OCTOBER 2016

MASC Municipal Association of South Carolina

UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

Evidence of the Columbia Canal collapse remain visible a year after the historic 2015 flood.

One year later, cities take steps, lessons from flood

At a city managers meeting in January, Forest Acres City Administrator Mark Williams asked for a show of hands of those who were affected by last October's catastrophic flood.

He was surprised by what he saw.

"Almost every single hand went up in the room," Williams recalled from the meeting in January. "We were so focused on our own localized problems that I don't think we really understood what was happening to the entire state."

The October 2015 rains claimed 19 lives, decimated roadways and brought billions of dollars in damage to the state. A year later, local governments are still putting communities back together.

For the City of Forest Acres, this month brings additional pain.

The city not only marked the flood but also memorialized Greg Alia, the Forest Acres police officer who was fatally shot in the line of duty on September 30. Williams said the severity of the flooding to come was becoming apparent the day after the city buried Officer Alia on October 3.

"We were standing at his funeral in the rain when it started," said Williams. By the next day, city officials knew they were in for a dangerous weather event.

City employees worked overtime, and public safety employees were displaced for months after the police station was flooded.

In neighboring Columbia, four wastewater treatment employees stayed to man the plant after state officials recommended evacuation. The four managed the wastewater that was coursing through the 60 million-gallon-per-day plant. At one point, the volume reached nearly triple that amount, the greatest volume in the plant's history.

State environmental officials recommended staff evacuate and shut down the plant due to concerns about the

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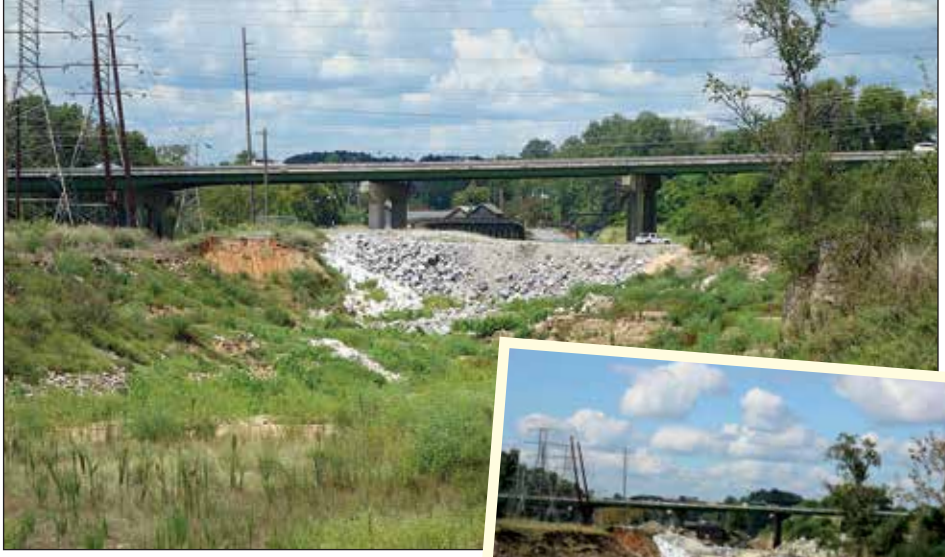

Temporary repairs to the breached Columbia Canal dike remain visible in September 2016.

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condition of a nearby dike. But the four employees stayed.

"Had the plant been evacuated and shut off, raw sewage would have poured into the river, surrounding neighborhoods and city streets, and drastically impacted Columbia's citizens," stated the city's news release.

In neighboring Forest Acres, flood damaged at least 180 homes, of which Williams estimates at least 15 percent remain displaced.

"One in particular that has plagued me was an elderly retiree who didn't have flood insurance, and her home was a 100 percent loss," said Williams.

Then something unexpected happened. The woman's mortgage company erased her debt.

"It was a blessing for her," said Williams. "I wish everyone had done as well." He said the city continues to help a handful of property owners pursue federal hazard mitigation grants.

"The flooding was clearly magnified by the failure of the dams," said Williams. "The ones that are being restored I am pretty sure will have a lot more scrutiny, better engineering, and hopefully be able to sustain weather like we experienced last year without fear of failure."

In the meantime, debris that entered the city's drainage channels during last year's flood remains.

"I'm concerned there is a potential for debris in another heavy rainfall to float together and form a dam, and start causing more problems," said Williams.

The city is working with the SC Department of Natural Resources and has communicated with Richland County and the City of Columbia to collaborate on cleaning up Gills Creek, one of the hardest hit bodies of water.

Meanwhile, the City of Cayce is still completing $200,000 in repairs to the Thomas Newman boat landing dock and nearly $1.5 million in repairs to the Riverwalk. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will cover 75 percent of the costs.

Bad flood, good data

For the Charleston Water System, the flood presented a valuable test. Despite 700 miles of sewer pipe, there were only seven sanitary sewer overflows.

The system's major pump stations are equipped with a telemetry system, which helps the Charleston Water System keep tabs remotely on what is going on out in the system.

"This proved very helpful during the historic floods in October, and we avoided widespread sanitary sewer overflow," said Matthew Brady, communications manager for the Charleston Water System.

What's more, he said, the data they collected during the flood helped them identify areas of infiltration/inflow, which refers to instances when the system receives extra flows into the system from situations like unusually large volumes of rain water.

The city's sewer system is separate from its stormwater system and wasn't designed to take in that extra water.

The Water Environment Federation selected the City of Columbia Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant staff, (l-r) Brandon Wilcox, Adrian Martin, Ashley Dove and James Foust, for its national 2016 Water Heroes Award for responding bravely during Columbia's historic October 2015 flood. Photo/City of Columbia

"We are targeting the areas we identified for further evaluation and repair," Brady said.

Communicating—now and in the future

In the City of Cayce, at least one key lesson emerged from the flood, according to the city spokesman: It is critical to use relationships with the media to allow for open communication with residents, businesses and schools.

