

UPTOWN

Renowned international economist touts strong cities and towns

Cities and towns as the center of economic growth was one of the hot topics discussed in Columbia in October by Dr. Richard Florida, renowned author and international expert on economic competitiveness and regional development. Florida was in South Carolina at the invitation of New Carolina, the SC Council on Competitiveness, to talk about the state's efforts to grow its new economy.

Florida's research and writings, including his best selling "Rise of the Creative Class," focus on cities as a critical part of this new economy. He makes a direct connection between the health of a city and its ability to draw the workers that companies will demand in the future.

The Municipal Association of SC was a major sponsor of Florida's visit and hosted several mayors, councilmembers and key influencers at a Q&A session and the dinner where Florida spoke. As part of this major event for statewide key influencers, the message of strong cities was heard loud and clear by the more than 200 business leaders when Florida said, "Mayors are the leadership of the global economy." He said, more than any other elected official, a mayor has more power to influence the direction of economic growth. "Mayors can



Dr. Richard Florida is an international expert on economic competitiveness and regional development. photo: Allen Anderson

spearhead change," Florida said. "The most important thing is making sure mayors have a forum to cooperate" to build regional success.

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Economy guru pushes creative economy

By C. Grant Jackson, Business Editor, The State

South Carolina and Columbia's biggest challenge is to create a knowledge-based economy that serves all its citizens, new economy guru Richard Florida observed recently.

Florida brought his message of developing a creative economy through technology, talent, tolerance and a fourth T — territorial assets — to the annual meeting of Engenuity SC, the

strategic council focused on building Columbia's knowledge-based economy.

He challenged his audience: "As you build this creative, prosperous, competitive economy, it has got to be one economy."

That was the most important part of the charismatic economist's message, said retired steel executive Samuel Tenenbaum.

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Earlier in the day before Florida spoke, Ed Sellers, the chair of New Carolina, invited MASC to make a short presentation to its board about efforts by

leaders in South Carolina hometowns to engage key influencers in support of strong cities and towns. These 40-plus key influencers heard Sellers reiterate his

strong support for updating outdated annexation laws, a point he made in his keynote address at the MASC Annual Meeting in July.

Economy guru continued from cover

Tenenbaum has been a disciple of Florida's work for several years and has provided copies of Florida's best-selling book — "The Rise of the Creative Class" — to much of the local and state leadership.

While Tenenbaum said he was encouraged by Florida's speech, he said he is still disappointed by the slow response to the message.

"We can go through all the things that he points out are necessary, and we have only done part and parcel. We need people who will go forward," Tenenbaum said. He pointed to lack of adequate funding for education.

Several hundred people listened to Florida speak at Engenuity07 for nearly an hour before the economist and author fielded questions by audience members from throughout the state.

Earlier in the day, he held a roundtable discussion with about 40 members of the board of New Carolina, South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness.

His message to both groups was similar.

The United States is going through an economic shift much greater than the shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. The shift is from the industrial economy to the knowledge-based economy, which Florida terms "the creative economy." It is, he said, "the biggest shift in all of human history."

The industrial economy was based on physical labor and natural resources. The creative economy is based on human intelligence and ideas. The real source of economic growth today is the human mind. "The only advantage we have is our ideas, our knowledge and our creativity," Florida said.

But if regions, states or cities are going to be successful in the new creative economy, they must find ways to tap the creative energies of all their citizens.

"The real source of growth is each and every human being," Florida said. "Every human being is creative."

Creativity doesn't care about social class, Florida said. It has no gender. It has no race. It doesn't care about sexual orientation. Tolerance is critical to successful places hitting on all cylinders, he said. The challenge is tapping that creativity. If we are going to grow the economy, he said, we must grow the capability of our people.



Columbia should be encouraged by its progress, however.

The city is part of one of the top 10 mega-regions in the world, Florida said. The region, which extends from Atlanta to Raleigh to Charlotte, has been dubbed "Charlanta."

But for Columbia and other places to retain their identities as their economies grow, they also must pay attention to Florida's fourth T: territorial assets. Planning needs to start immediately to protect those aesthetic assets that make an area unique, he said.

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With baby boomer retirements looming, succession planning gains increasing importance

It's a scenario being played out in offices throughout the country – an overwhelming number of baby boomers facing retirement in the next five to 10 years. Officials with the City of Aiken knew they were confronting the same trend.

