

May 2025

# UPTOWN

a publication of the Municipal Association of South Carolina

## LIGHTING UP THE CITY

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**Cover Photo:** The City of West Columbia is one of many municipalities to upgrade its streetlights to LEDs. Photo: City of West Columbia.

# Ethics Rules Conflicts of Interest and Recusals

**A** key requirement of South Carolina's ethics laws is that public officials, members of public bodies and public employees must not use their offices in a way that provides themselves, members of their family, or businesses with which they are associated with financial gain.

To prevent officials from taking acts that benefit them financially, state law addresses situations where they must recuse themselves from voting on an issue, or even deliberating on an issue.

The relevant section of law is found in SC Code Section 8-13-700. State law defines family members for the purposes of a potential conflict of interest situation to be a spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent or grandchild.

Recusal from a vote involves several steps.

## Prepare a written statement.

Because the law bars officials and employees from "knowingly" using their position to benefit financially, they bear the responsibility of identifying potential conflicts of interest and acting on them. The law requires them to make a written statement describing the matter requiring action and the nature of the conflict. The Municipal Association has a sample recusal statement at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: recusal statement).

## Submit this statement.

In cases of public employees, they should submit the statement to their supervisors.

Public officials or members of public bodies should provide the written statement to their presiding officer, which for city councils is usually the mayor. The presiding officer must then place the statement into the official record by having it included in the meeting minutes.

## Avoid taking any further action.

Avoiding any official action means not voting and not deliberating. The member is not required to leave the meeting, but the SC Ethics Commission advises that members of public bodies who recuse themselves physically leave the room for the portion of the meeting concerning the conflict of interest to avoid any perception of undue influence.

There can be unusual cases where a councilmember who has recused themselves on a vote is needed for the council to maintain a quorum, or majority of the entire body that must be present for the council to take actions. In cases where it is impossible to achieve a quorum without counting the conflicted members, councilmembers can help resolve the situation by recusing themselves, and then remaining physically present. They would need to state clearly on the record that their only reason for doing so is to preserve the quorum.

*Issues involved with conflicts of interest, voting recusals and quorums are all covered in the Municipal Association's Handbook for Municipal Officials in South Carolina. Find it at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: official handbook).*

# Business Licensing Officials Association Training Institute Recognizes 2025 Graduates

**T**hirty officials representing South Carolina city, town and county governments graduated from the SC Business Licensing Officials Association Training Institute during BLOA's spring meeting.

The Institute helps improve the professional and administrative skills of business licensing officials. The three sessions include topics on general licensing, problem areas and personal development. The graduates can earn the Accreditation in Business Licensing designation after passing a comprehensive written exam.

## These are the newest BLOA Training Institute graduates:

- Paula Baxley, administrative clerk, City of Barnwell
- Alisha Belk, business license coordinator, City of Hartsville
- Haverlean Bradshaw, customer service rep IV, Charleston County
- Brandon Brown, director of business services, City of Hartsville
- Nicole Calvert-Daniels, customer service clerk, City of Greenwood
- Sharon Durst, municipal clerk, Town of Blythewood
- Tonya Evans, zoning/business license coordinator, City of Manning
- Kimberly Floyd, administrative assistant, Horry County
- Preston Fontenot, county service rep, Charleston County
- Stacey Freeman, business license official, City of Folly Beach
- Michele Gallo-Funderwhite, permit specialist, City of Goose Creek
- Dana Grant, business license coordinator, City of North Charleston
- Meredith Holmes, planning & zoning director, City of Loris
- Morgan Hunt, deputy treasurer, City of Clinton
- Ralph Johnson, deputy treasurer, Horry County
- Karley Lever, human resources, Town of Irmo
- Alexander Maybank, county service rep IV, Charleston County
- Nichole Nettles, license & permit official, Town of Seabrook Island
- Dana Payne, county service rep, Charleston County
- Walter Peeples, revenue collector, Beaufort County
- Tynice Pusha, county service rep IV, Charleston County
- Ashley Putnam, business operations specialist, City of York
- Brittany Rambo, accounting specialist, City of Greenwood
- Satidra Rivers, deputy town clerk, Town of St. Matthews
- Kelly Smith, business license administrator, City of Columbia
- Renee Smouse, license & permitting specialist, City of Travelers Rest
- Claude Turner, business license officer, City of Greenville
- Angela Varnadoe, customer service supervisor, City of Walterboro
- Stephanie Weaver, auditor, Charleston County
- Jeffery Williamson, codes compliance officer, City of North Augusta

Learn more about the BLOA Training Institute at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: BLOA).







# Registration for 2025 Annual Meeting Starts in June

The Municipal Association of South Carolina's 2025 Annual Meeting will take place July 16 – 20 at the Hilton Beachfront Resort on Hilton Head Island. The registration process for this year's meeting will begin June 16.

The Association's registration process, which helps ensure that municipal officials have priority for reservations and ticketed events, will get underway in May.

## Registration drawing

The Municipal Association draws city names to randomly determine the order of registration appointments for cities and towns, providing a fair process for all those interested in attending. The deadline to enter the drawing is Friday, May 30.