And in the Charleston area, last year's natural disaster is driving officials to embark on a specific public information effort.

"This is also a good opportunity to remind people not to flush things like sanitary wipes. They are harmful to the sewer system and proved to be problematic during this rain event," said Brady.

Wet wipes have been known to harm wastewater systems of all sizes, despite manufacturers' claims that they are flushable. Add an historic flood event, and the problem only worsened.

"The additional flow we received from the rain caused a significant number of wipes to break free, thus clogging our system," said Brady. "As such, we've increased our campaign to remind customers to not flush wipes."

Post-flood: A flexible system

The City of West Columbia is still fixing parts of its Riverfront Park and making roadway repairs. Plus, a doubling of organic compounds at the Lake Murray Water Treatment Plant led city officials to work with the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control to devise a more versatile disinfection process.

"We saw some elevated levels of disinfection byproducts due to increased organics in our source water resulting from the flood of 2015," said Brian Carter, city administrator of West Columbia. The city performed a study to determine if it was feasible to move the disinfection point later on in the water treatment process and still achieve the required amount of disinfection, while minimizing the formation of disinfection byproducts.

"The study validated our assumptions, and this was submitted to DHEC to get permission to move our disinfection point," said Carter. "What it allowed us to do is take out a lot of the organics before we were disinfecting."

Carter said the importance of foresight proved to be another valuable lesson. For example, it helped to send crews to gather yard debris ahead of the rain event. Days before last year's flood reached its peak, city employees aggressively cleared debris away from storm drains. This early push put the city in a much better position as the rain pounded the state.

As for other lasting changes, Carter said, "There is certainly more discussion on the interconnectivity of our utility systems with our neighbors, the City of Columbia and the City of Cayce."

NEWS BRIEFS

The **Greer Commission of Public Works** won two awards. The National Association of Clean Water Agencies awarded a Gold Peak Performance Award to Greer's Maple Creek wastewater plant after it met all the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit limits during the 2015 calendar year. The American Public Gas Association honored the Greer CPW with its silver-level System Operational Achievement Recognition for "excellence in operating its natural gas utility."

The Municipal Association of South Carolina hired **Caitlin Cothran** as assistant manager for collection programs. She is the former city administrator of the City of Landrum.

The **SC Business Licensing Officials Association** awarded nine individuals with the Accreditation in Business Licensing designation and four individuals with the Masters in Business Licensing designation. Earning their ABL designation in June and August: James Absher, City of Lancaster; John Rabon, Town of Springdale; Jane Ciucevich, City of Greer; Dougie Rumsey, City of Anderson; Nicole Kindzia, Town of Surfside Beach; April Bigham-Akins, Town of Hilton Head; Kent Bold, Town of Kiawah Island; Victoria Messina, Beaufort County; and Faith Scruggs, City of Simpsonvile. Earning their MBL designations between December and May: Al Johnson, City of Beaufort; Bruce Seeley and Barbara Wooster, Town of Hilton Head Island; and Michelle Paulchel, City of Cayce. The MBL requires obtaining the ABL designation plus accumulating 50 experience points.

Business Licensing Officials Association celebrates 30 years

Recognizing the value of collaborating, 105 business licensing officials from 56 cities gathered in Columbia in September 1986 to organize the South Carolina Business Licensing Officials Association. As it celebrates its 30th anniversary, BLOA, which the Municipal Association of SC organized as an affiliate, continues to develop training opportunities for its members.

One of the initial benefits BLOA provided to members was a telephone referral service, in which attorney Roy Bates answered members' questions about business licensing. Bates also wrote the original *Business Licensing Handbook*, which BLOA furnished as a benefit to each member. A frequently updated version of the handbook endures as the go-to resource for licensing officials today.

"When I was a rookie business licensing official, we relied on in-house training from fellow city employees to learn on the job," said founding member and past president Brenda Kyzer, who currently serves as the Municipal Association's manager for collection programs.

"But when we started attending BLOA meetings, I felt like the world opened up. BLOA gave all of its members the opportunity to learn from one another."

Today BLOA continues its tradition of extensive training by offering two professional certification programs, two annual training meetings, regional training by council of governments district and the most active listserve among all of the Municipal Association's affiliates.

In 2017, BLOA members, through the Business Licensing Task Force, will continue their work on legislation to standardize business licensing processes and make doing business easier across the state.

Business licensing officials across the state have much to celebrate from their past. But their dedication and professionalism will lead them to great opportunities as they embark on another 30 years.

Building Officials Association of SC joins Municipal Association

The Building Officials Association of SC recently became the Municipal Association's 12th affiliate organization.

"Our association is excited about the many business advantages that partnering with the Municipal Association will bring," said BOASC President Buddy Skinner. "We are also encouraged to share with the Association a wealth of building knowledge and a new perspective about our industry."

The Municipal Association will provide a variety of services to BOASC under an affiliate agreement. As with its other affiliates, the Municipal Association will coordinate BOASC's meetings, promote membership in the group, and provide training and professional staff support.

"Bringing BOASC on board is just another example of how cities and towns can work together to improve the training and professional development offered to city employees," says Municipal Association Executive Director Miriam Hair.

One of BOASC's first projects with the Association will be to develop model administrative policies and procedures that cities and counties can adopt as part of their building codes ordinance. BOASC and the Association will work to raise awareness of building officials' roles in public safety. And BOASC plans to increase the number of training opportunities it offers to its members.

"Through the Municipal Association's tried-and-true methods of marketing, training and planning, we hope to achieve our ultimate goal of increasing the profile of the building official and promoting a more safely built environment for all," said Skinner, who is also the City of Greenville's building codes administrator.

For information about membership, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: building officials) or contact Scott Slatton, legislative and public policy advocate, at sslatton@masc.sc or 803.933.1203.