Kenny Cook, human resources director for the City of Aiken, conducted a survey to determine the depth of the problem. The statistics were staggering:

33% of the city's department heads could retire in less than five years; the majority could retire in eight years;

83% of the captains in the public safety department could retire in less than five years;

63% of the lieutenants could retire in five years;

50% of the superintendents in the public works department could retire in less than five years.

Aiken officials knew it was time to plan for the future.

"Succession planning is important in any industry, private or public sector," Cook said. "But our workforce tends to be older than the private sector."

Faced with that knowledge, Aiken decided to take steps to hire and retain younger employees, and groom them to take over positions that would likely soon become vacant, Cook said.

"We need to get knowledge in their hands so we can have a pool of qualified applicants."

Aiken put together a two-part succession planning program. Emerging Leaders Training is held once a month for two years in conjunction with

Aiken Technical College. This training focuses on 14 core competencies including customer orientation, interpersonal relations, finance and resource management.

Employees in the the Mentoring Program fill out an application detailing their future career goals. Applicants then are paired with the employee in the upper-level position they aspire to, such as city manager, assistant city manager or human resources director, Cook said. Together, they create a learning plan to get the employee the skills he needs to move up.

The succession program is a two-year commitment on the part of the staff person being mentored, Cook said. It often involves extra work on weekends and evenings with no compensation, but offers the opportunity for a better future career.

All cities should consider a succession program, Cook said. It helps to fill positions left vacant due to retirements, deaths or new jobs. It also is great for morale and can aid in retention, he said.

In Anderson, the issue was personal for City Manager John Moore. Both he and Assistant City Manager Linda McConnell could retire in the next five to seven years.

"We knew we wanted to have people groomed in-house, so they would have the opportunity to move into these jobs," he said.

Anderson established an Emerging Leaders Program, in conjunction with the International City/County Management Association and the Center for Governance at the University of South Carolina. About 20 people were selected to take part in the monthly training program.

Succession planning helps groom city employees and move them up through the ranks to maintain the continuity of progress, Moore said. "That's not to say that we can't find good, quality people outside," Moore added, "but this gives us both options."

The City of Clemson also strives to hire within and has created its own intern program in public administration, said Assistant City Manager Chip Boyles.

"The important thing to me is to hire the right people at all job levels," Boyles said. "The right people will stay with the organization and move up if you give them the right tools."

While the pending retirement of baby boomers has been an industry-wide problem, the City of Clemson hasn't experienced it yet, Boyles said. However, officials have seen the impact of hundreds of qualified people retiring from nearby Clemson University over a 3- to 4-year period, and "we're trying to learn from that," he said.

Boyles, Moore and Cook will speak on the topic of succession planning at the Municipal Human Resources Association meeting, December 5-7. For more information about the meeting, visit MASC's Web site at www.masc.sc.

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute graduates three

In September, three 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. Fall 2007 graduates are Patricia Brown, treasurer, City of Marion; Michelle Starnes, clerk-treasurer, Town of Williamston and Donna Young, clerk, City of North Augusta.

To receive their certificates, the graduates attended more than 100 class hours on topics such 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 and the Association of Public Treasurers.

During the Fall Institute, Chasity Canaday, city clerk/treasurer for Ellore, received a three-year scholarship to attend MCTI. In her scholarship application, Canaday wrote: "I play a very active and visible role in the business of our town, and I hope to learn how to better utilize my position to serve our residents and customers." The scholarship is sponsored by the Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association and is underwritten by SCANA Corporation.



The Fall 2007 MCTI graduates are, Left to Right: Patricia Brown, treasurer, City of Marion; Michelle Starnes, clerk/treasurer, Town of Williamston and Donna Young, clerk, City of North Augusta.

MCTI is sponsored by MASC, MFOCTA and the Center for Governmental Services at the University of South Carolina's Institute of Public Service and Policy Research.

Opportunity knocks

By Howard Duvall, MASC Executive Director

Once in a while an opportunity comes around you just shouldn't miss. Right now there is an opportunity to promote annexation in your city or town. It has been 30 years since the stars aligned to promote annexation, and they are in the right alignment now.

In 1975, bowing to a potential judicial challenge to property assessment procedures, the General Assembly passed Act 248. This Act, the Equalization and Reassessment Act of 1975, set in motion the periodic reassessment of real and personal property that is followed today.

