

Greer Mayor Rick Danner (l) and Orangeburg Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (r)

## Being an ambassador for your city

The Hometown Legislative Action Day in February featured a frank, insightful and humorous discussion by Orangeburg Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter who talked to meeting participants about how they can be more effective advocates for their cities and towns.

Greer Mayor Rick Danner (and the Association's past president) engaged Cobb-Hunter in a lively conversation that focused on how city officials can make sure their legislative delegation knows what is happening back home in their cities and towns.

Bottom line, Cobb-Hunter stressed is staying in touch, especially when you aren't asking for something. "City officials and legislators represent the same people," she noted, "and they should be just as interested as you are in what's going on in your city."

She gave meeting participants a peek behind the curtain by talking about how she and legislators learn about issues. She said most legislators look at issues through the lens of their personal experience noting her background as a social worker.

There are a number of considerations Rep. Cobb-Hunter said she takes into account. "I look at my life experiences. I see it as a blessing to serve so I'm always interested in doing what can make the most difference for the most people. I think you'll find most legislators look at things this way."

"I see public service is about making life better for others, and I do it through the lens of my background. I take on issues I like or that someone has brought to us that I think is worthy."

*Ambassador, page 2 >*

### In This Issue

**Annual Meeting  
registration  
begins in May**

**Page 2**

**Frequently Asked Questions:  
executive sessions and the SC  
Freedom of Information Act**

**Page 6**

### Special Section: Housing

**Downtown  
living**

**Page 12**

**Facing homelessness  
in the Palmetto State**

**Page 14**

# In this ISSUE

Annual Meeting registration begins in May ..... 2

On-demand courses get officials up to speed quickly ..... 3

Annual budget preparation ..... 4

52 graduate from Institute ..... 5

Gangs in South Carolina ..... 6

Frequently Asked Questions: executive sessions and the SC Freedom of Information Act ..... 6

Municipalities are turning the keys to success ..... 7

## Special Section: Housing

There's no place like home ..... 9

Day In the Life of housing officials ..... 10

Downtown living ..... 12

Facing homelessness in the Palmetto State ..... 14

Liability issues of donated buildings ..... 15

President: **Mayor Joe McElveen**  
Sumter

Executive Director: **Miriam Hair**  
mhair@masc.sc

Managing Editor: **Reba Campbell**  
rcampbell@masc.sc

Editor: **Mary Brantner**  
mbrantner@masc.sc

Associate Editor:  
**Meredith Houck**  
mhouck@masc.sc

Contributing Writers:  
**Eric Budds, Amy Edgar Geier,  
Urica Floyd, Ken Ivey, Meredith  
Kaiser and Clare Morris**



Sumter Mayor Joe McElveen, president of the Municipal Association, encouraged municipal officials to build relationship with their local legislators throughout the year.

### Ambassador, from page 1 >

Ongoing communication is key if you want your legislators to stay engaged and understand how what happens at the State House affects the cities and towns they represent, Cobb-Hunter said.

"I'm not sure all of you are convinced it's important for us to understand what's going on in your cities," Cobb-Hunter said. "Your job as mayor or council is to reach out to the delegation and explain the importance of your city and what you do. It's so important we all work together. It's got to be a mutual thing. Like everything else, it boils down to lack of communication. You have to take the responsibility to educate us."

"You have got to understand the importance of talking to us as part of your

social network. You need to call us when you see us doing things you don't like or understand. Nothing is going to change until you can sit and talk about the realities of the challenges that face this state."

Cobb-Hunter said local officials cannot assume legislators understand what happens in cities. "You've got to be an ambassador for your city," she said. "You've got to get personal and put a face on what you're talking about."

After Rep. Cobb-Hunter's remarks, Sumter Mayor Joe McElveen, president of the Municipal Association, said, "She hit the nail on the head when she said our voice matters. If our legislators don't hear from us, they won't know what's important to our cities and towns...and she made it clear that matters."

## Annual Meeting registration begins in May

The Municipal Association's 2014 Annual Meeting is scheduled for July 10 -13 at the Charleston Place Hotel. The Association will continue using the same registration/reservation process as in recent years to ensure municipal officials receive priority for hotel reservations.

The Association's online process involves scheduled phone appointments on May 28 and 29 for municipal representatives to make hotel reservations and register municipal attendees for the meeting.

The Association will conduct a drawing on May 21 to determine the order of these appointments. To participate in the drawing, each municipality must select a representative (only one per city/town). The representative must register online for the drawing by May 20.

Municipal representatives will receive a confirmation indicating their entry into the drawing. Following the drawing on May 21, Association staff will notify representatives of their appointment times and will post the list of all appointment times online.

During the 30-minute scheduled phone appointments on May 28 and 29, an Association staff member will call the city representative and assist in making online registrations/reservations for all the elected and appointed

# On-demand courses get officials up to speed quickly

In today's technology-driven world, accessing the latest movies and television programs on demand is what we have come to expect. After months of development, the Municipal Association began offering elected officials on-demand versions of some of the courses required for completing the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government.

Officials can now access two of the five required courses, "Municipal Economic Development" and "Forms of Municipal Government" through the Association's website at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEO). The on-demand options allow officials to take the courses on a day and time that is convenient for them, to complete courses at their own pace, and to save travel time and costs to attend in-person training.

Councilmember David Merchant of Sumter needed both on-demand required courses to graduate from MEO in February. He appreciated the availability of the on-demand courses. "As a newly elected official on council for just more than a year now, the on-demand courses brought me up to speed very quickly on things that I had been hearing but didn't know a lot about," explained Merchant. "I also especially liked the convenience of taking the courses online."

To graduate from the Institute, participants must complete two day-long classes

and five courses broadcast to the ten regional councils of governments' offices. Some of the broadcast courses are available on demand. By the end of the year, the Association will add more on-demand options for required courses.

"Elected officials can check their progress for completing Institute requirements by logging on to the Association's website," explained Urica Floyd, the Association's staff associate for distance learning. "Once logged on, officials can view their Institute transcript that is accessible from the Member Home Page."

The next scheduled broadcast sessions are "Municipal Governance and Policy" and the "Freedom of Information Act in SC" to be held on Thursday, May 15, from 6 – 9 p.m. Registration and a light dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m. The deadline to register online is Monday, May 5.

