



UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



Travelers Rest Councilmember Dr. Shaniece Criss, left, speaks with South Carolina State Epidemiologist Dr. Linda Bell during the Municipal Association's Virtual Annual Meeting.

Virtual Annual Meeting Examines Impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19, the reason why the Municipal Association of SC staged its first-ever Virtual Annual Meeting, also provided the conference with its primary topic of discussion. In a series of videos that remain available on the Association's website, officials dug into the effects of the ongoing pandemic and ways that cities and towns can address it.

Here are some of the topics covered in the video sessions:

Fighting the spread

Dr. Shaniece Criss is a Travelers Rest councilmember, and serves as a health sciences professor at Furman University. Criss

Annual Meeting, continued page 2 >

In This Issue

HEDG Applications Due
Page 45

Revitalizing Downtown Economies
Page 46

Special Sections:

2020 Annual Report
Page 7

2020 Achievement Awards, Main Street SC Inspiration Awards
Page 27

In this ISSUE

The 2020 – 2021
Board of Directors..... 3

Pandemic Highlights
Need for Local Leadership 4

Caring for Those
in Police Custody..... 5

4 Graduate From MEO Institute .. 6

News Briefs..... 6

Association Highlight:
Forms and Powers of Municipal
Government handbook..... 43

Municipal Elected Officials Institute
of Government Monthly Quiz.... 43

What are Cable and
Telecommunications
Franchises?44

Hometown Economic Development
Grant Applications Open 45

Revitalizing
Downtown Economies..... 46

Special Inserts

2020 Annual Report 7

2020 Achievement Awards:
Main Street SC Inspiration
Awards 27

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Annual Meeting, from page 1 >

joined South Carolina State Epidemiologist Dr. Linda Bell to discuss the ways local government can help slow down the contagion.

Bell said cities and towns can take valuable steps at the local level. They can help with education on prevention, help build partnerships with community health providers, schools and the faith community to improve access to care.

The two also discussed how systemic issues — even city planning as well housing, public transportation and infrastructure — can create worse public health outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

They also discussed the importance of local governments pursuing diversity on boards and committees to understand all communities' needs better.

"I'd really like to stretch city and town councils to think, let us go out into the various communities to hear their voices," Criss said. "[People] move through the world in a different way, different responsibilities, different stressors. And so we have to be intentional in the way that we reach out to make sure that we hear those voices."

Bell said that the most critical tools for protection of residents and protection in places of business remain high levels of physical distancing and the use of masks.

"There are people in the population who are putting us all at risk," Bell said. "As those behaviors continue, it's going

to prolong the period of time that we're going to continue to see illnesses in our community, hospitalizations and even deaths. If communities can come together and recognize that this is not just for the individual, but it is a collective response that's required."

Voting procedures

South Carolina has now staged a primary election in a pandemic and faces a presidential election in November. Chris Whitmire, director of public information and training for the South Carolina State Election Commission, explained the

social-distancing challenges of elections in a conversation with Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon.

"The biggest issue is that elections today are conducted pretty much like they were 100, 200 years ago. We gather at a place, near where we live, in our neighborhoods. We gather together with our neighbors and we cast ballots," Whitmire said.

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- Chris Whitmire,
director of public information and training for
the South Carolina State Election Commission

For the June primaries, the General Assembly allowed all voters the choice to vote absentee. The record for absentee ballots in primary jumped from around 60,000 to more than 200,000, Whitmire said. Also, the majority of absentees voted by mail, where in the past most absentee voters submitted ballots in person.

Some issues making the voting process more difficult include the high-risk age of many poll managers, and fewer locations willing to serve as polling places, given the large number of people who will come to vote.

CARES Act funding

South Carolina received more than \$1.9 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act. A portion of that funding will be provided to local governments as reimbursements for COVID-19-related expenditures. This includes \$20 million for expenses that took place from March through June 2020, and other funds for expenses made during the remainder of the year. Brian Gaines, division director of the SC Department of Administration's Executive Budget Office, discussed the process with Municipal Association Executive Director Todd Glover.