Prior to 1975, property owned by manufacturing and utilities was

reassessed each year by the Department of Revenue, known then as the South Carolina Tax Commission. The assessment of residential property was left to the counties where the values changed very little after being put on the tax rolls.

Act 248 of 1975 required all properties to be placed on the tax rolls at fair market value. The huge increase in residential assessment values resulted in a corresponding huge decrease in property taxes to the manufacturing and utility property taxpayer.

Many cities used this dramatic drop in property taxes to the manufacturing sector to convince the manufacturers on their borders to annex into the city. The

window was open for them to become full participants in the civic life of their city without any increase in the total taxes they paid. It was a win-win situation for both the city and the manufacturing community.

Fast forward 30 years. The stars have now aligned to give a similar tax reduction to owner-occupied property. This offers cities and towns a window of opportunity to convince these residential property owners to annex into the city.

Act 388 of 2006 called for an increase in the state sales tax by 1 cent to pay for the school operations portion of the property tax for owner-occupied

property beginning in 2008. Statewide, this means a reduction of about 60 percent in property taxes for these owner-occupied properties.

Taxpayers are just now getting the good news as they receive their tax bills. Many will not feel the increase in the sales tax being used to offset the cost of operating schools in the state. They will only understand their property tax bill has gone down.

Municipal governments have an opportunity to convince these happy taxpayers to use a portion of their reduction in property taxes to pay for the higher level of services they can receive by annexing into the city. Cities should

put together their best analysis of the cost and benefits of annexation.

A good example from the City of Greenwood can be found on the MASC web site at www.masc.sc/hometown-sc/greenwood_annexation_2007.pdf. Other general talking points about the benefits of annexation can be found in the Featured Links section of the MASC Web site.

By carefully planning their annexation strategies, cities can use the 25 percent petition/election method to match residential areas receiving the property tax reduction with other areas, which would support the cost of services. The 25 percent petition is signed

by electors (residents having the legal right to vote) living in the area proposed for annexation. The referendum is open to the electors living in the same area.

Every city and town should look at the residential areas contiguous to its municipality. Is the window of opportunity open for you?

For assistance in developing an annexation strategy, contact Howard Duvall at 803.933.1202 or hduvall@masc.sc.



Hometown Happenings

December

Each month, municipal officials have the opportunity to download materials that will help them share the value of cities and towns with the community and more specifically their key influencers. Through each suggested activity and corresponding materials, municipal leadership will form partnerships with the local business community, the media, local non-profit organizations and policy makers.

MASC will post December Hometown Happenings information on its Web site in early November. Let MASC know if you participate in a Hometown Happening. Call Casey Fields at 803.933.1256.

Holiday Season – With the holiday season approaching, many cities and towns are planning parades and festivals. When planning the events, consider using the holiday season to partner with a local business to sponsor a food or toy drive for local needy children. Partner with local businesses to host holiday events around your hometown, especially those that benefit less fortunate residents. Send holiday cards to your local businesses, and honor them with a reception at city hall. Host a tree lighting ceremony at your municipal building. Decorate your downtown with lights. Celebrate the holiday season with employees and residents.

Arbor Day – Sustainable forests and green space are precious commodities in cities and towns. Celebrated in South Carolina on the first Friday in December, Arbor Day is a great opportunity to showcase your Tree City designation or host an event to plant trees along your Main Street. Partner with local businesses, garden clubs or schools to host a ceremony or event on December 7 to show residents trees and preserving the environment are important to city officials. Research how to be designated a Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation and work toward those goals. Partner with local colleges and universities to plant trees on campus or in the surrounding areas. Collaborate with local environmental groups to plant trees in your hometown. Commemorate Arbor Day with a luncheon at your local park honoring city park and recreation employees. Pass a proclamation reaffirming your hometown's commitment as a Tree City.

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

Comprehensive planning offers chance to engage key influencers

It's mandatory for all cities – updating the comprehensive plan that will map out the city's future. While this long-term planning process serves as a master plan for growth and development, it also provides an opportunity for city leaders to involve the public in the issues and challenges facing their community.