## Courses required for graduation

1. Basic Budgeting and Municipal Finance
2. Municipal Governance and Policy
3. Freedom of Information Act in SC
4. Municipal Economic Development (available on demand)
5. Forms of Municipal Government (available on demand)
6. Session A
7. Session B

officials from the municipality. Staff will allow the representative to register only municipal elected officials and employees during the appointment.

To complete the registration/reservation process, the representative must have a Visa or MasterCard with a sufficient credit limit and per transaction limit to pay for the registrations and hotel deposits. Nonrefundable hotel deposits and registration fees are collected during the reservation process.

To prepare for the registration appointment, the representative must have completed registration forms, including both housing and meal ticket requests, for each person being registered.

Reservations must be made using the Association's online registration system.

## 2014 Annual Meeting Important Dates and Information

- Host hotel: Charleston Place Hotel
- Registration material available online: April 24
- Registration brochure mailed: May 8
- Deadline for municipal representatives to enter drawing for online registration/reservation appointment: May 20
- Drawing: May 21
- Municipal representative registers officials during the city's assigned appointment: May 28 and 29
- Registration opens for all nonmunicipal attendees: May 30
- Hotel reservation deadline: June 9
- Preregistration deadline: June 23

# NEWS BRIEFS

**Venyke Harley** joined the Municipal Association's staff in February as loss control manager for Risk Management Services. She will provide risk management and technical assistance to the members of the SC Municipal Insurance Trust and the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund. Harley has more than 14 years of human resources and risk management experience in both the public and private sectors, serving most recently as the human resources director for Orangeburg County.

**Jennifer Gray** joined the Municipal Association's staff as a part-time accountant. She has more than 25 years of accounting experience as a tax preparer and auditor of governmental and nonprofit agencies



# Annual budget preparation

The key to a good budget process is a well-structured, organized and executed budget plan implemented through a team effort. While this approach is time consuming, it can greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the budget process and ensure the city complies with state mandates and uses best budgeting practices.

---

## Legal mandates for budget process

- All municipalities, regardless of size, must adopt by ordinance a balanced annual budget. Revenues must equal expenditures.
- All budget meetings are public meetings, and the municipality must provide written notice of the meeting. Written notice includes, but need not be limited to, posting a copy of the meeting agenda(s) at least 24 hours before the meeting at the town/city hall or at the building in which the meeting is to be held and notifying the press and anyone who has requested individual notice.
- General budget discussions do not qualify for executive session.
- Before adopting an annual budget, council must conduct a public hearing giving at least a 15-day public notice of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipality. SC Code of Laws, Section 6-1-80, gives specific details of what the notice must include.
- State law requires a public hearing and ordinance, approved by a positive majority vote of the municipal council, to impose new service fees. SC Code of Laws, Section 6-1-330 gives specific details of what the notice must include. A positive majority is a majority of the total members of the council, not a majority of council members present at a meeting.

---

## Legal mandates for budget calculations

- State law caps the annual increase in municipal property tax millage. A municipality may increase millage for general operating purposes in one year by the prior calendar year's average Consumer Price Index increase and the percentage increase in the city's previous year population, plus the previous three

years' total increases allowed by law but not previously imposed by council. The Office of Research and Statistics of the State Budget and Control Board furnishes population numbers.

- Municipalities with the local option sales tax must reconcile prior year LOST collections with the LOST revenue estimate used in the previous year's budget to calculate the tax credit factor. Any shortage in credit given in the current budget year must be rolled over into the calculation of the credit factor for the next year. The municipality should calculate a new LOST credit factor every year as part of the budget process.
- Once every five years, property values are reassessed for property tax purposes. In reassessment years, municipalities must adjust the millage rate to account for the change in the assessed value after reassessment, excluding the increase in value associated with new construction, the renovation of existing structures and the resale of a property. This is referred to as the rollback millage calculation. Visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: rollback millage) for specifics on the calculation.

---

## Budgeting best practices

- The most important step to a successful budget is to agree up front on the process.
- A detailed budget calendar is the most important budget tool.
- The budget process should start a minimum of three months in advance of the budget due date. Many municipalities begin budget preparation six months before the start of the new fiscal year.
- In the council form of government, city council should designate the individual(s) responsible for preparation of the budget. By state law, the mayor in the mayor-council form and the city manager in the council-manager form of government are charged with preparing the budget for council's consideration.
- A prioritized list of council goals can help in making decisions on how to allocate scarce resources in the budget process.
- Staff can expedite budget forecasting by maintaining detailed historical records

on revenue and expenditures in a format that can be easily compared and analyzed for a minimum period of three to five years.

- Council can avoid unexpected budget problems by carefully examining and adjusting prior year revenues and expenditures to account for unique situations. Examples on the revenue side include one-time revenue budgeted the prior year such as grants, collection of past due revenues, cash from insurance settlements, and opening or closing of businesses or industries. Health insurance premiums, state retirement contributions, utility rate increases and one time payments are examples of items which should be double checked on the expenditure side.

---

## Annual reporting

The council is responsible for ensuring the municipality is submitting required financial information and payments to the appropriate agencies. The start of the budget process is a good time to confirm that your municipality has completed the following tasks:

- Submit an annual audit to the state Treasurer's office by the 13th month after the city's fiscal year end or state funds may be withheld.
- Submit Local Government Finance Report to the Budget and Control Board by January 15 (Sec. 6-1-50). State funds can be withheld for failing to submit this report on time.
- Confirm that your municipality is current on submission of state court fines and victim assistance assessments to the state Treasurer's office.
- Submit annual audit to creditors, grant agencies and local banking institution(s).

*Basic budgeting is covered each year during the March Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government broadcast. Later this year, the Association will begin offering an on-demand version of this course.*

*For more information about the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEO).*



# 52 graduate from Institute

The Municipal Association recognized a large class of Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government graduates at the Hometown Legislative Action Day in February. The 52 graduates represent 38 municipalities.

For more than 25 years, the Institute has provided elected officials with a basic understanding of the operation of local government.

The Association continually evaluates the Institute's curriculum and how it delivers training to ensure the information is up-to-date and reflects current best practices. The Association also looks for ways to make the information more accessible to elected officials. This year, the Association began offering on-demand versions for some of the courses required for completing the Institute. In addition, the Association launched the Advanced Institute in February for MEO graduates. See related story on page 7.

The Municipal Association plans and presents the Institute in cooperation with the University of South Carolina's Institute for Public Service and Policy Research and Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute.