Building codes FAQ

Why do cities and towns adopt and enforce building codes?

Councils adopt and direct enforcement of building codes to protect life and property. Unsafe construction or alteration of buildings poses a significant public safety threat. Therefore, cities adopt and enforce building codes to ensure risks to the public are reduced.

City building officials and fire marshals are responsible for enforcing building codes. Some cities in the state contract with their counties or private companies to enforce building codes.

Where do the building codes come from?

The International Code Council is the nationally-recognized, member-driven authority that writes and updates building codes that state and local jurisdictions adopt. South Carolina law requires use of ICC building codes.

The South Carolina Building Codes Council is responsible for approving and modifying ICC codes for the state. The Codes Council is made up of public and private building industry officials who are appointed by the governor. A seat on the council is designated for cities and is currently held by City of Forest Acres Councilmember Curtis Rye.

What are the most current building codes?

The 2015 South Carolina or International Building Codes with South Carolina modifications for building, residential, fire, mechanical, electrical and plumbing work are the most current codes cities must adopt and enforce. Cities are not allowed to opt out of enforcing these mandatory codes. However, South Carolina cities are not required to adopt and enforce the administrative policies or procedures within the code. Instead, cities may adopt their own administrative policies and procedures.

Cities may adopt and enforce "permissive codes," which a local government may use as needed. These include the 2003 International Property Maintenance Code, Existing Building Code, and Performance Code for Buildings and Facilities.

What happens when the codes change?

If the ICC changes a code, the Building Codes Council reviews the change and votes on whether to adopt it for South Carolina. No action is required by a city, but it must enforce the change. Building officials and contractors across the state receive training on the changes as part of their state-mandated training requirements.

How are disputes about building codes addressed?

Cities may appoint a construction board of appeals to hear and rule on disputes about building code and fire code enforcement.

How much training is required for a building official?

To enforce building codes in South Carolina, building officials must be certified by a nationally-recognized organization to conduct building code enforcement. Once certified, building officials must register with the Building Codes Council, the state body that approves building codes for use.

Building officials must complete at least 24 hours of training every two years to maintain their registration with the Codes Council. The Codes Council distributes state funding to Building Officials Association of South Carolina and other entities that offer training. All municipalities enforcing building codes must employ a certified building official. An inspector who is not a building official may only inspect areas in which he is certified.

If a building official is a member of ICC, he must complete 60 hours of training every three years to maintain his membership. The ICC is a member organization that promulgates codes for use by the industry while also providing training on the codes and the building industry.

Who hears complaints about building officials?

The SC Building Codes Council investigates and hears complaints about building officials.

For more information about the Municipal Association's latest affiliate, Building Officials Association of South Carolina, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: building officials).

Cities and towns chase balanced housing stock

Cities continually seek a mix of diverse, accessible and affordable housing options. It's a challenge to offer developments that meet the needs of a population that ranges from baby boomers to millennials.

Housing trends vary across South Carolina, with some municipalities forced to establish moratoriums on developments, while other areas experience stagnant housing markets.

The Town of Mount Pleasant has a moratorium on apartments. Officials there worried that the proliferation of multifamily projects could upset the residential balance of the community and create other issues, especially related to transportation, according to Planning Director Christiane Farrell.

"Having and maintaining the right mix of housing stock is what is important," she said.

The town recently had several new senior living facilities approved, including two that specialize in memory care and three continuing-care retirement communities. The addition of these senior living facilities likely will satisfy the town's current demands, Farrell said.

This year, Mayor Linda Page appointed a housing task force to address the availability of affordable housing. The committee will not finish its work until the end of the year but has generally agreed that more affordable and attainable housing is needed, Farrell said.

The City of North Charleston is also looking for housing solutions to address its growth.

"Most of you probably realize that the largest number of housing construction today is apartments. We're seeing a windfall of them," said North Charleston

Mayor Keith Summey, during a breakfast event before a bus tour of his city at the Association's Annual Meeting in July. "I hope that people continue seeking residences in that mode, because we're going to end up with a lot of apartments that are empty, if they don't."

Summey also pointed to the shortage of low- to moderate-income residential homes.

Growth has also driven up housing prices in Fort Mill.

"Even with hundreds of new homes being built each year, inventory remains relatively low, the number of days spent on market continues to decrease, and average home prices continue to rise," said Fort Mill Planning Director Joseph Cronin. "While this is good news if you're trying to sell a home, many working families, as well as senior citizens living on fixed incomes, have been priced out of the Fort Mill area."

Over the last 12 months, the town has issued 530 new single-family home permits, with an average construction value of just less than $385,000 per residence. Of these, only six, or 1.1 percent, were valued at less than $200,000, Cronin said. Factors that make it difficult to build more affordable housing are primarily land values, a limited number of areas which are zoned for higher density single-family and multifamily development, and the area's strong real estate market, he said.

On the other end of the spectrum, Cronin said economic development professionals have expressed concern that the Fort Mill area has a limited inventory of executive housing. Fort Mill has become a popular destination for corporate executives, and several members of the Carolina Panthers football team also have purchased homes in the area.

Most of the higher-end communities, particularly those with $1 million-plus homes on golf course lots, are substantially built out, as are most of the lakefront lots in neighboring Tega Cay, he said. Barriers to building more executive housing include competition for land from mid-range builders ($350,000 to $500,000), slower rates of return for developers and a lack of utilities in many areas zoned for low density, estate-type lots, Cronin added.

Fort Mill has seen an uptick in senior housing. This year, development began on a 731-home subdivision for residents aged 55 and over. In July of 2015, town council approved a residential rezoning for Traditions at Fort Mill, which will include 252 age-restricted apartments. And in July, council annexed a 13-acre property which will include an age-restricted 200-room continuum-of-care residential facility.