Comprehensive planning goes hand-in-hand with *Hometown, SC*, an initiative of the Municipal Association of South Carolina that aims to build relationships to raise hometown voices to a new level of influence. The goal of the initiative is to demonstrate the value of South Carolina's cities and towns to their residents and illustrate to policy makers and key influencers the important role cities and towns play in the state's economic prosperity.

"The comprehensive planning process is a good example of how city leaders can take something they're already doing and apply the *Hometown, SC* message that strong cities are critical

to economic growth and competitiveness," said MASC Director of Advocacy and Communications Reba Campbell.

The planning process allows city leaders to discuss the concerns and goals of the community with its key stakeholders, such as business owners, educators or hospital administrators.

"This provides a chance to get them involved and keep them up to date on what's going on in the community," Campbell said.

Town leaders in Port Royal knew residents could offer a good deal of input on the future of their community. The town was dealing with a growing real estate market and the sale of its port by the State Ports Authority.

"This was a community reinventing itself, and still trying to maintain its character," said Jane Peeples, a consultant who helped facilitate a meeting between town leaders and key influencers.

Councilmembers suggested a number of residents with high credibility in the community take part in a dialogue

about Port Royal's future. The group included active community members and local business owners; all had lived in the town anywhere from five to 50 years. Members discussed the values of the community, concerns about future development and ideas on how to enact their visions for the town, Peeples said.

"The town wanted to include, at least initially, those residents who are most impacted by the decisions being made regarding development or redevelopment in the Town of Port Royal," said Town Manager Van Willis. "Most of these individuals had somewhat of an understanding of our master plan, but they needed a historical perspective on the town's efforts. We also wanted them to connect what they desired as residents with the basic precepts of our master plan. It was amazing to see how similar their vision for the town was with our actual plan."

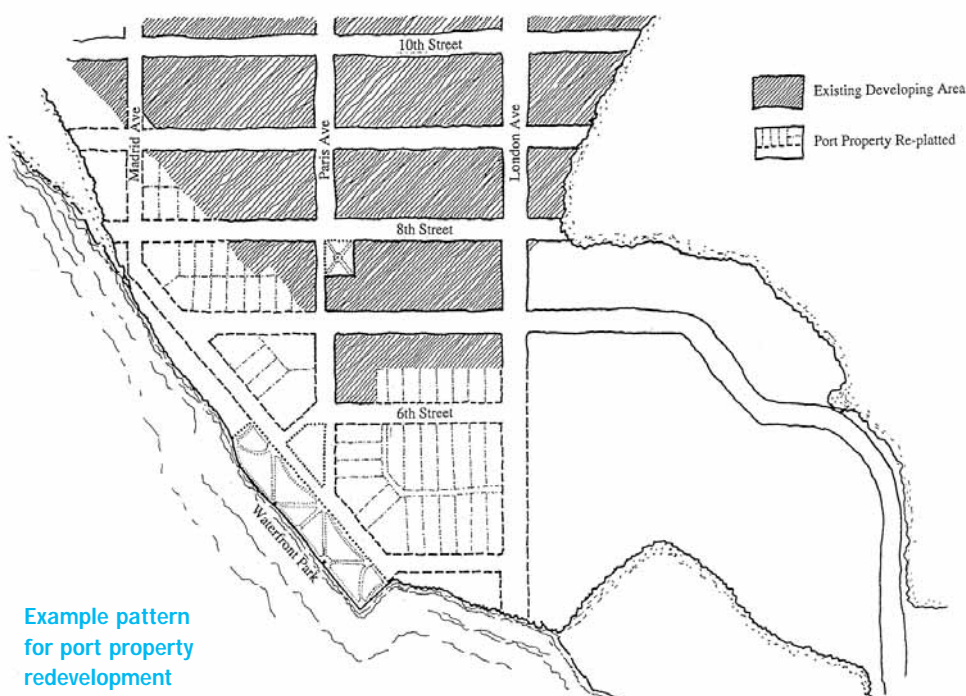
Willis said he hopes the participants will continue to be involved in the planning process for the town's future.

"It's important they remain a part of the process because the plan is long-range, and the citizens and elected officials need to have faith in the plan," Willis said. "They need to examine how far we have come from the beginning because I do not think they realize how dramatic an improvement has occurred."

The City of Greenville is also in the process of updating its comprehensive plan. Planners there have been working hard to ensure they hear viewpoints representing all city residents, said development planner Jennifer Rigby.

"The most important thing is getting good citizen input that's constructive and helpful," she said.