The winter 2014 graduates are, in alphabetical order, Councilmember Tara Almond of Cayce, Mayor Paul Bartley of Ridge Spring, Councilmember Jim Bright of Belton, Mayor Samuel Causey of Fairfax, Councilmember, Crosland Cox of Clemson, Councilmember John W. Ducworth of Clemson, Mayor Jake Evans of Atlantic Beach, Councilmember Cassie Fowler of Whitmire, Councilmember Nathaniel Gaines of Bowman, Councilmember Lila J. Gantt of South Congaree, Councilmember Brian Garrison of Easley, Mayor Gregrey Ginyard of Jenkinsville, Mayor John Hansen of Ware Shoals, Councilmember Jackie Harris of Lancaster, Councilmember, Allen Harrison of Blackville, Councilmember Robby Hill of Florence, Councilmember Leonard Houser of Pinewood, Councilmember Lossie Hyman of Olanta, Councilmember Josephine Isom of Atlantic Beach, Councilmember Stephen Jowers of Blackville, Councilmember Tom Klein of Port Royal, Councilmember Elizabeth. Kohlmann of Surfside Beach, Councilmember Frances Lester of Pinewood, Councilmember Mary Beth Mabry of Surfside Beach, Councilmember John Mahony of Fountain Inn, Mayor William

McMillan of Mullins, Councilmember David Merchant of Sumter, Councilmember Ella Mingo of Batesburg-Leesville, Councilmember Ginger Morrow of Inman, Councilmember Sandra Oboro-kumo of Rock Hill, Mayor David Owens of Pickens, Councilmember Laurie Parks of Camden, Councilmember Heyward Patterson of Eastover, Mayor Geraldene Robinson of Eastover, Councilmember Rhudine Robinson of Eastover, Councilmember Mindy Rogers of Calhoun Falls, Councilmember Isaiah Scipio of Pickens, Mayor Tony Scully of Camden, Mayor Sarah Sherwood of Abbeville, Councilmember Ralph Smith of Varnville, Councilmember Jackie Spann of Pinewood, Councilmember Randle Stevens of Surfside Beach, Councilmember Scott Valentine of Williston, Councilmember Michael Void of Bowman, Councilmember Steve Waddell of Travelers Rest, Councilmember Joan Walker of Ninety Six, Councilmember Odell Weston of Eastover, Councilmember Edwin Wicker of Newberry, Councilmember James Wilson of Union, Councilmember Tracy Witherspoon of Fairfax, Councilmember Ronald Young of Jonesville and Councilmember Matt Zender of Meggett.

# Gangs in South Carolina



Richland County Sheriff's  
Department Gang Unit

**R**ichland County Sheriff Leon Lott had a sobering message for mayors attending the Association's Hometown Legislative Action Day. "Gangs are throughout the state...big cities and rural areas... You will never get rid of gangs, but you can keep them from controlling your community."

South Carolina has 3,249 "documented" gang members and more than 500 gangs, according to Lott. Nationally, there are more than 1.4 million gang members.

State law defines a criminal gang as a "formal or informal ongoing organization, association or group that consists of five or more persons who form for the purpose of committing criminal activity and who knowingly and actively participate in a pattern of criminal gang activity."

Lott urged the mayors to not be in denial about gang activity in their communities. "Denial is the biggest thing that helps gangs grow. It is a sign of weakness to deny there is a problem."

"Our biggest problem in the past was that we were reactive," said Lott. "We can't just do enforcement. We have to be proactive."

Being proactive means being educated about gangs and gang activity, explained Lott. He lamented the fact there is no state-wide, central point for information about gangs. "You need to take the initiative to be educated," he advised.

For law enforcement officers, the Criminal Justice Academy covers gangs briefly during its basic training. Throughout the year, the Academy offers advanced courses on understanding of criminal gangs and their impact on law enforcement, graffiti recognition and criminal street gang investigations.

Richland County Sheriff's Department is considered a leader in gang education. In 2013, the Department was recognized by the South Carolina Gang Investigators Association for its continued efforts to stop gang violence. Richland's Gang Unit collects information on gangs and conducts gang

awareness classes free of charge to any group requesting the presentation. Lott has even given his deputies permission to provide the training in other communities, if requested.

Staff Sergeant Vince Goggins, head of the Gang Unit, gave the mayors a brief overview of the training his unit provides. Part of the presentation focused on deciphering gang graffiti. Calling graffiti a gang's billboard, Lott said, "The longer you allow it to stay up the more you are helping gangs promote themselves." Richland County deputies quickly remove gang graffiti as soon as it is discovered.

Education has to be an on-going process said Lott. Law enforcement, local officials and community members need continual training because gangs are constantly changing. Sheriff Lott mentioned three recent trends.

Just as in other parts of society, social media has had a big impact on how gangs recruit new members. "It is taking the place of gang graffiti as a recruitment tool," said Lott.

## Frequently asked questions

## Executive sessions and the SC Freedom of Information Act

### **Q. What is an executive session?**

An executive session is a portion of a council meeting that is closed to the public. Occasionally, councils may find they need to meet in executive session for the overall public good. Executive sessions must comply with state law and be used only when absolutely necessary.

### **Q. What are the circumstances that allow an executive session?**

The SC Freedom of Information Act limits municipal executive sessions to four open meeting exceptions (Section 30-4-70):

1. discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion,

- demotion, discipline or release of an employee, or an appointment to a public body;

2. discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements, discussions of a proposed sale or purchase of property, receipt of legal advice, settlement of legal claims or discussions of the public agency's position in adversary situations, discussion about development of security personnel or devices;

3. investigative proceedings or allegations of criminal misconduct; and

4. discussion of matters concerning the proposed location, expansion or provision of services encouraging location or expansion

of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body.

### **Q. How does a council properly enter executive session?**

Before going into executive session, the council must vote, in open session, to enter executive session and state the specific purpose and open meeting exception for the closed door meeting. Councils must be as specific as possible without compromising the issue. The motion to enter executive session should be specific, such as "to go into executive session to discuss applications for employment within [a specific department]" or "to discuss negotiation of

Also, gangs are moving toward more white-collar crimes, such as tax fraud, check fraud and counterfeiting. They are also involved in human trafficking and prostitution.

Finally, hybrid gangs are becoming more common. Unlike traditional gangs that formed along racial, ethnic and cultural lines, hybrids cross those lines.