## Key dates

- **May 21** – Agenda and registration information posted online. Registration brochures mailed.
- **May 30** – Deadline to enter registration appointment drawing.
- **June 2** – Registration appointment times are announced.
- **June 16 through 18** – Cities with a phone appointment register on one of these days. During the appointment, an Association staff member will call the city representative to start the online registration/reservation process. A city's representative must have completed registration forms in hand, including housing and meal ticket requests, for each person to be registered during the city's call. During the online process, the city representative will use a Visa or MasterCard to make hotel reservations and register municipal attendees for the meeting. Make sure the credit card has a sufficient credit limit and per-transaction limit.
- **July 3** – Deadline to register for Annual Meeting.
- **July 16 – 20** – Annual Meeting at the Hilton Beachfront Resort on Hilton Head Island.



## Withholding Payroll Taxes Creates Personal Liability

Employers who fail to withhold certain taxes, including federal income tax, Social Security or Medicare taxes can be held personally liable for those taxes, according to the IRS.

These types of taxes are known as trust fund taxes, which must be paid to the IRS either through electronic funds transfer or as payments made with applicable tax returns. If these taxes are not paid, the IRS may charge a penalty in the amount not collected, with interest.

The IRS notes that the penalty may be collected from “any responsible person or persons who acted willfully [in not paying the taxes] if the IRS can’t immediately collect the taxes from the employer or business,” which could include asset seizure.

The full details of this liability are available on the IRS website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov):

- Notice 784 explains the fund recovery penalty and who has to pay it.
- Notice 931 explains deposit requirements for employment taxes, and the methodology and schedules for how they are paid.

It is essential for employers to understand that failure to comply with payroll tax withholding is not just an issue for the municipality — it can have serious personal consequences for those in charge. The IRS takes the collection of trust fund taxes seriously and has the authority to pursue individuals who are responsible for the oversight.





# Licensing Virtual Businesses Legal Case Moves Forward

**T**he increasing prevalence of virtual businesses in the modern economy presents new challenges for local governments. Virtual businesses like DoorDash, Instacart, AirBnB, and Rover provide goods or services through an app-based platform and often have no physical presence within the local government's jurisdiction. A critical question that these companies create for local governments is whether a taxing jurisdiction may require virtual businesses to apply and pay for a business license.

Until recently, there were limited sources of guidance available in South Carolina to answer this question. On July 26, 2023, the South Carolina Attorney General's office released an opinion discussing whether a peer-to-peer car rental platform, Turo, Inc., was subject to the Myrtle Beach business license tax.

The opinion was not decisive, but instead stated that in the absence of physical presence in the city, "a court *may* find Turo is not doing business within City [emphasis added]."

## **DoorDash, Inc. vs. City of Anderson case**

The South Carolina Administrative Law Court recently issued a helpful opinion on the question of licensing virtual businesses, although the likelihood of further court appeals means that the issues involved are not yet fully resolved.

The dispute before the court centered on DoorDash's challenge to the City of Anderson's business license tax assessments for 2022 and 2023. DoorDash argued that South Carolina law

requires physical presence before the local government may require a business license, and that imposing a business license tax on a virtual business violates the U.S. Constitution. The Municipal Association of SC supported the City of Anderson's legal work in the lawsuit.

In considering the state law issue, the court explained that Anderson's ordinance defined "business" as activities conducted "directly or indirectly" for gain within the city. It concluded that DoorDash's operations, which include partnerships with 94 local restaurants, clearly met this definition. The court further emphasized that physical presence is not required for the imposition of the tax.

The federal constitutional issue was more complex. The U.S. Supreme Court had long held that, under the due process and dormant commerce clauses of the U.S. Constitution, a business must have a sufficient connection or "nexus" with the local jurisdiction before it may be subject to taxation.

Until the 1970s, the Supreme Court considered that this required nexus included physical presence. But in two cases, *Complete Auto Transit v. Brady* in 1977 and *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc.* in 2018, the Supreme Court held that local governments could tax businesses with no physical presence in the jurisdiction if the businesses engaged in enough indirect activity within the local jurisdiction to support a finding of nexus.

In the *Wayfair* case specifically, the Court upheld a South Dakota law requiring any business — whether physically present or not — to pay sales taxes if it engaged in more than 200 individual transactions, or more than \$100,000 in transactions, within the state on an annual basis.

In the Anderson case, the SC Administrative Law Court applied these Supreme Court decisions and found that DoorDash had a substantial nexus with Anderson because of its economic activities within the city. The court particularly emphasized that DoorDash received gross income of \$1,940,388.10 in 2022 and \$2,504,028.90 in 2023 from restaurant transactions within the City of Anderson, clearly in excess of the threshold amounts upheld in *Wayfair*.



The court granted Anderson's motion for summary judgment against DoorDash. Presumably DoorDash will now appeal the decision to the SC Court of Appeals, so a fuller resolution on the questions of licensing virtual businesses must wait for potential court decisions in the future. In the meantime, however, the law in South Carolina appears to hold that local governments can require virtual businesses to apply and pay for a business license.

#### Other implications of new court decision

The City of Anderson case highlights the evolving landscape of business operations and taxation, emphasizing the need for cities to assert their authority in the digital age. As local governments continue to navigate these complexities, the outcome of this newest court case sets a precedent for fair and equitable taxation of virtual businesses.

Even so, municipalities should consider two limitations in the conclusions that can now be drawn. First, the decision is likely

to be appealed, which could change the case law on the matter. The Association will monitor the case and will provide timely updates to its members.

Second, the court's analysis depends heavily on the transactional volume threshold in finding a sufficient legal nexus for taxation. Municipalities that seek to require virtual businesses to have a business license must include a minimum volume threshold before requiring a license.

