



UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



Matt Lehrman, co-founder and managing director of Social Prosperity Partners, discussed the process of inviting all stakeholders to join in solving community problems during the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting.

'Not a Win-or-Lose' Civility as a Foundation of Community Change

The Municipal Association of SC formally launched its effort to promote civility in local government during the Annual Meeting, including the "Pillars of Civility," a list of ways that officials can avoid the pitfalls of anger and dysfunction. One such pillar calls for officials working collaboratively to "concentrate on what you have in common, not what separates you."

This advice caught the eye of Matt Lehrman, co-founder and managing director of Social Prosperity Partners, who served as the keynote speaker and who called it his favorite pillar. He said that it invited people to consider not just "civility" as the opposite of "incivility," but also to see the choice between "scarcity" and "possibility."

"When we talk from a position of scarcity, we are talking about the problems that we face in our community with incredible pressure upon us. Time pressure, budget pressure, and the like. It's very common that those are win-lose scenarios," he said. "When we are in a position of scarcity, we make all kinds of assumptions. We make assumptions that everyone who cares about this was notified that everyone had a chance to participate that everyone was heard and respected ... But when we switch our mindset from scarcity to possibility, then we're in a place where we can continually be inviting more people to join in our process. It is an additive, there's not a win-or-lose."

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For bringing as many people together as possible, Lehrman called upon his audience to create connections among their communities and build a meaningful vision of what the community can achieve. This requires understanding whether groups of community members have high levels of ability to participate, and whether they have high levels of desire to participate.

He described those with high ability and desire as “devoted,” or the people who are keenly focused on an issue.

“You know who those people are because they are calling you day and night,” he said, adding that this group needs to be respected and heard to maximize the chance of a civil conversation.

The next group, the low-ability but high-desire group, Lehrman called “oriented” to important issues in the community.

“And when they show up, they need to be received,” he said. “They deserve accountability. They deserve a collection of ideas that were voiced that go on a website or on a follow-up message somewhere that says ‘we heard you.’”

Lehrman described those who are low-ability and low-desire as “asleep” to the issues of the community, often because of other matters competing for their attention. He said officials will often be tempted to leave this group alone because it minimizes problems.

“I would ask, where is your responsibility to wake people up to let them know that there’s an issue that they might want to pay attention to? Even at the risk that those people will disagree with your position. Your job isn’t to win. Your job is to make people feel engaged and connected meaningfully in your community.”

The final group, he said, is one with significant possibility, the high-ability, low-desire group — those who are “uninspired.” This group can be activated with the right push, according to Lehrman, as happened in 2014 when the ALS Association created a popular social media trend to raise money through the “Ice Bucket Challenge.” He noted that many of those who dumped ice water on their heads on camera to raise this money likely did not initially care about the progressive neurodegenerative disease known as ALS.

“Make them work on topics that feel significant to them, and give them meaningful ways to participate. Make it fun,” he said.

Creating these connections can help officials make great achievements, Lehrman said, because “where people work together courageously, their potential is unlimited.”

Annual Meeting Presentations Available Online

The Association’s website, www.masc.sc, has materials and recordings available from many of the sessions, including these:

- Opening Session speeches, including the keynote from Matt Lehrman
- Civic Storytelling: How to Create Real World Connection in a Digital Age
- Sustainable Design Practices: How Cities Large and Small Can Lead the Way in Building a Resilient Future
- Population-specific sessions: Keeping the Party Safe, Economic Development, and Police Reform and Incivility
- Social Media Pointers and Pitfalls for Elected Officials
- Five Questions to Ask Your Business Licensing Officials
- Do You Really Need to Leave the Room? Conflicts of Interest and Recusals
- The SC Election Commission’s Role in Municipal Elections

The 2022 - 2023 Board of Directors

A 19-member board of directors, composed of both elected and appointed officials, sets policy for the Association.

New officers

The officers, or members of the executive committee, are elected to one-year terms at the Association's Annual Meeting. The officers' terms will expire in July 2023.

President: Mayor Rick Osbon, Aiken

First Vice President: Mayor Barbara Blain-Bellamy, Conway

Second Vice President: Mayor Greg Habib, Goose Creek

Third Vice President: Mayor Brandy Amidon, Travelers Rest

Immediate Past President: Councilmember Kathy Pender, Rock Hill

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 four at-large seats.