According to the U.S. Justice Department, "Hybrid gang culture is characterized by members of different racial/ethnic groups participating in a single gang, individuals participating in multiple gangs, unclear rules or codes of conduct, symbolic associations with more than one well-established gang (e.g., use of colors and graffiti from different gangs), cooperation of rival gangs in criminal activity, and frequent mergers of small gangs."

Traditional gangs have a leadership structure; hybrids do not. They form to accomplish a specific task then disband quickly, making it a challenge for gang units to track them.

Lott stressed the importance of community-wide awareness, education and involvement. He explained it cannot just be the police. It has to be one team with involvement from residents, schools, businesses, neighborhoods and the faith community.

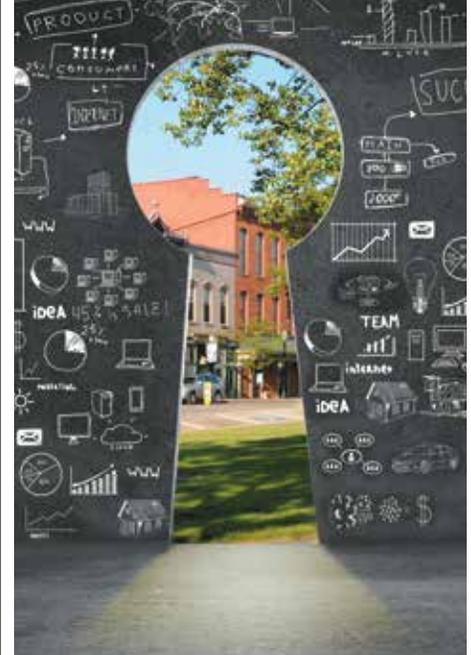
Gang activity affects the whole community. It does not recognize fences, borders

or city limits. Gang activity in one part of town affects the quality of life and sense of security for the entire community.

Recognizing the need for a team approach, numerous communities across the state are working with their sheriff's departments and other agencies.

In February, the City of Barnwell and the Town of Williston entered into an intergovernmental agreement to help fund a county gang task force. Barnwell Sheriff Ed Carroll wants to get the task force, which will focus exclusively on gang and drug activity in the rural county, started as soon as possible.

"Rural counties like ours tend to have higher unemployment rates," explained Williston's City Administrator Kenny Cook. "This lack of employment adds stress to the social fabric of the communities and makes gangs more attractive to young people having difficulty finding jobs. This in turn discourages industry from coming to your area if there is a high crime rate. It becomes this cycle of unemployment and increased gang activity. We all believed it was necessary to try to address these issues now before the situation gets even worse. What is happening now is when one town cracks down the gangs concentrate in one of the other towns. We all believed a joint effort at the county level might be an effective way to approach the problem."



## Municipalities are turning the keys to success

How can South Carolina local elected officials successfully market their hometowns for economic development? In February, the Municipal Association's new Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute class on economic development offered some keys to success.

During the day-long session, seasoned economic development professionals shared successful strategies that municipalities can use to market themselves.

"I learned a lot about different incentives and how cities and counties can work collaboratively on projects," says Summerville Mayor Bill Collins. He particularly liked the examples from Orangeburg and Greenwood that were shared as part of the curriculum.

"As a mayor in my first term, I find these sessions invaluable as Summerville wrestles with managing our challenges," Collins added.

According to Eric Budds, the Association's deputy executive director responsible for education and training initiatives, the keys to economic development success include the following:

- identifying your niche
- developing a plan to take advantage of the niche
- developing sustainable economic

*Municipalities*, page 8 >



a contract and receipt of legal advice related to a building project."

### Q. Can votes be taken in executive session?

Votes and informal polling of members may not take place in an executive session. The only action that can be taken in an executive session is to adjourn or return to public session. Section 30-4-70 (b)

### Q. What are the consequences of misusing executive sessions?

Convening an unauthorized executive session, discussing items not eligible for executive session or not disclosed

as part of the motion to enter executive session, or voting on an item in executive session are violations of state law which may result in prosecution. Additionally, improper and overuse of executive sessions erodes public trust in government.

*The Freedom of Information Act in SC is one of the topics for the May 15 session of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government. For more information about the Institute or to register for the session, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEO).*



**Municipalities, from page 7 >**

- development partnerships
- understanding the available economic development tools and resources
- working the plan
- being creative and persistent

“There are 270 cities in SC; many of them in rural areas. You have to come up with a niche and a plan then find some partners. You should be creative and persistent in how you work your plan,” said Budds.

Niche-marketing experts recommend using a diverse team to identify the community’s assets. It is important to step back and look at the big picture. According to the National League of Cities, there are seven important factors that local

leaders should look at in assessing their municipality:

1. economic conditions
2. population characteristics
3. labor force characteristics
4. physical conditions
5. business climate
6. knowledge-based resources
7. quality of life

At the advanced session, panelists from Clinton, Greenwood, Florence, North Augusta, Pickens and Ridgeway shared examples of how efforts are being made in their communities to differentiate themselves from peer cities by developing plans to exploit strategic advantages, build sustainable partnerships, apply creative financing techniques and employ sheer determination. They further emphasized success in economic

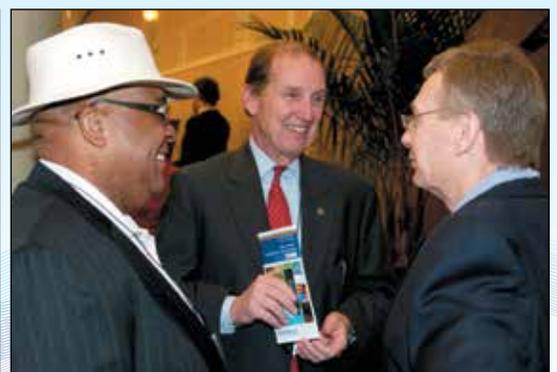
development is built by achieving a series of incremental accomplishments that feed off of each other over an extended period of time.

Economic development and public safety policy/administration were the first two topics offered by the Advanced Institute. Almost 150 municipal elected officials attended one of the two sessions on February 4.

“Serving as an elected official can be extremely complicated,” said Budds. “The intent of the Advanced Institute is to provide continuing education opportunities for local leaders who have already graduated from the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government.”