> *"Even with hundreds of new homes being built each year, inventory remains relatively low."*
>
> Joseph Cronin,
> Fort Mill planning director

During the last couple years, several low-income apartment communities have been sold and transitioned to market-rate properties, Cronin said. The majority of the tenants in these communities received housing vouchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or housing assistance through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 program. Many of the residents in these communities were senior citizens living on fixed incomes. There are very few low-income housing options in the Fort Mill area, and the conversion of these properties has further reduced the limited inventory, he said.

Smaller municipalities report a great need for additional housing stock.

The City of Hardeeville needs more senior housing, according to Brana Snowden, the city's director of planning and development. Most of the building permit applications come from the active adult communities in the city, she said.

Snowden said the city also needs more affordable housing to meet the demands of the community.

"Moderate priced workforce housing is our biggest need—housing for teachers, government workers, firefighters," she said. "In recent markets, developers and lenders have been more focused on the retirement communities or active adult communities. No one has come in to build housing for the workforce that Hardeeville is looking to grow."

Available workforce housing would also help stem the flow of people moving to Savannah, Georgia, Snowden said.

The City of Darlington, meanwhile, is poised to welcome about 30 small rental houses. It would be the first new neighborhood in the city in at least 20 years, according to Economic Development Director Lisa Chalian-Rock.

The developer, a Darlington native, wants to see the city grow, she said.

Darlington has many older, single-family homes and subsidized apartment complexes, but the city needs market-rate apartments, town homes or condos, as well as options for seniors, said Chalian-Rock.

"A diversity of housing types and price ranges would be ideal to accommodate a variety of potential new residents," she said. "Unlike in most communities, multi-family housing in Darlington has declined disproportionally to single-family housing in the last decade."

The condition of the current housing stock also affects potential growth. Many of Darlington's older houses need structural repairs and do not meet current consumer demand for greener buildings and improved energy efficiency, Chalian-Rock said.

In December, Gaffney, Williamston and Hartsville will become the first three cities to graduate from Main Street South Carolina's Boot Camp program.

Hartsville, Williamston and Gaffney first boot camp grads

The City of Hartsville is bustling with a renewed vibrancy. Boutiques, restaurants and two hotels have taken up residency downtown. In fact, a total of 41 downtown businesses have opened in Hartsville since the city joined the Main Street South Carolina program in 2014.

In December, Hartsville, Williamston and Gaffney will become the first three cities to graduate from Main Street South Carolina's Boot Camp program. The boot camp is an intensive technical assistance and training program for communities competitively selected for the Main Street SC program. The Main Street America approach focuses on a cost-effective method of attracting new investment to downtown districts while reusing the existing building stock and leveraging amenities.

During the boot camp, Hartsville created a startup challenge which offered funds and other incentives to local entrepreneurs to help them establish their businesses downtown, according to Suzy Moyd, executive director of Main Street Hartsville. Contestants received assistance in developing business plans, establishing mentors, seeking funding and finding locations. They also received help with branding, marketing, social media and promotions.

The city also established its #ConnectHartsville project, which paired local downtown merchants with students from the SC Governor's School for Science and Mathematics to create a social media presence for the businesses. The project has allowed the

businesses to strengthen their online exposure while giving students real-life educational opportunities.

Continuing to draw on the strengths of its students and young people, the city also works closely with Coker College, the private liberal arts college located in downtown Hartsville. Moyd said she includes a Coker student and faculty liaison on her Main Street Advisory Board so they can work together on events and compare needs. Many students intern with the city and Main Street Hartsville for credit hours.

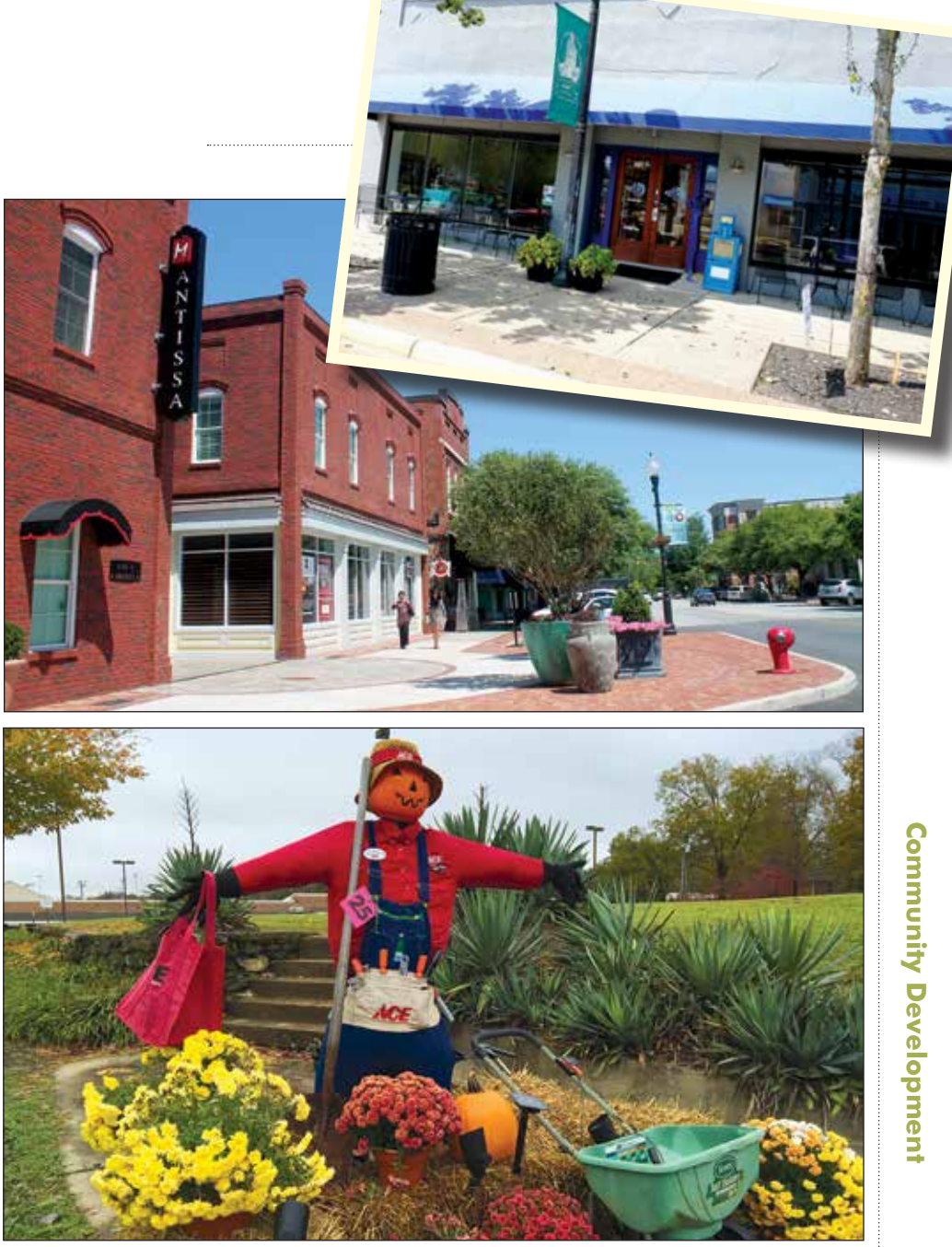
A second boot camp program graduate, the Town of Williamston, launched its Inaugural Scarecrow Decorating Contest in 2015. Local organizations, families, businesses and individuals submitted more than 40 entries. The scarecrows decorated the town throughout autumn, creating a community-driven celebration, according to Sonya Crandall, executive director of Envision Williamston.