Glover noted that cities cannot use the funding for revenue replacement, and Gaines described some of the things funds can be used for — personal protective equipment, telework or telehealth expenses, testing and treatment, among others. The SC Department of Administration has engaged the consulting firm Guidehouse, Inc. to vet reimbursement requests. Each city's designated point of contact will make requests through an online portal, with some communication afterward about appropriate documentation.

"It's not going to be as simple as uploading receipts and getting a payment back. You're going to have to demonstrate that these are expenses that are directly related to COVID-19," Gaines said.

Find all of the Virtual Annual Meeting videos at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting). Other sessions address city leadership in difficult times, such as the pandemic, economic uncertainty and discussions on race; South Carolina's economic outlook during and after COVID-19; and business license standardization.

The 2020 – 2021 Board of Directors

Delegates at the Municipal Association of South Carolina's Virtual Annual Meeting elected officers and board members to the Association's board of directors.

The 18-member board, composed of both municipal elected and appointed officials, sets policy for the Municipal Association of SC. The officers are elected to one-year terms at the Association's Annual Meeting. The terms of the officers will expire in July 2021.

- **President**
Mayor Cornelius Huff, Inman
- **First Vice President**
Councilmember Kathy Pender, Rock Hill
- **Second Vice President**
Mayor Rick Osbon, Aiken
- **Third Vice President**
Mayor Jason Stapleton, Williston
- **Immediate Past President**
Councilmember Octavia Williams-Blake, Florence

Board members are elected at the Association's Annual Meeting for three-year terms. The board is composed of representatives from each area of the 10 councils of governments and three at-large seats.

- **Mayor Brandy Amidon, Travelers Rest**
Representing: Appalachian Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2023
- **Mayor Brendon M. Barber Sr., Georgetown**
Representing: Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2021
- **Mayor Barbara Blain-Bellamy, Conway**
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2021
- **Mayor Michael Butler, Orangeburg**
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2023
- **Mayor Terrence Culbreath, Johnston**
Representing: Upper Savannah Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2021
- **Mayor Jane Darby, Edisto Beach**
Representing: Lowcountry Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2022
- **Mayor Greg Habib, Goose Creek**
Representing: Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2022
- **Councilmember David McGhee, North Augusta**
Representing: Lower Savannah Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2023
- **Mayor Bo McMillan, Mullins**
Representing: Pee Dee Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2022
- **Councilmember Clayton Pack, Manning**
Representing: Santee Lynches Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2022
- **Mayor Lancer Shull, Batesburg-Leesville**
Representing: Central Midlands Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2023
- **Councilmember Wes Spurrier, Clover**
Representing: Catawba Regional Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2021
- **City Administrator Natalie Zeigler, Goose Creek**
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2022

Pandemic Highlights Need for Local Leadership

by Mayor Cornelius Huff, City of Inman; and President, Municipal Association of SC

I hope you enjoyed the online sessions from the Municipal Association's first Virtual Annual Meeting. Like all of you, I would have rather met in person in Charleston, shaking hands, sharing stories and enjoying fellowship with our colleagues and friends. As local leaders, though, we must set an example for our residents. And during this time, the example must be one of health, safety and caution.

Since we could not safely meet in person, the Association provided a virtual platform to conduct our business meeting and share relevant information online. Since March, the Municipal Association staff has produced a variety of online educational materials to help us continue to learn during the pandemic. From videos about budgets and other technical assistance questions, to sample mandatory mask ordinances and explanations about executive emergency orders, we have access to a ton of information. Please, take advantage of this opportunity. We have a knowledgeable staff supporting us at the Association. Reap the benefits of the resources and content they are making available to us.

We are in a difficult time. City and town leaders are navigating — along with our residents — through a global public health crisis, an economic downturn and a renewed movement to end the unnecessary police brutality that tarnishes the work of trustworthy, principled law enforcement officers.

I know that together, as one team, as one South Carolina, we will overcome these challenges and come out better on the other side, but we have to do it together. I want us to work in partnership



"I want us to work in partnership to find common ground to make our state, our cities and our towns a better place to live, work and raise our children."

- Mayor Cornelius Huff, City of Inman; and President, Municipal Association of SC

to find common ground to make our state, our cities and our towns a better place to live, work and raise our children. That is, at the core, not only our constitutional mandate, but also our calling — to serve our state and our residents that elected us.