*For more information about the Advanced Institute or to review the presentations from the February courses, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Advanced Institute).*

# 2014 Hometown Legislative Action Day





# There's no place like home

For years, there has been much talk about the ways that baby boomers (born 1946-64), Generation Xers (born 1965-80), and millennials, also known as Gen Yers (born 1981-2000s), look at life. Communities must understand the differences among these generations to effectively market to all three groups of potential residents.

“The key thing to consider when marketing your community is that you have to have different housing choices,” says Nick Kremydas, chief executive officer of the SC Association of Realtors. “For instance, you might have a traditional type of design that appeals to baby boomers—smaller house with a small yard in a planned community.”

Buyers of all ages deserve viable housing options. “We have to have affordable housing choices. We should look at creative building ordinances that provide common sense solutions,” said Kremydas.

According to the “Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends” report published by the National Association of Realtors, 28 percent of millennials and 31 percent of Generation Xers make up recent home buyers.

### Millennial Case Study: Andrew Epting (28), married with no children

Andrew Epting, program director for SC Clean Energy Business Alliance and his wife, Elyse, an elementary school teacher, bought their house in 2011. The newlyweds took advantage of the \$8,000 federal new buyer tax credit.

The Eptings only looked at established neighborhoods in Columbia with easy access to downtown and close to both of

their workplaces. They fit into the national profile of what millennials look for when choosing a place to live.

“Millennials want to live close to where they work,” explained Kremydas.

With student loans approaching \$25,000, most millennials are not looking for 3000 sq. ft. homes in the suburbs. These young professionals are looking for communities with affordable rentals, town houses and starter homes near transportation, shopping, recreation and others their age.

### Generation X Case Study: Jessica Daly (41), married with four children

When purchasing her home last fall, Jessica Daly, president of the Clare Morris Agency in Columbia, looked first and foremost at the neighborhood. It was not about the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, it was all about what was best for the family.

“With small children, we needed to be near their school and all of their extracurricular activities,” explained Daly. “We had already made the mistake of buying for baths or bedrooms without really checking out the neighborhood. Those things (bedrooms and bathrooms) can be added, but you can’t change your neighborhood.”

Gen Xers across the country want to live in communities that are “cool” according to Rebecca Ryan, founder and co-owner of Next Generation Consulting. She defines cool as communities with a variety of employers, higher learning institutions and a sense of vitality with perks like bike trails, cultural centers and parks.

### Baby boomer housing trends

According to a recent report provided by Livable Communities, a national AARP initiative, the country’s expanding 50+ demographic makes it even more important to design communities to accommodate older residents.

Baby boomers want an active lifestyle, explained Jim Love, the director of congressional relations for SC AARP. “They are more active than people give them credit for. Seniors would like to eventually be untethered from the car. They want to be able to walk or bike to where they are going.”

As communities become more age-friendly, people of all ages will find them appealing,” said AARP Executive Vice President of Social Impact Nancy LeaMond. “Not only older people, but mothers with strollers and ex-joggers with knee problems will welcome crosswalks with countdown clocks and mid-crossing safe havens. You shouldn’t have to be a former Olympic sprinter to get across the street before the light changes.”

No matter how old the potential home buyer is; Kremydas feels that providing quality housing options is a team sport.

“Realtors are committed partners with our cities and state. We’re not just selling houses, we’re selling communities. It’s in our best interest to work together to improve the quality of life in SC.”

*What makes a community a great place—for people of all ages? Find innovative ideas from people across the country who are making homes, neighborhoods, cities, towns and states age-friendly places to live at [AARP.org/livable](http://AARP.org/livable).*

# A Day in the Life of housing officials

*This is part of a series of articles on the duties and responsibilities of municipal employees. For this article, we spoke with housing officials from across the state about the changes and trends in the field of housing, as well as some of the challenges and rewards of the job.*



Clarence Gaines, City of Sumter

For many housing officials, there is no greater reward than helping people realize the American dream of homeownership.

“Nothing compares to the joy of seeing first-time homeowners take the keys to their new homes at closing and the look on their face as they realize that they now hold the keys to something that is truly theirs,” said Ginny Stroud, community development administrator for the City of Greenville since 2001.

Stroud said she enjoys hearing from residents about the positive improvements in their neighborhoods. She said it is both rewarding and humbling to talk to residents living in new, affordable rental homes when they realize how much money they are now saving by being in an energy efficient home.

Stroud said she has seen positive changes in housing, with residents becoming more engaged in their neighborhoods and communities.

“Residents want to know about developments being proposed for their

neighborhood and are interested in providing input on design elements, property management, tenant selection and long-term maintenance,” she said. “They are interested in the new families moving into the neighborhood and encouraging the same level of engagement.”

The most pressing issues facing housing today are the decrease in federal funding and the tightening of lending rules—which has led to difficulties in both developing housing and qualifying individuals and families to purchase housing, Stroud said.

Workforce development, education and skill development, and connecting residents to jobs are some of the other concerns the city faces, Stroud said.

“A heart-wrenching frustration we often face is the realization

that, in some cases, no matter how affordable we make a rental home, it is still not going to be affordable enough because the household cannot earn enough money to pay the rent,” she said.

Affordable housing is a priority for many municipalities, but it is of special concern to the City of Myrtle Beach with its seasonal jobs and need for affordable workforce housing to support the service sector, said Cliff Rudd, who has been the community development administrator for the City of Myrtle Beach

for the past 19 years.

Myrtle Beach partnered with the Housing Authority of Myrtle Beach to establish the nonprofit Home Alliance, Inc. to develop affordable housing for low-income and homeless people. They have constructed apartments for low-income and formerly homeless tenants; built housing for homeless, disabled men; and assisted some families with monthly rent.



Ginny Stroud, City of Greenville (l)



Stephen Taylor, City of Clinton (r)

Rudd said the city also has focused on neighborhood revitalization and housing rehabilitation to tie in with the affordable housing. In 1995, the city partnered with Douglas Development to repurpose a former elementary school into low-income, elderly housing. They converted former classrooms into apartments. The project had several phases, and now offers 122 units, Rudd said. Since then, a new park and fire station have been built next to the apartments on Mr. Joe White Ave.

“It’s all part of our overall neighborhood redevelopment strategy,” Rudd said.

Fortunately for the Palmetto State, housing still is considered affordable here unlike other parts of the country, said Deborah Livingston, community development director for the City of Columbia. In particular, Columbia was not impacted as deeply by the housing crisis that erupted around 2008, she said.