Williamston also used signs and guides to better promote the town. The signs mark prominent locations such as the park, farmers market and town hall. They created the town's first *Dining and Shopping Guide*, featuring 20 restaurants and 33 retail establishments around town. Billboards, posters and rack cards inform residents and visitors about events in town.

Envision Williamston made efforts to attract new businesses, as well. The organization redesigned its *Business Assistance Guide* to provide contact information and explain the startup process for new businesses. It also formed a New Business Recruitment Task Force to work with business prospects and reach out to local property owners with available properties in town.

The third boot camp graduate, Gaffney, made strides in beautifying the downtown area. In June, the Gaffney Main Street Team awarded façade grants to five downtown businesses to help with building improvements, such as awnings and painting, according to Fawn Leigh, assistant director of My Downtown Gaffney.

Gaffney's new business incubator, bGEN, also received a grant to help fund a large awning for its facility. bGEN opened in May, and seven businesses and one nonprofit have already located there, Leigh said.



(top) The Mantissa Executive Suites and Spa in Hartsville was once a run-down furniture store but now features a boutique hotel with a medical spa, a fine dining restaurant and rooftop bar. (bottom) An entry in the Town of Williamston's Inaugural Scarecrow Decorating Contest. (inset) Gaffney's new business incubator, bGEN, has housed at least seven businesses. Photo/bGEN.

The building improvements sparked other beautification efforts.

"Other business owners are cleaning up their stores, painting trim, planting flowers and just becoming more involved in the process," Leigh said.

Now that the cities have completed boot camp, they will move to a second tier of the Main Street SC program where they will receive ongoing maintenance support. Other cities are also participating in the boot camp program. Georgetown and Sumter will graduate at the end of 2017, and Aiken and Moncks Corner will move to the second tier of maintenance support at the end of 2018.

Main Street SC will advertise and accept applications on a competitive basis in the fourth quarter each year for admission into the program effective January 1 of the following year. Cities interested in becoming a Main Street SC member should contact Beppie LeGrand, Main Street SC manager, at blegrand@masc.sc or 803.933.1231.

This *'simple'* crime can be costly

Litter control is an ongoing struggle for municipalities. There is time and expense involved in pickup, maintenance and beautification efforts. Yet a successful litter control program pays dividends with improved quality of life for residents, a sense of community pride, and the economic development rewards that come from attracting residents and businesses.

To change the behavior that causes litter, there must be a consistent approach to litter prevention, according to Sarah Lyles, executive director of Palmetto Pride. For instance, Palmetto Pride focus groups have found that issuing tickets would deter littering, Lyles said.

Litter control involves many stakeholders, resource assessments and community considerations. Starting a litter control program should involve law enforcement, schools and concerned residents and be supported by city councils, Lyles said. Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter introduced legislation in 2014, prompted in part by news coverage of South Carolina's problems with litter. As a result of her efforts, the SC Litter Commission was created last year in the SC Department of Natural Resources. It encourages greater cooperation, particularly between state and local officials, on litter removal and prevention.

Some cities have used code enforcement to help reduce litter. Charleston has a livability court that focuses on litter and other code violations. Rock Hill has strong codes that focus on property blight. Neeses has made litter pickup a consistent community-wide project by adopting a highway and participating in the Great American Cleanup.

Municipalities can employ a number of community improvement tactics that are not expensive, Lyles said. They can plan a citywide cleanup, involve garden clubs in beautification projects, work with local businesses to keep their grounds litter-free, assign city personnel to clean up litter in parks and other high-impact areas, and encourage people to adopt a highway or form a Palmetto Pride Clean Team.

It may take a while for the new efforts to make a noticeable difference.

"The fact is that there will always be litter," Lyles said. "Taking the time to clean it up will reduce litter in the long run. Consistent cleanup and litter prevention education will make a difference."

Litter is always a concern in the City of Clemson, where up to 100,000 people can descend upon the city for football games,

graduations or other special events. Even during an ordinary week, students pack the bars and restaurants downtown and leave behind trash.