The Association suggests that the annual thresholds should be at least as high as that approved in *Wayfair*, either

- more than 200 individual transactions, or
- at least \$100,000 in total transactions.

Higher thresholds may be appropriate, depending on the municipality and its resources.

## Results From 2025 Compensation Survey Now Available

Cities and towns have an easy way to compare their employee compensation with pay from other municipalities across the state through the compensation survey developed by the Municipal Association of SC. The 2025 survey results are now available.

Municipal leaders can use this tool to save time when studying pay data to help inform decisions on how to set their compensation levels competitively. As a reference tool, the survey should only supplement a full class and compensation

study commissioned by a city or town, and it should not be a substitute for a full study.

Users can now find the data from the 2025 Compensation Survey online. They can use it to generate customized reports, like narrowing the survey results down to information for municipalities of a particular population range or specific job positions. Reports can also include the number of full-time employees of a particular city or town, or its annual payroll. Other search functions include salary ranges, merit-raise minimums or maximums, or the range of a cost-of-living adjustment. Users can also export all of the compensation survey data into Excel spreadsheets, or download the entire compensation survey report as a PDF.

Responding to the survey is voluntary for municipalities, but higher response rates increase the usefulness of the data. The Association requests survey participation from cities and towns at the beginning of each calendar year.

Find the survey on the Municipal Association's website at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Municipal Compensation Survey).





# Annual Meeting to Address Business Licensing Class Schedule Updates

Each year, the Municipal Association of SC Annual Meeting provides a time for elected officials from around the state to share ideas and best practices. This year's conference, taking place July 16 – 20 on Hilton Head Island, will address a wide range of municipal issues, including the business licensing updates that all those cities and towns with business licensing must enact.

The Business License Tax Standardization Act of 2020, or Act 176, established ongoing steps that cities and towns in South Carolina must undertake to keep their business licensing practices compliant with state law.

Legislators intended for Act 176 to streamline business licensing, making it uniform and consistent for businesses operating in multiple jurisdictions across South Carolina. The requirements of the law therefore aim to ensure the licensing process will work the same for the business, no matter the jurisdiction involved.

One of the ongoing requirements involves cities updating their class schedules every odd-numbered year to comply with the most recent statistical profitability data from the Internal Revenue Service.

## Updating the class schedule

A standard class schedule for categorizing businesses accurately helps ensure that businesses are placed in the appropriate class. A standardized class schedule promotes clarity by providing businesses with an understanding of their licensing requirements based on their specific business activity.

To make updating the class schedule as simple a process as possible, the Municipal Association of SC developed an amendment to the model business license ordinance that includes the updated standard class schedule.

The ordinance to adopt the new class schedule and the schedule can be found at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: business license ordinance updates).

Municipalities must adopt this class schedule by ordinance by December 31, 2025. This class schedule will be used for the business licensing year running from May 1, 2026, to April 30, 2027, as well as the license year running from May 1, 2027, to April 30, 2028.

Before January 1, 2026, cities should not use this updated class schedule, and should instead continue using their current class schedule.

The Municipal Association of SC provides a sample ordinance for every update. Municipalities must adopt this class schedule by ordinance every two years, with the next update required by December 31, 2027.

Find more information on the 2025 Annual Meeting agenda at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Annual Meeting). Read about registration deadlines for the Annual Meeting on page 4.

- Use 2022 NAICS
- Use 2023 Class Schedule

**To Do:** Pass new class schedule for 2026 (New ordinance required)

- Use 2022 NAICS
- Use 2025 Class Schedule

**To Do:** Pass new class schedule for 2028 (New ordinance required)

- Use 2027 NAICS
- Use 2027 Class Schedule

**To Do:** Pass new class schedule for 2030 (New ordinance required)

2025

2026

2027

2028

2029

2030

- Use 2022 NAICS
- Use 2025 Class Schedule

- Use 2027 NAICS
- Use 2027 Class Schedule
- **To Do:** Verify all NAICS codes to make sure they are accurate.

- Use 2027 NAICS
- Use 2029 Class Schedule





# Communicating Before and After a Sewer Backup

**S**ewer backups can be a challenging and expensive problem for individual property owners or for municipalities, depending on who has responsibility for them. Communicating about backups with property owners is a key part of navigating the issue successfully.

Determining who is liable for the cleanup and repairs means determining where the backup originated — potentially inside the city-owned sewer main, or in the sewer connection between the city's sewer main and the building, which falls under the property owner's responsibility.

A court will likely hold a city liable for damages in a case where its actions are believed to have caused the backup. For example, if public works staff used excess water pressure when cleaning a sewage line, a court could find that this action backed sewage up into a home, or if workers incorrectly installed the city's lines in a way that clogged them. Other cases where the city is likely liable are those when it had notice that a problem existed, but did not correct it.

## Proactive communication

Preventing sewer clogs is always preferable to resolving ones that have already happened, and proactive communication covering the causes of backups can help with this. This can

be regularly distributed educational material, aimed at residents and businesses alike that explains how sewer users should keep items that can clog systems — especially cooking grease — out of their drains.