Officials have publicized the plan using radio interviews, billboards, bus shelter signs, flyers and at downtown



Example pattern for port property redevelopment

News Briefs



■ The League of American Bicyclists presented the City of Spartanburg with a bronze designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community. Spartanburg is the first city in South Carolina to receive the designation and one of only seven across the U.S. to be named a Bicycling Friendly Community this year.

■ Aiken City Councilmember Beverly Clyburn and SC Representative Bill Clyburn were selected to appear in the 2008 African-American History Calendar. Representative Clyburn is also a former Aiken city councilmember.

■ The Columbia Office of Economic Development received the Technology-Based Economic Development award from the International Economic Development Council. The city was cited for its collaboration with the USC Columbia Technology Incubator.

■ Members of the Municipal Court Administration Association of SC elected their 2007 - 2008 board of directors: President - Sally Phipps, court administrator, Town of Mount Pleasant; Vice President - Diane Anderson, clerk of court, City of Rock Hill; Secretary/Treasurer - Vicky Huggins, clerk of court, City of Loris; Members-at-Large - Amy Wilkerson, clerk of court, City of Isle of Palms and Kenneth Gunnells, clerk of court, Town of Kiawah Island.



events in an effort to encourage citizen participation in its design. Also, the city has conducted random telephone surveys and an Internet survey, and held a public meeting to inform residents about the plan and answered questions.

“As the community grows over the next 20 years, it’s important to include every person that’s currently in our community,” Rigby said. “We would like folks who are currently in our community to stay in our community.”

From large cities to smaller towns, using the comprehensive planning process is a great example of how cities and towns of all sizes can use the resources of the *Hometown, SC* initiative to reach out and engage key

influencers. “*Hometown, SC* is all about incorporating a message that strong cities are critical to the state’s economic success into every communication and outreach opportunity we have, Campbell said. “Using the comprehensive planning process to incorporate this message makes perfect sense.”



Paris Avenue restored as the main street

Save the date: February 20

Cities Mean Business – MASC’s *Hometown, SC* Legislative Action Day

MASC will mail registration information and have information available online in early January. Hotel reservations can be made at the Columbia Marriott by calling 803.771.7000 or toll free at 1.800.627.7468. The deadline to receive MASC’s room rate of \$132 is January 24.

Downtown retail offers eclectic mix of treasures for holiday shopping

By Amy Geier Edgar

With the holiday shopping season swinging into full gear, shoppers often head to the malls. Yet downtown retail offers many things that malls can't compete with, from unique gifts to an atmosphere reminiscent of holidays of old.

"Downtown Conway is driven by our uniqueness," said Ashley Davies, executive director of Conway Main Street USA. "We pride ourselves in having things shoppers can't find at the mall."

Conway has developed a strong arts presence, and many galleries have located downtown. Each month, the gallery owners in the historic district have an Art Walk, featuring opening receptions for new artists. One local artist helped establish a new Thanksgiving event, in which area fourth-graders will paint Thanksgiving themes on storefronts downtown. The artist brought the idea from his native Maine, where he participated in the same event as a child, Davies said.

"It shows how unique we are," she said. "We have a lot of people who come here, retire here and bring their traditions with them."

Along with local art, downtown Conway has great gift shops and apparel of all types, Davies said. Those potential gifts will all be on display during the city's Holiday Open House November 11. Decorations will be up all over town, shops will stay open and music and refreshments will be available in all the stores, Davies said.

The city also will host a Victorian Christmas celebration, on November 29,

December 6, 13 and 20. Stores will stay open until 8 p.m., giving residents a chance to come downtown to see a classic Saint Nicholas, take a Victorian carriage ride and watch the carolers in the street.

This event evokes nostalgia for many residents, Davies said.

"For many people, coming to downtown is an important part of their holiday experience," she said.

The holiday season kicks off the Thursday before Thanksgiving in downtown Hartsville, as the Hartsville Downtown Development Association sponsors its Christmas Open House. Shops will be



The HobKnob Gourmet in Hartsville sells upscale kitchenware, gourmet foods and gift baskets.

open until 9 p.m., and visitors can sample refreshments, listen to music and watch strolling carolers, said Judi Elvington, executive director of the downtown association.