"One of the biggest factors in having a clean community is having a clear message from city council of the importance of achieving a clean place," said Clemson City Administrator Rick Cotton. "Council's clear directive to employees of this priority will ensure that all departments contribute where possible, regardless of whether it is in your job description or not."

Clemson's horticulture and public works departments work together on cleanup and beautification efforts. The horticulture department mows, manicures and picks up trash on a stretch of highway leading into the city.

"It reflects on our community," said Tony Tidwell, city horticulturist. "We want to be inviting to visitors."

The biggest litter-causing events are football games, said Clemson Public Works Director David Conner.

The city takes pride in its cleanup efforts and has crews working throughout the night after football games so streets are clean in the morning. The city council recognized that the public works department needed extra equipment to do its job, so last year it purchased a small street sweeper that can get into parking decks and the downtown area to sweep up cups, bottles and other debris. Public works employees also work closely with the university and share equipment to do major street cleaning along the main corridors a couple times a year, Conner said.

"It's a powerful message when you see someone out there keeping the streets clean," Tidwell said. "It preaches responsibility and ownership."

The City of Greenwood makes a conscious effort to pick up litter prior to mowing rights of way, parks and other public spaces, spending hundreds of man hours annually picking up litter in the city, according to City Manager Charlie Barrineau.

Greenwood County created a Keep Greenwood County Beautiful program in 2008 to coordinate the county's "Pitch In" Litter Prevention Task Force in association with Palmetto Pride. The group organizes numerous litter cleanups and shred days. Additionally, the group coordinates the annual Lake Greenwood Cleanup Day along with Preserving Lake Greenwood. The Greenwood City/County Planning Department coordinates a monthly litter cleanup using community service assistance from the state Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services.

The biggest challenge is that litter is never-ending, and volunteers get discouraged when they feel they are not making a dent in the problem, Barrineau said. But those long-term efforts are critical, he added.

> *"There is no question this is a concern for Greenwood and the entire state of South Carolina."*
>
> Charlie Barrineau, Greenwood city manager

"I spoke to the Greenwood Realtors Association, and a local realtor told me about how litter and curb appeal many times impact the sale of property," he said. "There is no question this is a concern for Greenwood and the entire state of South Carolina."

It is often difficult for small towns to stay on top of litter-control efforts. The towns of Neeses and Norway in Orangeburg County participated in voluntary trash pickups in April. Neeses' effort was in conjunction with the Adopt-A-Highway program, and Norway's was through Palmetto Pride. The towns picked up a combined 1,575 pounds of trash.

Volunteers in Norway picked up trash on the roadways along highways 321, 400 and 332. In addition to the town's continued anti-litter efforts, its Beautification Committee is currently discussing plans to landscape Main Street (Hwy 321) to create a welcoming environment for new businesses and residents, according to Mayor Ann Johnson.

"With the continued dedication and participation of our residents, the Town of Norway is working hard toward projecting an image that is inviting to those who may consider us for their residential or commercial home," Johnson said.

Neeses Town Clerk Sonja Gleaton coordinated the Adopt-A-Highway Litter Pickup Day in her town. The town deals with a lot of litter due to its busy location as a crossroads for Savannah Highway, Neeses Highway and Ninety Six Road.

"Location, location, location," Gleaton said. "That says a lot about the amount of litter we get."

In addition, the Town of Neeses' Adopt-A-Highway group participates in litter pickup events that are sponsored by other agencies such as Keep Orangeburg County Beautiful. The town also organizes educational programs in coordination with its Crime Watch meetings to focus on how litter may affect the environment in the community.

"We do the best job we can with picking it all up, and the town is behind us 100 percent," Gleaton said.

Littering is a crime and needs to be addressed with a consistent effort, according to Jamie Nelson, past president of the South Carolina Litter Control Association, and director of the Spartanburg County Environmental Enforcement Department.

"Knowing that our cities are the cornerstones of this beautiful state we live in, litter control and the actual act of enforcing the litter laws must be at the forefront and not an afterthought in the mindset of municipal governments and police departments," Nelson said. "This so-called 'simple' crime of littering is extremely costly to municipal governments. This act has potentially cost areas possible economic growth, both by missing out on industries and new residents."

Riverfront Park in North Chalreston

North Charleston:

From wartime industrial to creative renewal

In the City of North Charleston, old industrial sites are giving way to new homes, nonprofits, breweries and startups.

It's a testament to the 44-year-old city's power of reinventing, reimagining and repurposing. Strategic land gifts and purchases, too, play a key role in the story of how the city is doing it.

A point of view underpins it all: North Charleston is different, and that's all right.

"We don't mind having three different zoning uses next to each other," Ray Anderson, special assistant to the mayor, explained to a busload of local officials participating in a mobile tour during the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting.

"We've embraced it," he said, adding that the city also spans three counties—Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester.

Anderson said the city's mayor, Keith Summey, "always talks about respect." It's an attitude that threads the city's disparate swatches together.

"As long as the different business people, industrial people and residential people understand, that's just our DNA," Anderson said. As the city expanded north, officials used more traditional land use controls.

"We are a very eclectic community," said Mayor Keith Summey.

Cultural diversity, too, seems to reflect the city's textured identity. The Charleston Naval Base closed in 1996, but the international influence the base brought to the area remained.

For instance, after the base closure, a ship repair company purchased the naval property for $9 million. Anderson said a Taiwanese ship is currently at the facility. The Taiwanese crew is there, too.

"Their kids are in our schools. They'll be here a year," said Anderson. "It's been an interesting transition."

Strategic gifts and purchases

In some cases, the city served as the residential developer. The city purchased Liberty Homes, once a neighborhood of World War II duplexes, for $4.5 million, replaced the infrastructure and created a nationally recognized sustainable, green community.

In another instance, the city is planning to donate land to a community-minded charity. North Charleston will give about 5 acres of land to Water Mission International, a faith-based engineering ministry that designs and builds clean water and sanitation equipment.