For the past three decades, Livingston’s department has arranged affordable home loans for families and individuals earning up to 150 percent of the Area Median Income. They work with partner banks to secure low interest rates, low down payments and no mortgage insurance.

Livingston said the greatest rewards come from getting people into homeownership. She recalled one young man who spent about two years improving his credit score with the assistance of the

city’s homeownership training and credit counseling programs. It was momentous when he finally was able to purchase his own place.

“He was the first person in his family to ever own a home,” Livingston said. “He was like a child in a candy shop, he was so excited.”

It is frustrating when new homeowners fail to maintain their property or do not become part of a positive change in the neighborhood, she said. The city offers neighborhood services to get homeowners invested in their community, such as sponsoring workshops on owning and maintaining a home, as well as organizing neighborhood clean ups and neighborhood leadership summits.

The City of Clinton had a unique opportunity to address housing issues when the Presbyterian College School of Pharmacy located downtown, bringing with it some 300 students. Developers built apartments and condos to fill the need, said Clinton Community and Economic Development Director Stephen Taylor. The influx of students has made for a lively downtown during the day, and city officials want to see that vibrancy grow. Four new businesses have located in Clinton in the past year and a half, and Taylor hopes to recruit more.

The city also has been working to address its affordable housing demand by partnering with Homes of Hope, which provides affordable and energy-efficient houses for low income and homeless families. The city purchased property and the agency has built four homes so far, with more on the horizon, Taylor said. Residents in the program begin as renters and are assisted with financial training and credit counseling in an effort to reach homeownership.

The City of Sumter has programs that

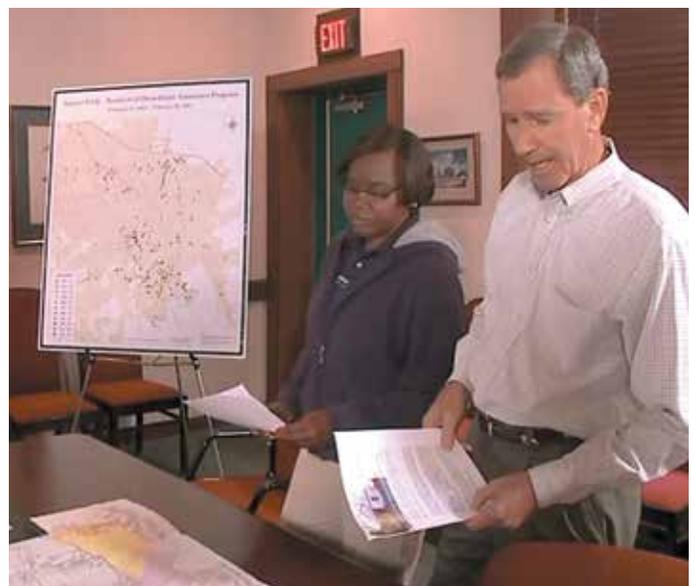
address housing on two levels—building new, affordable homes and demolishing vacant dwellings.

The city’s Affordable Homebuyer Program builds new homes throughout the city in an effort to help low income families purchase a house. The city uses federal Housing and Urban Development funds for the program, and tries to build about two homes each year, according to Community Development Director Clarence Gaines.

The program has faced challenges, Gaines said. When the housing market crashed, they struggled to find applicants who had a good enough credit score to get a house financed. Now the applicants have recovered—and people are on a waiting list—but the federal funding has been cut, Gaines said.

The second part of the housing picture in Sumter involves demolishing boarded-up buildings. Bob Fleury has been project manager for the Sumter Pride Program for the past 13 years. The residential demolition assistance program uses Community Development funds to demolish dilapidated structures and eliminate slums and blight. Since the program began in 2002, the City of Sumter has demolished 346 buildings, Fleury said.

“It returns a sense of pride to each street in the city,” Fleury concluded.



Bob Fleury, City of Sumter (r)



The Town of Saluda worked with a downtown property owner to convert his building into residential units for teachers.

# Downtown *living*

For many people, the lure of living downtown is strong—just step out your door and you have access to shops, dining, jobs. Yet downtown living is not an option in many municipalities where most buildings are predominately professional or commercial businesses, and life shuts down after the work day ends.

A number of cities are finding ways to change that. They're attracting people to move downtown by repurposing old buildings into housing and breathing new life into downtown along the way.

Like many rural areas, the Town of Saluda had few rental properties. Education officials knew that it was a concern for young school teachers—if there was no affordable place in town for them to rent then they were forced to commute from larger nearby cities and could not truly become invested in their communities.

A solution came to town officials in 2009 when a downtown property owner expressed interest in converting his

building into residential units. The town committed to match funds for the renovation, and the property owner agreed to renovate the building into housing for local teachers.

The owner received a Community Development Block Grant and a workforce housing grant from the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority. The Upper Savannah Council of Governments and the state Departments of Commerce and Education all were involved in the unique project. In 2009, Saluda won a Municipal Association Achievement Award for the project.

Today the building houses six apartments upstairs and retail space on the first floor. There is a waiting list of teachers hoping to move in. The apartments have brought young professionals into the heart of town, and they are eating in local restaurants and spending time downtown, said Tom Brooks, administrator for the Town of Saluda.

When the apartments first became available, there was a bit of a slow start because education cuts meant there were not as many new teachers hired in the district, said Ruth LaForge, community development director for the Upper Savannah COG. But they soon became fully occupied, and the teachers were pleased to live in brand-new, affordable apartments with short commutes to work, she said.

"It helped the tax base by converting empty, unused space into livable space," LaForge said. "In a small town like Saluda, the addition of six new rental units is significant."

In the City of Columbia, a number of older buildings have found new life as housing, according to Deborah Livingston, community development director.

After the Wardlaw Junior High School closed its doors, the building sat vacant and dilapidated for 25 years, she said. When it was rehabilitated, the school building found new life as housing for

the elderly. The historic Mast General Store building on Main Street was renovated and features retail on the first floor and apartments above. The former headquarters of SCANA on Main Street is being redeveloped as housing for college students and young professionals. Called the Hub, the building features a sand volleyball court, swimming pool and an indoor gaming area.

The additional housing units bring many more people downtown and spur economic development, Livingston said. People are walking downtown, visiting shops, and going to bars and restaurants.

“It keeps downtown vibrant,” Livingston said.