The last time many of us all met together, in February at Hometown Legislative Action Day, I spoke about how local governments are making the important decisions closest to the people. These are the decisions that affect our residents' basic quality of life every day. It's not glamorous. It's all about doing what's necessary to take care of our hometown residents and businesses.

We are mandating masks, or not. We are shutting down, or not. In all cases, we're making critically important decisions at a time when our residents need leadership the most. We are taking action. We are answering residents' concerns with action and changes at the local level.

There have been times recently when state and local leaders have been in conflict. But instead of fighting against each other, it's time to come together as one and work for the good of the entire state and all of its people — no more tug of war between city and state officials. To achieve such a goal, we cannot let divisiveness over political differences, between different government institutions and between business and government slow our efforts.

We are one South Carolina. We are one state. We are one people. Thank you for allowing me to be your president. I'm honored and humbled to lead our team for another year. The future of our cities and towns depend on us. And I believe that we can make sure that future is successful. Let's all come together to make decisions that protect, assist and move our residents and our state forward so next summer, we can shake hands in person at our Annual Meeting on Hilton Head Island.

Caring for Those in Police Custody

Virtual Annual Meeting Sessions Explore Police Issues of George Floyd Case, COVID-19

Shortly after the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25, protests and civil unrest sprang up in cities around the United States, including in many South Carolina communities.

The rolling nationwide event dramatically renewed conversations about police work and race. Some cities have developed committees and resident panels to consider local policing operations. Some have established new duty-to-intervene policies requiring officers to take action when they see other officers using excessive force.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina Virtual Annual Meeting dug into the topic through videos from the Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute. The Association's SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund often makes LLRMI training materials available to its members. The videos featured for the Virtual Annual Meeting are available to anyone through the Annual Meeting web page at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting).

The video presentations feature Jack Ryan, co-director of LLRMI, attorney and retired police officer. In one video, initially released days after the killing of George Floyd, Ryan discussed how many in the law enforcement community were quick to acknowledge that officers' conduct in that case was unacceptable.

"It always has to be recognized that anytime we take custody of someone, we now owe them a duty of care in addition to taking custody of them," Ryan said.

He added that duty of care takes into account injuries, illnesses, the method of restraint, and making sure that the person in custody is not in physical distress.

In training officers, Ryan said he had long stressed to officers that "as soon as the



person is subdued or restrained, then get off of them and get them into a rescue position. Get them to an upright position, or get them to their side to facilitate breathing."

Ryan noted that officers who witness conduct from other officers that could cause injury or demonstrate excessive force have a duty to intervene.

"Excessive [force], whether it's malicious or not, it's still excessive when you stay on top of somebody with your knee on their neck," he said.

While officers may need to use body weight to stabilize a person for handcuffing, they should avoid applying weight to the middle of the back and the neck, and avoid prolonged weight application, he said.

"Restraint, in a prone position, for a long period of time, with weight on the subject, is not going to be consistent with generally accepted policies, practices, training and even legal mandates with respect to use of force," Ryan said.

Other LLRMI videos featured as part of the Virtual Annual Meeting examined law enforcement aspects

of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ryan explored the considerations involved in decontaminating police work stations. Patrol cars, for example, can transport multiple prisoners in a shift and would need to be thoroughly disinfected when being handed from one officer to another.

When coronavirus began to spread rapidly in March, Ryan said, many agencies eliminated in-person roll call and moved to supervisors briefing officers at the beginning of their shifts over communications channels.

Another highlighted video looked at first-responder exceptions to the privacy disclosure requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA. For example, disclosure is allowed when it is needed to provide treatment, when needed to prevent the spread of a disease or when first responders may be at risk of infection.

Find the Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute videos and all other Virtual Annual Meeting videos at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting).

4 Graduate From MEO Institute

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government recognized four new graduates during the Municipal Association's Virtual Annual Meeting on July 17. These officials have completed the necessary 25 hours of instruction to graduate from the institute, and are now eligible to participate in the Advanced MEO Institute.

Some of the MEO Institute courses are available as online, on-demand courses. These include five courses that provide credit toward graduation — “Basic Budgeting and Municipal Finance,” “Forms of Municipal Government,” “Freedom of Information Act in SC,” “Municipal Economic Development” as well as “Municipal Governance and Policy.”