The Black Creek Arts Center will have a Christmas Shop in its gallery on December 6. There, shoppers can find work from local artists. That same day, parts of downtown will remain open again until 9 p.m. as part of the city's monthly "First Thursday" event, which spotlights downtown retail.

Throughout the holiday shopping season, and every day, downtown Hartsville retailers offer an eclectic mix of goods. The Hobnob Gourmet sells upscale kitchenware, gourmet foods and gift baskets. There even are upscale children's stores, offering items found in Atlanta and New York, Elvington said.

Downtown embroidery stores will print initials or monograms on everything from drink koozies to shoes, and shoppers can even have jewelry custom designed and made at Freeman & Smith Quality Jewelers. One of the few remaining independent booksellers, Burry Bookstore, even sells some gifts

exclusive to Hartsville – tiles, cutting boards and magnets with Hartsville themes, Elvington said.

In downtown Beaufort, shoppers are sure to find the perfect gift with an eclectic mix of shops, ranging from clothing and shoe stores to fine antique dealers. Segway Personal Transporters are sold downtown, as are hand-carved and signed/numbered oyster knives; hand-made teak furniture; and original pieces of art by local craftsmen.

Book lovers can find rare books and signed copies of books by acclaimed South Carolina author Pat Conroy. History buffs will appreciate the rare coins and pieces of Civil War memorabilia found in downtown shops, according to Joy Locke, executive director of Main Street Beaufort, USA.

Holiday shoppers can take a break during the city's annual "A Night on the Town" event, set for December 7. Holiday decorations will be up, and shops will stay open late and offer

DOWNTOWN RETAIL continued on page 9

Five situations where proper rules of procedure can save the day

By Warren Harley, MASC Government Affairs Liaison

Rules of procedure are required by state law. Each council must implement rules of procedure for orderly and proper disposition of matters coming before council, pursuant to Section 5-7-250(b). While every council is required to have rules of procedure, it is important to tailor them to the needs of your municipality. Well developed rules of procedure can help you deal with the routine issues that your council will face.

MASC receives many calls for assistance, and often those calls deal with issues that should be addressed in the municipality's rules of procedure. Below are some of those questions and how they can be addressed.

A common question we receive at MASC is who should preside over the meetings when the mayor or mayor pro tempore is not available? The answer is simple; elect someone from the members present at the meeting to temporarily preside.

During the course of a council meeting, questions come up, and many people want to know who is responsible for ensuring the rules are followed. We suggest the city attorney act as parliamentarian, and the mayor should decide questions of order.

The sole purpose of a council meeting is to conduct city business. Before council can conduct the city's business,

a quorum must be present. The question of what constitutes a quorum is common. A quorum is considered a majority of the members of council. If you have seven members, then you need four members to have a quorum.

What if you have a quorum, but due to a conflict of interest a member is disqualified from voting. Do you still have a quorum? If one of those four members is disqualified from the vote because a conflict exists, he is still counted for purposes of a quorum.

Council meetings also have an agenda listing the topics council will discuss. Preparation of council's agenda is very important. Matters to be considered by council must be posted at least 24 hours before the meeting. But what happens when someone wants to address an issue not on the agenda? Can council allow this during the meeting? The answer is yes. Council can allow an item to be added to the agenda. Keep in mind that this is not something the council should do lightly. Many councils require a 'super majority vote' or two-thirds of the council to amend the agenda.

Rules of procedure help you address many questions before they emerge in the middle of a council meeting, potentially causing confusion and mistakes. So, if your council has not adopted rules of procedure, do so immediately.

Questions answered by good rules of procedure

- When does the council meet?
- How is the agenda prepared?
- What is the order of business at the council meeting?
- How is a special meeting called?
- Are members required to vote on all matters unless required to refrain by state law?
- Who keeps the minutes?
- Are citizens allowed to address council? If so, when?
- How is the Mayor Pro Tem elected?
- When are ordinances required?
- May the agenda be amended? If so, by what vote of council?

Remember you are required by law to have them.

Visit the MASC Web site to download a sample rules of procedure (www.masc.sc/resources/suggestedrulesofprocedure.pdf). Also on MASC's Web site, you can order or download a copy of "Conducting Effective Meetings" (www.masc.sc/resources/publications.htm).

Downtown retail continued from page 8

specials and light refreshments. The evening will wrap up with the official City of Beaufort Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and a special concert by the Parris Island Marine Corps Band.