Businessman Steve Avant first realized the potential in the vacant structures in downtown Hartsville about 12 years ago.

Avant now owns 13 buildings in Hartsville, including about 25 apartments. Most of the buildings he bought were two-story structures with commercial spaces downstairs and second floors that were used for storage. Avant placed retailers on the first floor and built apartments and condos upstairs. He entered into a contract with Coker College that designated some of the apartments for senior students. Now Avant is in the process of renovating a former 28,000 square foot furniture store into a boutique hotel downtown.

The new residents downtown have been good for business, bringing more people to the restaurants and retailers downtown, Avant said.



A former 28,000 square foot furniture store is in the process of being renovated into a boutique hotel in downtown Hartsville.



The former SCANA headquarters on Main Street in Columbia is being redeveloped into housing for college students and young professionals.

“That’s the key to revitalizing downtown—having people living there,” Avant said.

The enrollment growth of Coker College has been beneficial to housing in Hartsville’s core commercial district, as the school has renovated space for apartments in several areas close to its campus, according to City Manager Natalie Zeigler.

“Because of their foot traffic and business patronage, our downtown residents play an important role in keeping the area lively and inviting,” Zeigler said.

The City of Darlington also has added residential space downtown over the past decade. The city has renovated seven buildings, establishing retail space on the first floor and a total of 36 apartments on the second floor of the buildings. Most

of the buildings had been former eyesores that were vacant or falling in, according to City Manager Howard Garland.

“The useful life of those buildings has now been extended 50 to 100 years,” Garland said.

Both the retailers and apartments have been a success,

he said. They are now home to many working class residents like policemen and teachers. They have quicker access to services and amenities, and they add to the vibrancy of downtown.

“It’s good to see people walking downtown at night, frequenting our local restaurants,” he said.

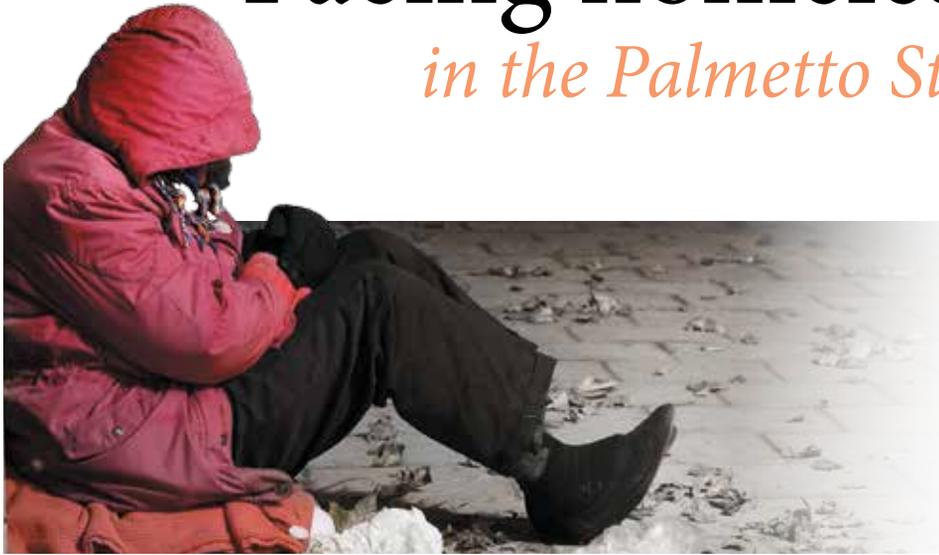
Former Spartanburg Mayor Bill Barnet has championed downtown living as a key component of a healthy and vibrant downtown. He and his wife decided to make the move themselves three years ago, renovating a commercial building that once housed the water system then a law office.

“We enjoy the fact that we can walk out our front door and, within a block, be at a coffee shop, a restaurant or wine shop,” he said.

To attract people downtown, city leaders need to pay attention to the things that draw people downtown, Barnet said. They should consider the availability of amenities like security, cable television and garbage pickup, he continued. They should also consider how decisions will impact people living downtown—when an event is held downtown that closes off streets, for instance, that affects residents.

“City leaders need to take a serious look at what they can do to make people want to move downtown,” Barnet said. “They need to listen carefully to what’s helping and what’s impeding their experience.”

# Facing homelessness *in the Palmetto State*



Exactly 6,035 South Carolinians were either living on the streets or in a shelter, according to the 2013 Point-in-Time Count taken on January 23, 2013.

Mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the PIT Count is conducted nationwide on one night in January each year. It provides a snapshot estimate of all sheltered (those living in temporary housing) and unsheltered (those who are not housed and living in places not fit for habitation, i.e., cars, campsites, parks, parking garages) homeless people. Originally a biennial event, 2014 was the first year of the Count being taken annually.

The more than 6,000 homeless South Carolinians counted in 2013 represent a 28.3 percent increase compared to the last count in 2011. Counties with the highest increases were those that have more urban areas especially Richland County (453), Horry County (296), Greenwood County (187) and Greenville County (185).

Homeless advocates caution that the counts are limiting because they only provide a snapshot. Providing an accurate, comprehensive count of the homeless population is challenging, especially in rural areas. Because the PIT Count relies on housing programs and services to identify people who are homeless, finding people who are homeless in rural areas

where there are fewer services is very difficult, according to the South Carolina Coalition for Homelessness.

The Coalition also points out “PIT counts tend to overcount people who have long histories of homelessness. People who are homeless for long periods of time are more likely to be homeless on a given day. Because families tend to experience briefer episodes of homelessness and are less likely to experience unsheltered homelessness, a PIT undercounts these families.”

## The poverty link

Housing and poverty are two areas that have a significant impact on homelessness. “A lack of affordable housing and the limited scale of housing assistance programs have contributed to the current housing crisis and to homelessness,” according to the National Coalition for the Homeless.

In her paper titled, “No Place like Home: Addressing Poverty and Homelessness in the United States,” author Tracey Ross pointed out “today, about half of the homeless population in this country work but do not earn enough income to pay for housing.”

Some researchers assert a more accurate measure of homelessness should be based on poverty rates. They estimate that 6.3 percent of the population living in poverty would experience homelessness in

a year. In 2012, the U.S. Census reported more than 800,000 individuals in South Carolina living in poverty. Based on the researchers’ calculation, South Carolina’s homeless figure is likely more than 50,000 individuals in a given year.