Many cities and towns in South Carolina maintain programs regulating commercial restaurants' discharge of fats, oils and greases, commonly known as FOGs, and maintain a section on their website explaining the aspects of the program:

- The ordinances establishing the regulations and their requirements, such as FOG traps and inspections
- Application documents for commercial connections to the sewer system with grease interceptors or grease traps
- Information on local grease recycling companies

## Communicating about a backup

When sewage has backed up into a property, what city staff say as they address the issue can determine whether a backup leads to a lawsuit. Depending on how the issue is discussed, city staff could risk accepting fault incorrectly.

Public works employees need to be familiar with the city's recovery policies and procedures, and be able to answer questions about what steps the city will

take after a problem. However, they should avoid premature discussions about who has liability in a particular case, since an insurance claims adjuster needs to investigate who has liability.

A good approach is for officials to encourage a property owner to work with a disaster restoration company, and indicate that the city's insurance provider will investigate the claim. The city should not become involved in any aspect of the aftermath if the homeowner will not sign a non-waiver-of-defenses agreement. This puts in writing that the homeowner acknowledges any city assistance does not mean the city is admitting liability for the incident.

## Maintenance and documentation

Regular maintenance and inspections of a sewer system can not only reduce the likelihood of backups occurring in the first place, they can help the city be able to explain the steps it regularly takes when a backup has occurred, and reduce its legal risks. A formal written plan can help with this, addressing a schedule for inspections, cleanings and repairs, as well as how complaints are documented.

*For more information on managing sewer backups, contact Municipal Association of SC Risk Management Services loss control staff at [losscontrol@masc.sc](mailto:losscontrol@masc.sc).*





# Public Works Trucks Need Regular Safety Inspections

**I**nspicing a public works truck, and its contents, is a multistep process that can improve worker safety and help prevent accidents that could result in the loss of the vehicle.

## Pre-trip vehicle inspections

For the vehicle itself, workers who will operate a vehicle for their shift can begin by reviewing critical safety items as their shift begins. This can include checking the depth of the tire treads, looking for any leaking fluids, and inspecting mirrors and windshields for damage. Brakes, horns, seatbelts and back-up alarms for vehicles should also be inspected regularly. It is valuable to establish a reporting system for drivers to note details from daily pre- and post-trip inspections.

## Fire suppression

For any public works vehicle, it's important to consider whether the vehicle is used to transport combustible or flammable materials. When they are, several Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements apply:

- The vehicle needs to be equipped with a 20B:C fire extinguisher, preferably mounted in a place where workers can get to it easily in case of an emergency.
- All flammables, such as gasoline, need to be in a container, approved by Underwriter Laboratories or the SC Department of Transportation, with a self-closing lid and spark arrestor for quantities over 5 gallons. For containers with a capacity of 5 gallons or less, an approved plastic gas can is appropriate.

Vehicle fires are especially a concern for sanitation vehicles. Since 2019, the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund has handled sanitation truck claims resulting in costs of more than \$3.2 million, with fires being the largest single cause of claims made to SCMIRF. Garbage itself is often the cause of these fires, so it helps to avoid leaving trucks loaded with garbage overnight, and also to turn off all lights, switches, including battery cutoff switches, and accessories.

## Chemicals

All chemicals should be labeled with the contents, and a safety data sheet, or SDS, for all chemicals present on the truck should be included. For every specific chemical on the truck, make sure employees know what personal protective equipment they need to wear in accordance with the SDS requirements, and specifically the emergency procedures in the event of chemical exposure to eyes.

## Tools on the truck

Any tools used for lifting — for example, a floor jack, bottleneck jack, chain and slings — should all have a load-rated capacity that is legible. All tools should be inspected prior to use for damage.

All drop cords should have the ground pin on the male end of the cord and there should be no cuts or abrasions to the outer insulation of the drop cord.

For cutting and grinding tools that have tool guards, the guards should not be disengaged or wedged open. If there is a chainsaw on the truck, the truck must also have chaps, a hardhat with full face shield, hearing protection and safety glasses for the operator. All welders should have the terminal lug boots on the welding leads on the welding machine.

All ladders should be inspected for any cracks or deformations in the fiberglass. Also, they should have the cautions and limitation stickers legible, not faded or damaged.

Remember that all trucks and equipment on the trucks need to be inspected prior to use for any damage. Employees should be trained on how to inspect the equipment, PPE and potential hazards on public works trucks.

*For questions about implementing a preventative maintenance program for a sanitation department, contact the Municipal Association Risk Management Services' loss control staff at [losscontrol@masc.sc](mailto:losscontrol@masc.sc).*





# Lighting Up the City

## Streetlights Keep Focus on Safety, Curb Appeal

**North Myrtle Beach uses a structured system for streetlight placement, and has about 2,300 streetlights in total. Photo: City of North Myrtle Beach.**

Ubiquitous and easy to overlook, streetlights nonetheless play a pivotal role in a city — affecting everything from pedestrian safety to helping drivers navigate an unfamiliar intersection to making commercial areas more inviting.

As technology changes, the light shining onto some city streets is changing, too. The City of West Columbia, for example, is one of many municipalities that has worked toward upgrades of light-emitting diodes, typically known as LED lights. It worked with its electrical service provider Dominion Energy to swap its traditional streetlights with LED lights to improve safety and reduce energy costs, said Tara Greenwood, West Columbia's assistant city administrator of development.

"For us, as we talk about energy efficiency and saving money, LEDs typically use 50% to 75% less energy than traditional [streetlights]," she said. "It allows us the ability to upgrade our public lighting while potentially reducing energy costs significantly. Those are cost savings we can pass along by saving on municipal energy bills."