With active downtowns in many South Carolina cities, shoppers can find

alternatives to cookie-cutter retailers and a chance to celebrate an old-fashioned holiday season with their neighbors.

Conway, Hartsville and Beaufort are members of Main Street South Carolina. Main Street South Carolina empowers citizens with the knowledge, skills, tools

and organizational structure necessary to revitalize their downtowns into vibrant centers of commerce and community.

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Cities need to plan for technology with an IT strategic document

Sometimes city leaders can't see the value in technology.

That was the case in Newton, N.C., said Shannon Howle Schelin, director of the Center for Public Technology at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government. A city councilmember said he'd like to see the number of city computers cut from 100 to two. The council froze the city's information technology budget.

Schelin asked city leaders to create wish lists of programs for their agencies. Councilmembers quickly realized they couldn't reach their goals – or fulfill their election promises – without technology.

"Nothing happens without IT," Schelin said.

Local governments need to make good strategic IT investments through planning, adequate investment, a means to measure progress and the flexibility to adapt to new products coming online, Schelin said.

Cities should create guiding principles for technology and view it as necessary for all departments, she said. A good IT strategic plan seeks to use technology to support the business objectives of the organization, help to conduct business electronically and ensure access to information and services while maintaining privacy, Schelin said.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina has been encouraging cities for several years to create an IT strategic plan, said Deputy Executive Director Miriam Hair.

"Many times, cities decide where they want to be but fail to put a plan in place to get there," she said. "We have been urging them to ask how technology can be used to effectively get them where they want to be."

It helps for all cities, large and small, to prioritize, create a plan and set a budget, Hair said. Cities should take the same sort of steps in creating a technology plan as they would in implementing a wastewater plan, she said.

Technology is important because it provides the vehicle from which accurate, reliable and timely information is produced for strategizing, identifying objectives, improving productivity and facilitating service delivery, Schelin said. The challenge is how to use technology to create a public value, she said.

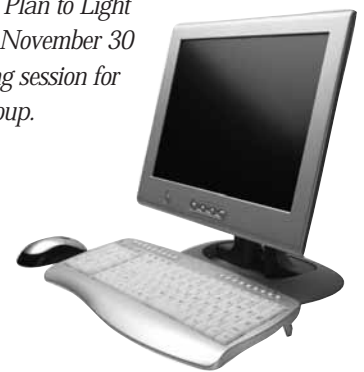
"You can't get public value or a better division of labor if you don't look at it in the long term," Schelin said.

Usually, about 1 to 1.5 percent of a city's general fund budget goes to IT, "but 99 percent of everything you do in government relies on technology," Schelin said.

A strategic IT document is essential to better plan for money, resources and growth, she said. To create a plan, it's important to conduct surveys and best practices research with department heads, staff, budget personnel and elected officials. Focus groups also are key in determining IT strengths and weaknesses now and in the future, Schelin said. A strategic plan needs to be a living, breathing document that can be implemented and updated as necessary, she said.

An IT strategic plan should be viewed as a business opportunity for local government, Schelin said. "Show them how much work we can do as a result of having this network."

Schelin spoke to IT professionals at the August meeting of the Municipal Technology Association of South Carolina, an affiliate of MASC. She also will speak on "Bringing the IT Plan to Light" at the November 30 training session for the group.



Classifieds

■ The City of Mauldin is accepting applications for a police officer. Send resume and application to City of Mauldin, PO Box 249, Mauldin SC 29662, Attn: Chief M. Bryan Turner by November 15. Application packets are available at www.mauldin.govoffice.com or City Hall.

■ The City of Anderson is seeking a downtown development director. Send completed application to 401 South Main St., City Hall Building, 1st floor, Personnel Office, Anderson, SC 29624. Application available at www.cityofandersonsc.com or City Hall. Call 864.231.2209 with questions. Applications accepted until position filled.

■ The City of Mauldin is seeking an economic development/planner. Send application to City of Mauldin, PO Box 249, Mauldin, SC 29662, Attn: Human Resources. Applications available at www.mauldin-sc.gov or City Hall. Contact Trey Eubanks at 864.289.8890 with any questions.

If you use words, use the right ones

By Dr. Henry T. Price

People in manufacturing know that there's a right way to do things and a wrong way. Industry spends a lot of money making sure things are done right because they know that doing them wrong will cost a lot more.