## Beyond shelters

The 2013 Point-in-Time Count showed a dramatic increase (72 percent) in the number of unsheltered individuals while the percentage of those in shelters or transitional housing units did not change significantly, suggesting the overall capacity to temporarily house people in the state has not changed.

The City of Charleston participates in the annual hunger and homelessness survey conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In 2013, Charleston reported that shelters had to turn away homeless families and homeless individuals because there were no beds available for them. Officials estimated that 40 percent of the demand for shelter went unmet.

“For the next year, city officials expect the number of both homeless families and homeless individuals to continue at the same level. Resources to provide emergency shelter are expected to decrease substantially,” according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ report.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness points out, “For many city officials, community leaders, and even direct service providers, it often seems that placing homeless people in shelters is the most inexpensive way to meet the basic needs of people experiencing homelessness. Some may even believe that shelters are an ideal solution. Research, however, has shown something surprisingly different.”

“The cost of homelessness can be quite high. Hospitalization, medical treatment,

incarceration, police intervention and emergency shelter expenses can add up quickly, making homelessness surprisingly expensive for municipalities and taxpayers.”

A recent study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that the cost of providing emergency shelter to families is generally as much or more than the cost of placing them in transitional or permanent housing.

Government officials and community leaders across the country are looking for alternatives.

For example, the U.S. Conference of Mayor’s report indicated that 35 percent of the cities participating in the Conference’s annual homelessness survey have adopted policies aimed at preventing homelessness among households that have lost their homes to foreclosure. Charleston officials have consistently provided access to technical or financial assistance to organizations that help prevent homelessness and to people who are facing the threat of foreclosure.

Myrtle Beach officials are addressing the challenges of homelessness for people who are homeless (or in danger of becoming so) and for the greater community. Despite spending significant money and resources, city officials observed the efforts were largely ineffective. Council approved a resolution stating the city would support programs and options to help those who wanted assistance, while at the same time work to mitigate the effects of homelessness on the community.

The city helped establish an umbrella organization to coordinate and streamline delivery of services. This new organization brought together organizations and entities that provided emergency and crisis services, including shelters, churches, food banks and other nonprofit groups.

“We want to help people not be homeless, rather than helping them continue to be homeless, explained Myrtle Beach Mayor John Rhodes. “It’s one thing to provide emergency food and shelter, but that’s not enough. Our goal is to help people move past the crisis situation. Instead of counting how many free meals were served, we’d rather be counting how many people got jobs and apartments and don’t need a free meal any longer.”



# Liability issues of donated buildings

Municipalities often find themselves on the receiving end of donated property. Councils are often eager to accept these “free” gifts; however, looking through a risk management lens may show these freebies could cost big dollars.

Municipal officials must perform their due diligence to determine the condition of any property it owns or may receive. To protect itself against premises liability claims, a municipality must be able to demonstrate that reasonable care was exercised to protect individuals from harm from conditions of which the city had knowledge or should have had knowledge.

Keeping complete documentation of all inspections and maintenance records is as important as doing the inspections and maintenance. The South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, the Municipal Association’s property and casualty insurance pool, provides its members with guidelines for conducting regular property inspections. The guidelines include simple checklists focused on key areas such as housekeeping, fire alarm/detection systems, means of egress, hazard identification, and general property condition.

“Municipal officials should establish a property donation acceptance procedure which includes criteria regarding accepting the donation,” suggested Heather Ricard, director of the Association’s Risk Management Services. “This will ensure consistency, determine immediate and ongoing costs, and evaluate the suitability of the property for city use.”

Include the city’s risk coordinator and attorney in the process from the outset to help identify and address liability concerns early. Contact the city’s insurance provider to discuss how the property may impact coverage or premiums before deciding whether to accept the donation.

Many donated buildings are vacant or partially occupied. This poses increased risks of damage caused by fire, natural elements or vandalism due to lack of maintenance, utilities and security.

Though cities may want to accept a donation with plans to redevelop the property, renovating or demolishing most properties are subject to state and federal asbestos regulations as well as OSHA standard 1926.1101.

Even though Environmental Protection Agency and Consumer Product Safety Commission regulations have banned many uses of asbestos, some materials remain legal for sale and use. The materials that were not banned included materials where asbestos fibers are generally well bound in the material. Many flooring, insulation and roofing products containing asbestos have not been banned. Do not assume that a donated property, regardless of age or condition, is free of asbestos. Contact the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control for its list of certified property inspectors.

“Considering the safety and risk management issues before accepting a donated building can help a municipality get a better picture of the true costs associated with the building,” concluded Ricard.

For more information about the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: SCMIRF).



1411 Gervais Street | PO Box 12109  
 Columbia, South Carolina 29211  
 Tel: 803.799.9574 | Fax: 803.933.1299  
 www.masc.sc

PRESORTED  
 STANDARD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Greenville, S.C.  
 PERMIT NO. 305

# Calendar

For a complete listing of training opportunities, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) to view the calendar.

## APRIL

**8 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Member Meeting and Legislative Reception.** Clarion Hotel Downtown, Columbia.

**11 Municipal Court Administration Association Spring Meeting.** Embassy Suites - Greystone, Columbia. Topics include an update from the South Carolina Court Administration, bond estreatments and reporting unclaimed funds.

**23 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Training and Advanced Academy.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include business license procedures, FOIA, making the licensing process more business friendly.

**30 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Linemen Training** (repeated on May 1) SCE&G Pine Island, Columbia.

## MAY

**1 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Linemen Training.** SCE&G Pine Island, Columbia.

**1 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include wellness programs, frequently asked questions to a labor attorney, an overview of the SC Human Affairs Commission.

**13 SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association Spring Academy.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include an annexation overview, finding and securing grants, and capital improvement planning.

**14-16 South Carolina Community Development Association Annual Meeting.** Hilton at Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach. Topics include community trail planning, Ready Workforce and

apprenticeship programs, and Beaufort's revitalization efforts.

**15 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Governance and Policy for Municipal Officials and the Freedom of Information Act in SC.** Via Web stream. Council of Governments offices.

## JUNE

**3 Accreditation in Business Licensing Exam.** Municipal Association's office, Columbia.

**8-11 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting.** Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach.

**12 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Second Quarterly Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include minimum control measures for construction and illicit discharges.

## JULY

**10-13 Municipal Association Annual Meeting.** Charleston Place Hotel, Charleston. See related story on page 2.