and opportunities to help others.





Educational Opportunities

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **November 10**, will hold its Fall Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Columbia. Topics include an explanation of water system terminology and improving customer service with technology.

SC Municipal Personnel Association

■ **November 16-18**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Bay Watch Resort in North Myrtle Beach. Topics include benefits law, retirement, deferred compensation, wellness and safety.

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **November 18**, will hold its Quarterly Meeting at Seawell's in Columbia. Topics include "Stormwater Pipe Rehabilitation: Is Digging Necessary?" and "Repairing Underground Utility Systems: Be Careful Where You Dig."

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

■ **December 2**, will hold its Annual Meeting at Seawell's in Columbia. Topics include ethics and the municipal attorney, recent developments in zoning, mutual aid agreements and the role of a municipal attorney in small towns.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

■ **January 18**, will hold its Annual Meeting at Seawell's in Columbia. This meeting was previously scheduled to be held in November 2005.

Hometown Connection

■ **January 31**, municipal officials from Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Marion and Williamsburg counties visit with their state legislators. Officials should meet at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia at 10:30 a.m. See related article on page 4.

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **February 21**, will hold Sessions A and B at the Columbia Marriott in Columbia.

MASC

■ **February 22**, will hold its Hometown Legislative Action Day at the Columbia Marriott. See related article on page 1.

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **March 2**, will present "Basic Budgeting for Municipal Officials." The session will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of government.

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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