Greenwood said the rough estimate in savings for streetlights that have switched to LED lights is about \$2 to \$4 per streetlight per month. The LED lights also have a longer live span — about three to five times longer than traditional bulbs

— which means a reduction in labor and material costs.

The program offered by Dominion allows for customizable options with a variety of LED fixture types that work in roadways, parking lots and streetscapes. Cities apply for the Dominion program, and if the project is approved, the utility company installs the new LED streetlights.

Along with the cost and energy savings, Greenwood said the city is particularly interested in improving visibility to make the city streets safer for pedestrians, drivers and bicyclists.

"LED lights provide brighter and more uniform illumination than traditional fluorescent lights," she said. "It's more of a white light, not the yellow or orangey dim light. It gives more of an accurate color to make street signs and buildings a little clearer to see."

West Columbia has roughly 1,500 streetlights. It started the LED replacements through the Dominion program in 2022, first targeting the city's River District, which is home to many restaurants and shops.

"We're working with Dominion through this program block-by-block in those areas where we have a lot of pedestrian traffic, where we have people out walking in the evening, especially down in the River District," Greenwood said.

"Safety is paramount in the City of West Columbia. We want all those who traverse the city to feel safe."

She said the feedback from residents has been mostly positive.

"If there are any concerns, we work with Dominion to fine tune the brightness level or an angle to accommodate community needs," she said. "If it's shining too bright in one area and we have to tweak it, we work with Dominion on that. They're a great community partner."

She suggested other cities interested in improving their street lighting make sure to keep the lines of communication open with the utility provider, business leaders and residents to ensure everyone is on the same page about wants, needs and expectations.

She also said West Columbia has successfully leveraged incentives and rebates for switching over to energy-efficient lighting, along with researching grants and partnerships to help offset the costs.

The Upstate City of Anderson takes its electricity seriously. Known as "the Electric City," Anderson was the first city in the United States to have a continuous supply of electric power and the first in the world to create a cotton gin operated by electricity, said Beth Batson, the city's public information director.



“Anderson native William Church Whitner was the man who first conceived the idea of generating alternating current electricity using turbulent river water to send power to the city in 1896. He is honored with a bronze sculpture in the city’s center,” she said. “This history of innovation informs the business environment in Anderson today as it boasts one of the finest entrepreneurial facilities in the area.”

And if one of the city’s streetlights goes out, residents have options on how to report the issue. They can directly report outages to Duke Energy, the city’s energy provider, by phone or through the website, or they can report the outage to Anderson’s public works division and the office will submit the outage to Duke’s website.

Batson said Anderson’s signal and sign department inspect streetlights by zone on a monthly basis, and outages are reported to Duke Energy.

“Citizens can report areas of street lighting deficiency to the city, and a study will be conducted to determine if additional lights need to be added to the inventory,” she said.

In the City of North Myrtle Beach, most street lighting is designed primarily for roadway safety, but some areas such as its Main Street feature enhanced pedestrian lighting to improve walkability and accessibility.

“Streetlights play a crucial role in enhancing roadway safety by improving visibility for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. They help reduce accidents at intersections and make it easier for drivers to see potential hazards,” North Myrtle Beach Public Information Officer Lauren Jessie said. “Well-lit streets also contribute to a sense of security and support the local economy by making public spaces more inviting.”

Jessie said North Myrtle Beach follows a structured streetlight placement system with lights installed at each intersection, and then spaced every 500 feet along roadways, ensuring consistent and effective lighting coverage.

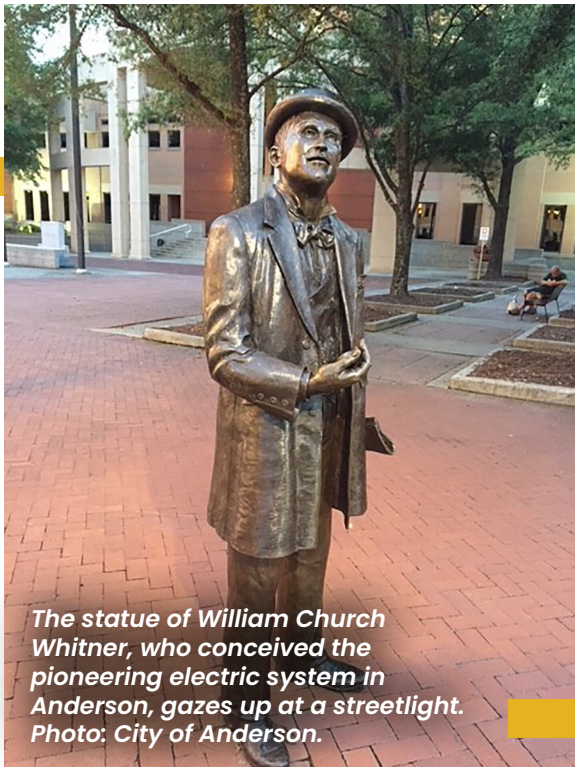
North Myrtle Beach has about 2,300 streetlights. Requests for additional lighting are reviewed to determine if the new lights would align with the city’s policy. If approved, the city works with its utility provider to maintain and install streetlights.

Residents may call the city’s public works office to report and outage or request a new streetlight. Those reports and requests help the city make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively.

“Understanding the city’s policy helps residents know where streetlights are placed and why,” Jessie said. “If they request a new streetlight, they’ll be aware of the criteria used to evaluate their request.”