Learn more about the institute at www.masc.sc (keyword: MEOI).



**Councilmember
Starling Forester Jr. of Brunson**



**Councilmember Phillip Gunter
of Eastover**



**Councilmember Curtis Harrison
of Timmonsville**



**Councilmember Tameka Morrow
of Heath Springs**

NEWS BRIEFS

Fourteen cities and towns have been recognized as honorees on the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government's 2020 Honor Roll. They are the **Town of Allendale, Town of Arcadia Lakes, Town of Calhoun Falls, City of Cayce, Town of Cheraw, City of Folly Beach, Town of Jonesville, City of Lake City, City of Newberry, Town of Prosperity, Town of Santee, Town of Summerville, City of**

Union and the **City of Wellford**. The Honor Roll recognizes annually the councils that can count all sitting members as graduates of the MEO Institute.

The **City of Charleston** was named “The South's Best City 2020” by *Southern Living* magazine, and the **City of Greenville** also made the list at No. 11. For the magazine's “The South's Best Towns 2020” list, the

City of Beaufort came in at No. 2, the **Town of Bluffton** made the list at No. 9, and the **City of Aiken** landed at No. 10.

Gregory Saxton, clerk/treasurer for the **Town of Awendaw**, earned the Certified Municipal Clerk designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.

Association Highlight:

Forms and Powers of Municipal Government handbook

The Municipal Association of South Carolina offers city officials and staff access to publications covering a wide variety of local government topics, including the handbook *Forms and Powers of Municipal Government*.

South Carolina municipalities must structure themselves using one of three forms of government defined in state

law: the mayor-council form, the council form or the council-manager form. The legislative functions of city and town councils work the same across all three forms, but other functions differ in important ways.

The handbook articulates the powers given by state law to mayors, councils and city managers or administrators under

the different forms. It also describes who performs administrative duties under each of the three structures, who supervises departments and appoints and removes employees, and when officials can delegate authority.

Find the handbook at www.masc.sc (keyword: *Forms and Powers*).



Test yourself monthly quiz

True or False:

The council form of government is often called “governance by committee” because of shared powers.

Answer: True

The “governance by committee” phrase reflects that, under this form, the mayor and the councilmembers equally share legislative and administrative authority. The mayor may exercise informal authority as a leader of council and as a spokesperson for the city. However, a mayor presiding at council meetings does so by tradition, not because of state law. To exercise administrative functions, the mayor or a member of council must receive authorization from council, and



council may revoke the designated authority.

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government offers in-person and online courses. To register for the on-demand courses, go to the Municipal Association’s

website at www.masc.sc and log in with your user identification number and password. The on-demand courses can be accessed 24/7 from any computer, tablet or mobile device that has internet connection and may be taken in any order.

What are Cable and Telecommunications Franchises?

Municipalities have the right to regulate and charge utility companies for the privileges to conduct business and occupy public property and rights of way. These charges are called franchise fees.

A franchise is a charge for the privilege of physically occupying the municipality's streets and rights of way. Franchises are customarily granted in exchange for an annual fee to place telephone, electric, gas, fiber optic and cable television lines in streets or on public property. The fee is not a tax. It is more closely related to a lease or license for physical occupation of property owned, controlled by or for the benefit of the municipality, like streets and sidewalks.

The South Carolina Constitution prevents the General Assembly from passing any law granting a private party the right to construct and operate infrastructure in the public rights "without first obtaining the consent of the governing body of the municipality in control of the streets or public places proposed to be occupied." In addition, SC law provides that municipalities may "grant franchises for the use of public streets and make charges for them."

Traditionally, municipalities charged private parties a franchise fee equal to 3% to 5% of the gross income generated by the activity occupying and using the public property or rights of way within the municipality.

Municipalities may also regulate and charge private utility companies for activities located in the municipal boundaries. For example, the municipality may impose permit fees, inspection fees, or encroachment fees on construction or improvements, even if it occurs within the public right of way. Municipalities may regulate and charge for the use of

municipal fixtures and improvements — for example, attachment fees for the use of municipally owned poles, or mast arms, or leases for the use of water tanks.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the SC General Assembly passed laws restricting and blurring the previously clear municipal authority to require business licenses and franchises for telecommunication and cable companies occupying and using municipally controlled streets or public places, and to require regulatory compliance.