But even if you do things right, and even if you manufacture the finest product in the world, people have to know about it before they buy it. In order to tell them about your product, you have to use words — and you have to use them well.

It's too bad that business doesn't always apply the same quality control standards to its writing that it does to its manufactured products. All too often these days, promotional materials that come through the mail or are presented in ads contain errors in grammar or spelling. Those errors are costly.

We live in the "Information Age," a time when information often determines success or failure. Some go so far as to say that, without precise and concise information, businesses can't succeed and people can't advance.

The irony is that, while precise and concise information has become an essential commodity, the ability of many people to produce it has declined dramatically. Writing is a skill that is no longer taught well. It's one thing to have what you want to say locked firmly in your brain. It's quite another to transmit that information, precisely and concisely, into someone else's brain.

For those who might wish to do something about the problem, the choices of where to start are so numerous that they are daunting.

Do you begin with grammar? After all, it provides the necessary foundation, the building blocks. Do you start with usage? Mark Twain said that if you want to say clearly what you mean, the importance of selecting the right word is like deciding between "lightning" and "lightning bug."

Do you first talk and teach about sentence construction and the proper use of punctuation? All of these elements are needed if you want to communicate precise and concise information. And don't forget about the dreaded cliché and its equally debilitating sibling, overwriting, both of which drain writing of its power.

Which of these approaches would your business take to make a point:

"A concept of the facility was presented April 16 to the directors and received enthusiastic response. Needless to say, we are delighted. It goes without saying that these are tough financial times."

"We are delighted that the directors have enthusiastically approved a concept of the facility, but these are tough financial times."

A little thought reduces 32 words to a punchier 20. And, of course, you remember your fifth grade "language arts" teacher telling you that if some-

thing is "needless to say" or "goes without saying," then don't say it.

Many people have difficulty deciding whether to use "that" or "which" in a sentence. They aren't interchangeable. And what about "because of" and "due to"? They aren't interchangeable, either. The same is true about "over" and "more than."

Notice that the question mark after "due to" goes outside the quotation mark, but the period after "more than" is inside. Simple rules for punctuation often are ignored. A lot of people don't know the difference, but many who receive business communications do. Why risk turning off the ones who do?

Remember, while your product might be the very best of its kind, most people aren't going to buy it just to find out. You're going to have to use words to persuade them. Make sure those words are working for you and not against you.

Dr. Price, a consultant with Sam E. McCuen and Associates, taught copy editing and writing for more than 30 years at the University of South Carolina.

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A helpful resource to use is "Working with Words, A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors" by Brian S. Brooks, James L. Pinson and Jean Gaddy Wilson.

MASC now accepting credit cards

Starting October 8, the Municipal Association of SC began taking credit card payments (MasterCard and Visa) for publications and mailing label orders. In the near future, MASC will take credit card payments for other services.

"This step moves us closer to our ultimate goal of allowing registrations and payments online," said MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall. "We anticipate offering online registration for our February *Hometown*, SC Legislative Action Day."





Educational Opportunities

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **November 9**, will hold its fourth quarterly meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia. Topics include MS4 implementation and the realities of pollutant removal.

SC Utility Billing Association

■ **November 13**, will hold its Fall Meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia. Topics include teambuilding for success and top customer service complaints and how to handle them.

Communications Workshop

■ **November 29**, the Municipal Association will hold a training session at MASC's office in Columbia on communications topics such as public speaking, creative uses of public access channels, media relations and message development.

SC Municipal Insurance Trust and SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund

■ **November 29**, will hold their Annual Meetings at the Clarion Townhouse in Columbia from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

■ **November 30**, will hold a meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia. Topics include ethical hacking, implementing an IT strategic plan and legal issues surrounding data retention.

SC Municipal Human Resources Association

■ **December 5-7**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville. Topics include succession planning, workers' compensation and wrongful terminations.

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

■ **December 7**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 200 Stoneridge Drive in Columbia. Topics include code of conduct for elected officials, e-discovery and the Fair Housing Act.

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

■ **January 23-25**, will hold its Spring Meeting and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks Region III Meeting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Greenville.

SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **February 19**, will hold Sessions A and B at the Columbia Marriott.

Hometown, SC Legislative Action Day

■ **February 20**, will be held at the Columbia Marriott.

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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