The city also takes an active role in monitoring streetlights, with police officers regularly checking lighting conditions and reporting any issues.

“Streetlights play a key role in public safety, and timely reporting of outages ensures that roads and sidewalks remain well-lit,” she said. “While streetlights enhance visibility and security, they are not a replacement for private security lighting. If residents have specific security concerns near their property, we encourage them to contact their utility provider about installing a private security light that does not face the public right-of-way.”



*The statue of William Church Whitner, who conceived the pioneering electric system in Anderson, gazes up at a streetlight. Photo: City of Anderson.*



*Conversion of West Columbia’s 1,500 streetlights to LEDs began in the city’s River District. Photo: City of West Columbia.*



# SC Infrastructure Investment Program Successes Celebrating Two Years of Progress

By Kendra Wilkerson, SC Rural Infrastructure Authority



*Expansion of the Pendleton-Clemson Wastewater Treatment Plant increased its capacity to 5 million gallons per day. Photo: SC RIA.*

**T**he SC Infrastructure Investment Program is an unprecedented, one-time investment in the water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure of this state. Using federal American Rescue Plan Act funds allocated by the SC General Assembly, the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority built upon an established model of efficient, customer-focused grant administration to deploy \$1.469 billion dollars to fund 219 projects across the state. These SCIIP grants — together with other recent one-time federal funding directed at critical infrastructure such as water and sewer, roads and broadband — are already boosting the state's economic growth. A recent study found that these infrastructure investments are contributing to the creation of over 275,000 jobs and \$54 billion in economic output over seven years, from FY 2021 to FY 2027.

Two years after SCIIP awards were made, infrastructure transformation is underway as most projects are under construction, payments are ramping up and some projects are nearing completion. The following are just a few examples of the many projects in process.

The **Pendleton-Clemson Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade** involves regional cooperation to address sewer improvement and expansion needs. The Town of Pendleton owns and operates the facility and shares capacity with the City of Clemson and Anderson County. Unprecedented recent growth has increased the demand for sewer treatment and the plant has surpassed

its maximum capacity of 2 million gallons per day, or MGD. To accommodate current needs as well as the robust development in the surrounding area, the three neighboring entities developed a partnership agreement to share the local cost of expanding the plant's capacity to 5 MGD. The project is supported by a \$10 million SCIIP grant and the full cost is expected to exceed \$60 million.

The **City of Charleston's King Street Pump Station project** will mitigate chronic flooding risks at the downtown Charleston intersection of King and Huger Streets, which is part of an estimated 60,000 one-way automobile trips each day. It is ranked as one of the most flood-prone areas in Charleston County and is closed for an average of five days per year. Upon completion of the project, which includes stormwater storage, a pump station, an outfall pipe system and a backup generator, the intersection will remain passable during 25-year storm events. Construction began in the fall of 2024 and is on track to be completed in 2026. The \$20 million project is funded by a \$10 million SCIIP grant, with the city covering the remaining costs.

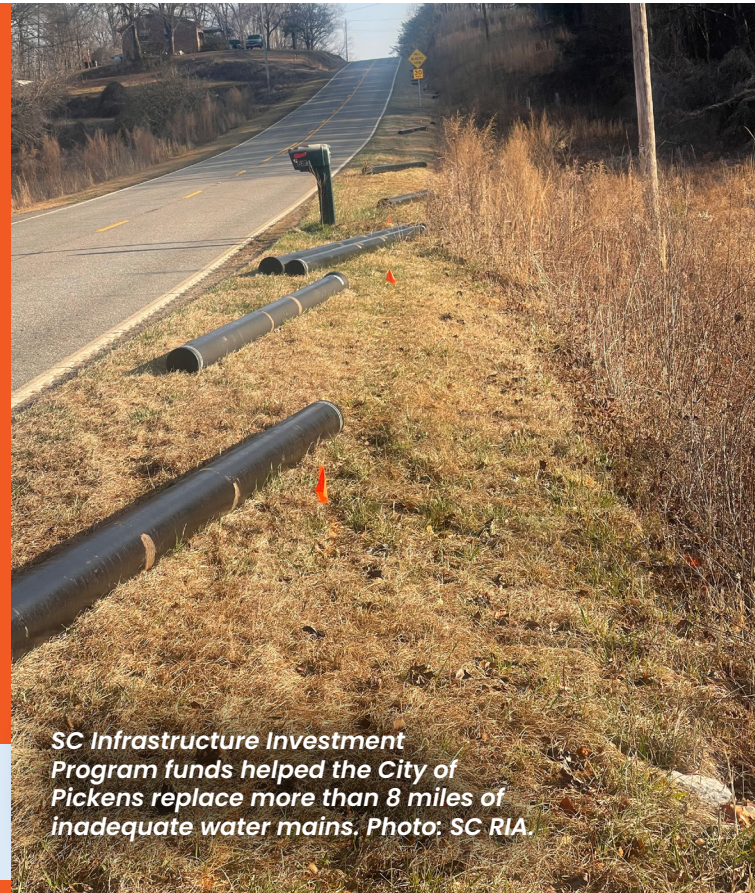
The **City of Pickens** received nearly \$5 million in SCIIP funds to address water quality issues by replacing over 8 miles of aging and undersized water mains and fire hydrants. The city contributed more than \$1 million on the project, which was a priority on its capital improvement plan because of increasing line breaks that temporarily left customers with little or no water pressure and



required costly repairs. Replacement with 6-inch, 8-inch, and 10-inch ductile iron pipe addresses these concerns as well as hydraulic and capacity limitations in some portions of the project area. Construction was completed in early 2025, well ahead of SCIIIP deadlines.