Telecommunications companies

Under prior law, municipalities generally charged telecommunications companies by imposing significant franchise fees. The South Carolina Supreme Court affirmed a 5% franchise fee on gross income from all sources in the 1999 case *BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. v. City*

of Orangeburg. Under this ruling, business licenses taxes on telecommunications companies were less significant.

With the Telecommunications Act of 1999, telecommunications companies pay a statutorily fixed franchise fee ranging from \$100 to \$1,000, depending on the size of the municipality and a 1% business license fee. Instead of the formerly significant franchise fee, telecommunications companies pay business license taxes at a fixed rate.

In the Telecommunications Act, the fixed franchise fees are "in lieu of any permit fee, encroachment fee, degradation fee, or other fee assessed on a telecommunications provider for its occupation of or work within the public right of way."

The municipality may still require a franchise agreement, and may regulate the terms and conditions on which occupation and work occur.



Telecommunications and Cable Regulatory Framework

	Telecommunications	Cable
Franchise	Local franchise; capped based on population at nominal amount (\$100 - \$1,000)	Statewide franchises; locality can consent and impose fee not to exceed 5%

Cable companies

Under prior law, municipalities required that cable companies secure and pay for local franchises. In addition to requiring annual payments, municipal franchises also often included other requirements applicable to cable companies — for example, requiring the cable company to provide support for and distribution of local access channels.

In 2006, the General Assembly passed the South Carolina Competitive Cable Services Act, now codified beginning at SC Code Section 58-12-300. It provides that cable companies may apply for a statewide franchise agreement. Existing local franchise agreements remain in effect during a transitional period, but are superseded by the statewide franchise upon expiration or termination. Municipalities may establish a franchise fee payable under the state franchise, but the fee may not exceed 5% of gross revenues.

The municipality may not charge any other permit, inspection, or encroachment fee beyond the franchise fee. It may still reserve a right to access one or more “PEG” channels (public, educational or governmental), but must bear all operational costs of providing local access programming.

The Municipal Association of SC encourages that municipalities take two separate actions on cable franchises. First, for all existing local franchises, municipalities should establish a franchise fee rate for such cable service providers upon expiration or termination of the existing franchise with the municipality. Most municipalities did so after the passage of the Competitive Cable Services Act, but it is prudent to check that such an ordinance was adopted and remains in.

Second, for cable providers operating under a statewide franchise, municipalities should adopt an ordinance consenting to such franchise, establishing a local franchise fee rate (not to exceed 5%), and imposing other terms and conditions allowed by law on the provider’s activities within the municipality.

The Association has prepared model ordinances for both situations, which models are available on request and at www.masc.sc (keyword: cable model ordinance).



This concept rendering shows the City of Union’s plans for The Depot alleyway project.

Photo: Alison South.

Hometown Economic Development Grant Applications Open

A burned-out, boarded-up downtown storefront once blighted Union’s Main Street, but when the property owner donated it to the City of Union, it provided a new opportunity. The city and the Union County Chamber of Commerce aimed to redevelop it into a multi-use outdoor space. They obtained a Hometown Economic Development Grant in 2019 to help them do so.

This new space will provide a valuable pass-through for downtown businesses in Union. It will have decorative elements such as a metal archway announcing the space as “The Depot” – a reference to Union’s railroad history — as well as outdoor furniture, and will be able to serve as an event venue.

City officials broke ground on The Depot Alleyway in late June 2020. The city is using the design-build method for the project, a project management style that allows maximum design flexibility and cost savings while minimizing scheduling delays.

The City of Marion also received a grant in last year’s cycle, which allowed for an expansion of its downtown facade improvement grant program. Since the facade program’s reestablishment in 2017, it has seen the completion of more than 13 projects, with more coming up, Historic Marion Revitalization Association Executive Director Stephanie Rizzo said. The program’s income sources include the city itself, fundraising and grants.