"They are an unbelievable company," said Anderson. "We're going to give them the property because of what they do." For instance, the organization assisted in the Columbia area after the flood last October.

"The bulk of their work is international with a local response only coming after natural disasters where safe drinking water is not available," said Ryan Johnson, economic development and public relations coordinator for North Charleston.

Last year the city purchased 24 acres of land in order to donate it to the Medical University of South Carolina for the home of a new pediatric medical campus. The North Charleston City Council voted in February of last year to spend up to $4 million to buy the land.

A tax increment financing district, which generated $139 million, helped pay for a new city hall, along with the new Fire Museum and other projects.

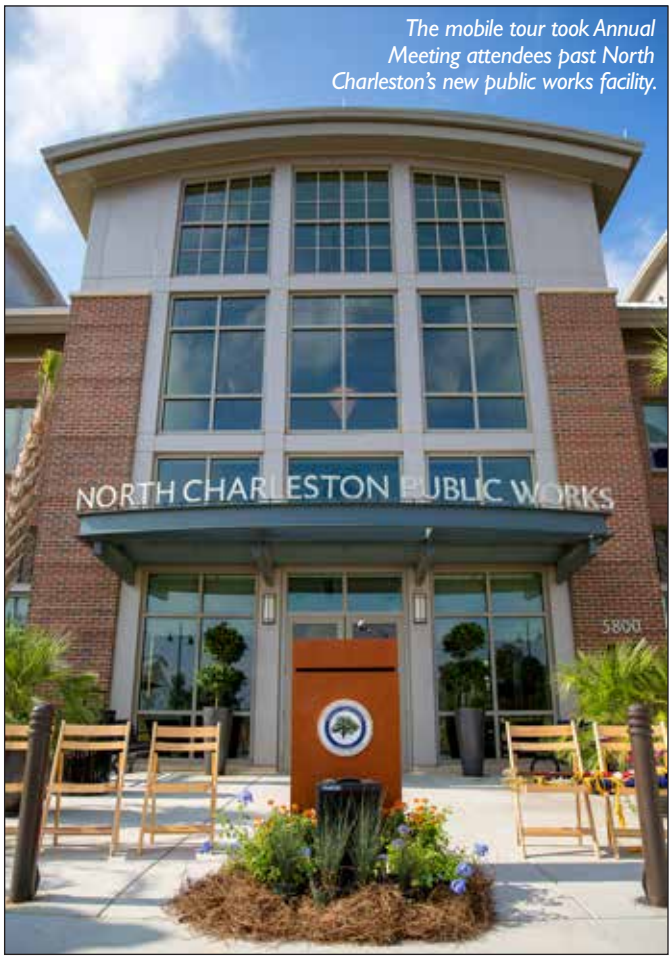
New life for old sites

Evidence of old sites becoming new is everywhere in North Charleston, where thousands of people moved during WWII to work at the Navy base and in the wartime industries.

- An industrial district that contained an old asbestos mill where fibers were spun into fire-retardant products has now attracted apartments and commercial establishments, including an outdoor advertising company and a brewery. The former mill building has been placed on the historic registry and will become offices, retail and restaurants.

- Five years ago, the city purchased the former Shipwatch Square property. The city's plan is to turn the current "food desert" area into a grocery store. But the process has been challenging, in part due to environmental concerns resulting from a past dry cleaning business. The project reflects a broader reality of repurposing industrial, and even some commercial, sites. "Everything you touch has got a brownfield component to it," said Anderson. "You just have to work through it and make it happen."

- The Centre Point area was phosphate mines in the 1920s but today is home to the Tanger Outlet Mall, as well as many other commercial establishments. The mall is part of what drives the city's No. 1 retail business status in the state.



The mobile tour took Annual Meeting attendees past North Charleston's new public works facility.

Setting an example

The City of North Charleston's approach to its future goes beyond its plans for redevelopment. The city's relationship with its workforce also figures into the city's broader vision.

For the mayor, that means looking out for the city's nearly 1,100 employees and hoping to motivate the business community to follow suit. A new $42 million public works facility sitting on 35 acres is part of that strategy.

"Our employees, who were being overlooked, now know that they've got a great place to work out of," said Summey, who was elected in 1994, making him the city's third mayor.

"One of the things that we're trying to do is set an example for private sector, and it's not just in buildings, in maintenance of buildings, and making sure that the easements are cut and cleared. It's also about respecting our employees," he said.

A key piece of that, he said, is his support for raising entry-level city salaries from $11 per hour to $15 over the next three to four years.

"We're not going to mandate the private sector follow us," said Summey. "But if we don't set the example, we'll never see it happen."

Innovating, incubating and training workers in the new economy

Landing a big, new employer is typically what equates to economic development within a city or town.

But in other cases, economic development happens in the form of gradual steps toward developing a strong workforce, nurturing startups and helping existing businesses expand.

All over South Carolina, municipalities are working with private businesses, energetic entrepreneurs and bright students to support, train and encourage a new type of economic development engine. These partnerships can take the form of incubators. It is in such settings that new ideas are given time to flourish into businesses, startups gather business advice, and nonprofits connect with cities to grow the next generation of engineers or scientists.

"Entrepreneurs are everywhere. There are smart, motivated entrepreneurs in every community," said David Warner, the director of the Technology Incubator at Knowledge Park in Rock Hill. "You need to find a way to identify them."

In Bluffton, the Don Ryan Center for Innovation has been helping innovative startups and early stage companies since it opened about four years ago as a partnership between the town and Clemson University. The center offers office space, resources and hands-on consulting support. Plus participating firms can connect with business mentors, technology expertise, product development and marketing assistance, intellectual property research and other services.