The SCIIIP funds making these projects possible have not been affected by recent changes to some federal funding programs. With a firm federal deadline of December 2026 to expend all ARPA funds, any SCIIIP grantees that cannot complete their projects by the June 2026 grant period end date should be in close communication with their RIA grant manager regarding the project timeline.

Even in the wake of these transformational projects, continual investment in infrastructure is required to maintain essential services to South Carolinians. RIA offers state-funded grants for water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure and planning projects through two application rounds each year. The details of the FY26 grant program will be posted to [www.ria.sc.gov](http://www.ria.sc.gov) in July. Those who submitted projects to the State Revolving Funds program in March of this year should monitor [www.des.sc.gov/programs/bureau-water/state-revolving-fund-srf-program](http://www.des.sc.gov/programs/bureau-water/state-revolving-fund-srf-program) for the Intended Use Plans that will be posted this summer. Please reach out to us at 803.737.0390 or [info@ria.sc.gov](mailto:info@ria.sc.gov) with any questions about RIA's funding programs.



*SC Infrastructure Investment Program funds helped the City of Pickens replace more than 8 miles of inadequate water mains. Photo: SC RIA.*



*Charleston's King Street Pump Station project was designed to reduce flooding events at a key downtown intersection. Photo: SC RIA.*

## SCIIIP by the Numbers

**As of March 2025:**

- **\$1.469 billion awarded**
- **219 projects in progress**
- **294 contracts approved**
- **\$238 million disbursed**



# Replacing Aging Utility Lines Improves Costs and Capacity

*Lake City's flooding mitigation efforts involved more than 2 miles of piping. Photo: City of Lake City.*

As many South Carolina cities and towns look back over a long history of providing water and sewer service to residents, an important reality sets in — some of their pipes and lines are 100 years old, and in need of replacement.

New infrastructure can help avoid expensive, repeated repairs to utility lines across a wide swath of public roadways, private property and rights of way. Even so, replacing old lines often comes with a hefty price tag, so cities are turning to federal and state grants to finance this expensive work.

For the City of Bennettsville, which offers residents electricity, water, sewer and gas services, finding the outdated infrastructure was simply a matter of using historical maps to see where the original pipes were located.

"We took a two-tiered approach," said City Administrator William C. Simon Jr. "We did secure the services of an engineering firm to assist us with this, but to bridge the gap a little bit faster, we took advantage of having personnel that have been working with the city for years. They just opened up lids and looked at the direction of the pipes and verified it on paper maps."

As those locations are verified, the system is being mapped out digitally on GIS.

"Then our next step is our engineering firm coming in for some of those areas where we haven't identified a lot of the infrastructure," Simon said. "They're going to help us put a camera down in some of the lines so that we can determine the direction of the pipes, and that's going to help us complete that system."

The water and sewer improvements in Bennettsville's Broad Street and Lake Wallace areas as well as water line replacement in the Marlboro Street area are in part of the city that has low- and moderate-income households.

The work is funded in part by a \$10 million grant from the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority through the South Carolina Infrastructure Investment Program. The grant also supports meter upgrades.

"This grant is a game-changer for us," Simon said. "We are a small city with a declining population, and we have a large low- to moderate-income population ... Revenues coming into the city are sustained, but they're low. So the city just did not have the money to really replace this aging infrastructure."

Simon said he expects the upgrades to be completed this year or early next year.

For Lake City, addressing its flooding issues caused in part by aging infrastructure is its largest public works project to date. The work encompasses 17 streets and 2.3 miles of piping.

To pay for the work, the city is using a \$13.5 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, combined with a \$1 million grant from the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority. The Acline Stormwater Drainage project will reduce recurring flooding in the downtown area that has caused structural damage to buildings.

"This has been going on for probably 25 years or more, and it's kind of putting Band-Aids on it to get by," said Ricky Sims, public works director. "It's going to help the downtown area and a lot of residential areas. It's the largest project that I know of that Lake City has ever had, as far as drainage."

To help secure the grant, Mayor Yamekia Robinson and a group of constituents visited with U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn to talk about the problems and possible federal assistance.

"This is my hometown," Robinson said. "So I grew up seeing the different flooded areas for years, and I can go back and even talk about how my father grew up here as well, and seeing flooding in his area where he grew up."



Getting elected officials on board for letters of support were helpful in getting the grants, Robinson said, as was hiring someone full-time to work on the grant applications.

“Doing this kind of thing without a grants professional is certainly possible,” said Lisa Jones, the city’s grant writer, “but there’s an advantage to having a grants professional work with you. They know where to find the money, and they can expedite getting the requests through and the administrative part.”

Jones said if towns cannot afford to hire someone specifically to write and manage grants, they can contract for the service or work, with organizations like the National League of Cities’ Local Infrastructure Hub or the granting entity itself to fill that role. South Carolina’s 10 Councils of Governments have also helped obtain and administer grants.

“The good news is funders want to fund projects so they will help you as much as they can,” she said.

Greenwood has taken a systematic approach to replacing its aging infrastructure.

The Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works, which runs the city’s water, electric and gas services, created an inventory of its water lines — some of which dated back to 1910 when the lines were installed by local textile mills.