“Not only does our grant cover facade work, but also structural work to

our buildings located within the Historic District. Business owners are eager to invest in their buildings knowing there is support available, often giving a little extra encouragement where it may have been lacking before,” she said.

Some of the other projects that grant funding has helped in the last year are a farmers’ market pavilion in Calhoun Falls and a park honoring Dave the Potter in Edgefield. The grants are also contributing to handicapped-accessibility upgrades for the Town of Prosperity’s Depot and strategic plans in places like Jonesville and Dillon.

The 2020 Hometown Economic Development Grant cycle will award as many as 13 grants of up to \$25,000 each. Project proposals can be anything that would make a positive, measurable and sustainable economic impact on a community. Those interested should submit an application online by Friday, September 25 at 5 p.m. The application requires that the council passes a resolution in support of the grant application.

Cities and towns that receive a grant must also provide matching funds. The municipal population determines the required amount of matching. Grant recipients must also submit progress reports and provide financial details about how they spent grant funds.

Find the HEDG application and sample resolution at www.masc.sc (keyword: hometown grant). For questions, contact Scott Slatton at sslatton@masc.sc.

REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN ECONOMIES

While some of South Carolina's downtowns were distressed commercial districts in recent years, many have worked to transform into vibrant walkable neighborhoods.

Challenges remain, with the massive business disruption of COVID-19 being a major one. Even so, through coordinated revitalization efforts these districts have attracted new businesses, retained local talent and cultivated community engagement. Conway, Laurens and Cheraw are three municipalities that have demonstrated the effects of incremental, comprehensive downtown planning.

Conway

Less than 20 miles from the Grand Strand, the historic river city of Conway has seen tremendous growth recently, but this was not always the case. In 2009 with more than 50 empty storefronts, downtown looked bleak. Today the vacancy rate is near 0% in the city's retail and restaurant district. This improvement partially stems from heightened resiliency. Conway has faced repeated disasters including flooding and fires during the last few years, but its residents have managed to develop greater community resolve. One recent affirmation has been the role residents play in sustaining and growing the downtown economy. For years, residents assumed that tourists led downtown investment, but when the city's main access bridge was closed for six months, the majority of the downtown economy remained robust. Residents turned inward to support local businesses and found that downtown could satisfy their shopping and dining needs.

Hillary Howard, executive director of Conway Alive, noted that beautification partnerships continue to be Conway's best strategy for downtown improvement. One example is Kingston Park, completed in fall 2019.



Above: A mural commemorating Conway's railroad history is a focal point in the renovated Kingston Park. Photo: City of Conway.

Right: Main Street Laurens organizes Finally Friday on the Square, which features live music, extended shopping and dinner specials. Photo: Main Street Laurens.



"This is a showstopper. It was a great collaboration between the Main Street program, the chamber [of commerce] and the city," she said.

Simple placemaking measures such as the installation of overhead lighting, landscaping and a mural transformed an unimpressive green space into a stunning corner park.

The next opportunity to grow the city's downtown is development of amenities along the Waccamaw River. To complement the existing 1.3-mile Riverwalk, leaders plan to connect downtown to this natural asset through the coordination of live, work, and play activities. The city recently purchased significant riverfront property which Howard described as a "real game changer" for catalyzing the riverfront's potential.

Laurens

Gateway to the Upstate and the greater Greenville area, Laurens' iconic courthouse square and nearby historic neighborhoods create a charming downtown district. Its walkability recently improved because of a push to incrementally expand the commercial district. A crosswalk connection to a public parking lot significantly improved access to the courthouse square. This much-needed crosswalk simply required a phone call to the SC Department of Transportation to coordinate the installation and a lane change in sync with a scheduled highway repaving.

Mayor Nathan Senn said "It was an easy ask, because it was a common-sense solution that was already identified in the downtown master plan."

Additional downtown master plan concepts have been realized in close



Events in downtown Cheraw include the Spring Festival and Annual Cheraw Lantern Parade. Photos: Town of Cheraw.

coordination with the downtown development nonprofit, Main Street Laurens. The Food Truck Plaza, a dedicated venue for community food trucks, is a catalytic component of the city's focus on growing its arts and food culture.

Jonathan Irick, executive director of Main Street Laurens, is helping to spur the culinary and arts initiatives to grow Laurens' downtown economy.