Most of the 28 companies that have gone through the program are still in business, according to David Nelems, the center's executive director. The most recent survey of firms that graduated showed 88 people work for the startups, generating a total impact of $5 million in annual payroll and $25 million in revenues. The types of companies grown in the Bluffton incubator span the business spectrum. "We focus on the word 'innovation,'" he said.

Among the Ryan Center's success stories is a business started by a graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, who began by digitizing brochures for marine sales, and eventually created a custom resource management system that tracks sales and services. "This will be a $20 million to $30 million company in a couple years, all based in Bluffton," Nelems said.

Another startup at the center is building a virtual reality headset for real estate sales. The business is expected to double its sales this year, he added.

"We know the majority of job growth is from small businesses. We have had several large companies recruited to Bluffton over time, but it's hard to hit a grand slam like that a lot," Nelems said. Instead, he said, it's important to help people turn their ideas into a profitable business.

That's what's also happening in Rock Hill, which operates an incubator program similar to Bluffton's.

Rock Hill, once home to more than 20 textile mills, suffered like many cities in South Carolina when the mills cut production or closed several decades ago. The area successfully recruited some new industries to business parks, but during the recent recession, Rock Hill and other municipalities began to understand the

importance of creating jobs through small and medium-sized businesses and startups.

About four years ago, the City of Rock Hill began developing a community-owned and operated incubator. David Warner, the director, calls it "home-grown economic development." He and a team from Rock Hill took classes from Clemson professors to learn about launching companies and the commercial use of technology. In August 2013, seven companies moved into the new Technology Incubator at Knowledge Park, which is run as a nonprofit.

"It's been successful beyond anybody's imagination," Warner said.

The incubator is part of the larger Knowledge Park plan. What has made it successful is its tie to urban redevelopment in Rock Hill that includes the old textile district, downtown and Winthrop University, he said.

"Knowledge Park has no hard boundary. It's energy. It's not about buildings. It's about people working. It's about job and talent development. It's more than real estate," said Warner, adding that the city, Winthrop University, York Technical College, local entrepreneurs and others all are working together. "It's unprecedented cooperation. We are all pulling on the oars in the same way."

For the City of Clemson, the research by faculty, staff and students at Clemson University is driving the startup businesses that are spending time in incubators. Two incubators, called Think Tanks, provide space where startups, entrepreneurs and small businesses can work and collaborate with each other. A third Think Tank will open soon, all located downtown close to the university.

"Our general objective, all woven into our comprehensive plan, is all designed to promote entrepreneurs," said Todd Steadman, planner for the City of Clemson.

City officials accomplish much of that by staying in regular communication with the researchers at the university whose work lends itself to startup business.

"They (researchers) are aware that we are here to help, and we are on their radar. We want to be in the forefront of their minds," Steadman said. "We are aware of what's available, and we build relationships. It's important to take time to understand your marketplace."

DIG STEM festival provided hands-on learning to children in Williston. Photo/Quentin D. Curry, Eyedew Photography

A joint city-university advisory board works to improve communication between various parts of the university and the city, making sure university researchers and entrepreneurs know what the city can provide for startups. Earlier this summer, an economic development committee was resurrected in Clemson, pulling members of the area colleges and universities together with the chamber of commerce, business community and city officials.

Other municipalities around the state are also involved with nonprofits that are working to grow the next generation of entrepreneurs, scientists and engineers.

One of those nonprofits, DIG, which stands for the Dreams, Imagination and Gift Development Program, was founded by Steven Brown in 2013. A native of Williston who went on to earn an electrical engineering degree at the University of South Carolina, Brown knew the challenges faced by small, rural towns. He also knew the talent pool that was often overlooked in these areas.

"We believe big dreams can be achieved in small places," Brown said. "But these kids have had zero exposure to many of these types of STEM jobs."

DIG recruits mentors to work with students and organizes monthly field trips to STEM-focused businesses. A STEM summer camp for first through eighth graders drew 98 kids (with a waiting list) this year. In April, DIG teamed with the Town of Williston to hold a festival that drew 2,000 people to the rural Barnwell County town. Students competed in a STEM competition, rode 3-D virtual rides, held reptiles courtesy of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory and explored other learning activities.

"There was a large education component, trying to encourage young people to go into STEM careers," Williston Town Administrator Kenny Cook said. "It's been done in the Upstate and Greenville and the Lowcountry, but this group wanted to have a test area in a rural area, so they chose us."

Brown said rural areas are a good place to look for the next generation of engineers and entrepreneurs.

"When you are from a small town, you are naturally innovative," Brown said. "The same things needed in large areas are needed in small areas. Our kids want to come back and start businesses here."

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Calendar

For a complete listing of training opportunities, visit www.masc.sc to view the calendar.

OCTOBER

19 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Fall Session. Marriott Columbia. Sessions include "Advanced Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations" and "Municipal Utility Policy and Administration."

25-28 SC Business Licensing Officials Association/Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association Joint Academy. Marina Inn at Grand Dunes, Myrtle Beach. Topics include business licensing legislation, the auditor selection process and updates to the Freedom of Information Act.

NOVEMBER

2-4 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Annual Meeting. Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach. Topics include challenging employee behaviors, emotional intelligence and transgender issues.

10 Risk Management Services Annual Members Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.

17 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Fourth Quarter Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. Topics include stormwater ponds research and best management practices.

DECEMBER

2 SC Municipal Attorneys Association Annual Meeting. Embassy Suites Columbia-Greystone. Topics include redistricting, cell towers, substance abuse and mental health.

JANUARY

31 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Sessions A and B and Advanced Institute. Marriott Columbia. Sessions include "Advanced Budgeting and Finance" and "Advanced Leadership and Governance."

FEBRUARY

1 Hometown Legislative Action Day. Marriott Columbia, 1200 Hampton St.

MARCH

5-7 South Carolina Utility Billing Association Annual Meeting. Sonesta Resort Hilton Head Island.

23 Municipal Technology Association of South Carolina Spring Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.