“We’ve got a lot of systems that were installed by the mills early on, and then when they either went out of business or changed their structure, they handed it over to the water utility,” said Hope Walker, the utility’s engineering director. “The first thing that we did was to identify how much line do we have in each decade.”

That inventory showed about 5% of the city’s water infrastructure was installed before 1950.

“The next thing we did was look at kind of an average dollar per linear foot: How much is it going to cost to keep these lines less than 100 years old or less than 90 years old, whatever the goal may be, whatever the life of the material is?” she said.

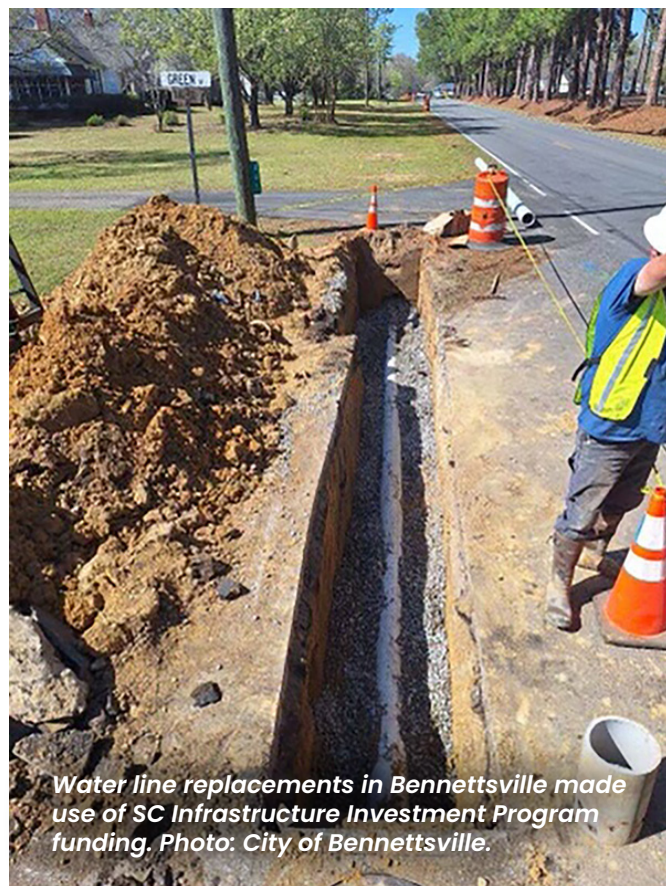
The utility estimated maintenance on those lines would cost about \$5 million a year, creating quite a financial incentive to replace the lines.

“In about 2019, we started really looking at the age of the system and how do we keep our system less than 100 years old or less than 80 years old,” Walker said. “Where can we impact the most people and get the best bang for our buck?”

Using \$10 million in grant funding from the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority, which had funds from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, and \$4.4 million in local matching funds, the city set about replacing more than 5 miles of water mains and 110 water service connections, as well as fire hydrants and gate valves.

The project’s size threatened to overwhelm the CPW staff, but Utilities Engineer Jonathan Atkins was hired in 2022 to help design the projects in house.

“Definitely having the funds to work with, even though it stretches our resources here in house, allows us to get a lot done in a short period of time,” Atkins said.



*Water line replacements in Bennettsville made use of SC Infrastructure Investment Program funding. Photo: City of Bennettsville.*



*The Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works have been replacing water lines as well as fire hydrants and gate valves. Photo: Greenwood CPW.*





# Municipal Association of South Carolina

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## Calendar

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

### MAY

**7 – 9 SC Community Development Association Annual Meeting.** Beach House Resort, Hilton Head Island. Topics include artificial intelligence in local government, planning and zoning, forms of government and understanding structures and functions in local governance, short-term rentals, an economic update and civility.

**15 Risk Management Services: Law Enforcement Training.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics include preventing injuries during foot pursuits and apprehension of suspects, law enforcement moonlighting, improving performance through nutrition and sleep and fire service regulation updates.

**20 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Freedom of Information Act in SC and Municipal Governance and Policy.** Regional Council of Government locations. Topics include municipal

governance and policy, a presentation about the council of government services and the Freedom of Information Act in SC.

**20 Business Licensing Essentials. Virtual.** Topics include the upcoming business license class schedule update.

### JUNE

**1 – 4 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting.** Sonesta Resort, Hilton Head Island. Topics include harnessing artificial intelligence and data for electric utilities, emergency preparedness, and joint pole use agreements.

**10 Setoff Debt Program: 2025 Employee Training.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**11 – 13 Main Street SC Annual Retreat.** City of Aiken Municipal Building.

**11 Setoff Debt Program: 2025 Employee Training.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**12 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Second Quarter Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

**24 – 25 Municipal Court Administration Association 101 Session A.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia. Topics include

a judicial system overview, case lifecycles, types of proceedings, bonds and courtroom processing.

**26 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Accreditation in Business Licensing Exam.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

### JULY

**8 Setoff Debt Program 2025 Employee Training.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**9 Setoff Debt Program 2025 Employee Training.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**16 – 20 Municipal Association of SC Annual Meeting.** Hilton Beachfront Resort and Spa, Hilton Head Island. For more information on the registration process and dates, see page 4.

**29 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Accreditation in Business Licensing Exam.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

### AUGUST

**5 Setoff Debt Program 2025 Annual Participant Training Session.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.