"We have learned to not overthink plans," Irick said. "Small, fast wins are just as impactful, if not more, than one large project that takes years to develop. For instance, the installation of overhead festoon lighting in the alleyways has boosted evening appeal in these formerly dark spaces."

Together, Irick and Senn note that positive communication has strengthened the partnership between the city and Main Street Laurens.

"Leaders are elected to lead," Senn said. "Play the long game. Be patient. Be willing to say no, not right now or yes because it's the right thing to do."

Cheraw

In recent years, the historic core of Cheraw struggled. A small mix of business anchors were surrounded by dilapidated buildings slated for demolition. The bleakness changed when Cheraw's town leadership voted to create a Main Street program to implement a comprehensive downtown plan. Today, Cheraw has a more unified vision with short- and long-term goals.

Rob Wolfe, Cheraw's first Main Street executive director, links this vision to the

town's positive relationship with engaged merchants building a modern shopping and dining experience.

"My role is to provide direction on how best to achieve that. For instance, we have hosted several workshops to offer practical solutions that address window design and business development."

Merchants immediately embraced the recommendations and storefronts were cleverly redesigned with appealing displays.

Cheraw in just one year has harnessed its residents' enthusiasm to help downtown succeed.

"People are noticing that things are happening," said Wolfe. "In fact, some residents compared Cheraw to a 'Hallmark' community after a successful evening lantern parade."

Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique.

"We have the best-preserved historic district outside of Charleston," Wolfe said. "Our historic district is the most visible asset with an enormous collection of pre-Civil War buildings including over 170 residential and commercial structures."

A district of this age, however, has its challenges. Most buildings are unused and need rehabilitation, but this is changing. One particular project that has the community encouraged is a downtown hotel.

Wolfe noted that "this is a very rare opportunity for a town of our size to secure a major outside investment. It's a huge boost for downtown and one that required the creation and approval of an incentive package and a land swap."

The goal is to retain Cheraw's large daytime workforce — a key asset — while spurring additional investment downtown.

A shared vision

Revitalization is more than physical improvements. It is also about leaders and residents working together.

Jenny Boulware, manager of Main Street South Carolina, noted that revitalization "requires bringing people together to develop and implement a shared vision. This can stimulate economic growth, creativity and activity downtown."

Identifying specific development strategies can take downtown districts to new levels of livelihood. Begin by identifying assets, resources and partnerships to inform long-term planning. An understanding of local market conditions — why people live and work downtown — helps craft a vision of downtown's role in the greater economy. Through public engagement, strategic planning, public commitment and ongoing support, South Carolina's cities and towns can create a place that unites community, attracts visitors and supports small businesses.

Main Street South Carolina is a technical assistance program that empowers communities as they revitalize their historic downtowns, encouraging economic development and historic preservation. Learn more at www.masc.sc (keyword: Main Street).



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 www.masc.sc

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Calendar

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

To ensure the safety and well-being of our members, the Municipal Association of SC will host its training sessions and meetings through the end of 2020 virtually when possible. Information about events and how members can access the virtual events will be updated on the Association's website.

SEPTEMBER

1 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Online only. Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments area.

2 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Online only. Catawba Regional Council of Governments area.

3 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Online only. Santee Lynches Regional Council of Governments area.

9 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Online only. Central Midlands Council of Governments area.

OCTOBER

6 SCMIT/SCMIRF Recruiting and Hiring, Use of Force and Traffic Pursuits.

7 South Carolina Utility Billing Association Customer Service Training and Networking Lunch.

8 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting.

14 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government and Advanced Continuing Education.

27 – 30 SC Business Licensing Officials Association and SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association Joint Academy.

28 Main Street South Carolina Fourth Quarter Training.

NOVEMBER

3 Main Street SC New Director Orientation.

5 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Fourth Quarter Meeting and Exhibitor Showcase.

10 Risk Management Services Annual Members Meeting.

11 – 13 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Annual Meeting.

DECEMBER

4 SC Municipal Attorneys Association Annual Meeting and Continuing Legal Education Seminar.

9 SCMIT and SCMIRF Public Works/ Utilities Risk Management Training.