Newly elected members

Councilmember Judy Bridge, Walterboro
Representing: Lowcountry Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2025

Mayor Jason Evans, Pageland
Representing: Pee Dee Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2025

City Administrator Desiree Fragoso, Isle of Palms
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2025

Mayor Kenneth Gist, Woodruff
Representing: Appalachian Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2023

Councilmember Jeffrey Graham, Camden
Representing: Santee Lynches Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2025

Councilmember Guang Ming Whitley, Mount Pleasant
Representing: Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2025

Other current board members

Mayor Brenda Bethune, Myrtle Beach
Representing: Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2024

Mayor Michael Butler, Orangeburg
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2023

Councilmember Robert Garner, Union
Representing: Catawba Regional Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2024

Mayor Stellartean Jones, Gray Court
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2023

City Manager Deron McCormick, Sumter
Representing: At-large
Term expires: July 2024

Councilmember David McGhee, North Augusta
Representing: Lower Savannah Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2023

Mayor Lancer Shull, Batesburg-Leesville
Representing: Central Midlands Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2023

Mayor Brandon Smith, Greenwood
Representing: Upper Savannah Council of Governments area
Term expires: July 2024

NEWS BRIEFS

Several municipal officials recently earned their Accreditation in Business Licensing designation. These are **Rita Bruce**, assistant city clerk, City of Landrum; **Paula Payton**, municipal clerk, Town of West Pelzer; **Scott McDonald**, business license official, Town of Summerville; and **Brandi Hussmann**, business licensing, Beaufort County. **Kaylee Summerton**, revenue analyst with the Municipal Association of SC, obtained both her Accreditation in Business Licensing and Master in Business Licensing.

The SC Association of Municipal Power Systems re-elected its board to a second term in office. The board includes President **John Young**, general manager, Laurens Commission of Public Works; Vice President **Robert Faires**, director of utilities, City of Seneca; Members at Large **Tim Baker**, utility director; City of Newberry; **Tim Hall**, utilities director, City of Abbeville; **Wade Holmes**, electric utility director, Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities; **Joey Meadors**, director of utilities and public works, City of Clinton; and Past President **Mike Jolly**, director of electric utilities, City of Rock Hill.

Greer Fire Deputy Chief **Joshua Holzheimer** was recently elected president of the South Carolina Firefighter's Association.

City of Columbia Mayor **Daniel Rickenmann** was recently appointed vice chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors' energy committee.

Osbon Elected President of the Municipal Association of South Carolina

Delegates at the Municipal Association of South Carolina's Annual Meeting unanimously elected Rick Osbon, mayor for the City of Aiken, as the Association's president. He will serve a one-year term that began at the conclusion of the 2022 Annual Meeting.

When asked about his vision for South Carolina hometowns, here is what Osbon had to say:

How are cities and towns driving success in South Carolina?

Cities and towns are the centers of economic development and business in our state. They are the quality-of-life hubs where people want to start a business, raise a family, enjoy the arts and all of the other amenities that come with living in a city. While we focus on all of those things, there is something else that should also help drive our success right now: our collective commitment to bring civility and agreeable disagreement back into our communities. The Municipal Association board of directors adopted a strategic plan that prioritizes civility, and with that an ongoing initiative that we are calling "Civility Makes the Difference." Through this effort, every city and town council has the opportunity to take a pledge to treat each other and the community with respect and civility. Currently, we are the only organization in the state to prioritize civility this way, and in doing so we can ensure that our cities and towns are in a position to keep



bringing economic success to South Carolina.

What makes you proud to be a local elected official?

I made the decision to run for local office because I wanted to contribute to the vitality of my hometown, improving the quality of life and bringing economic development. I began my local government service on Aiken County Council. I thought I could do even more for my hometown, so I ran for mayor. I felt like that our city needed a business owner's perspective. I'm a third-generation small business owner, and I've learned from my father and grandfather the principles of running a successful business — always treat people fairly and be kind. I have spent my time on city council building coalitions

and consensus for the good of our residents and businesses. I'm proud to serve at the most local level of government where we see our efforts — new parks, business incentives, downtown development, infrastructure improvements — become a reality. We see decisions that we make come to life and directly impact our residents and business owners.

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing cities and towns?

One of the biggest challenges facing cities and towns right now is the difficulty of governing in a time when disagreements turn ugly and compromise is a four-letter word. Businesses, industry, corporations and manufacturing do not want to locate in a place that isn't friendly for its workers and their families. We must make South Carolina cities and towns responsive to the needs of businesses, and create places where executives want to locate and hire our own residents. Local elected officials are often challenged by residents and even sometimes by colleagues who are negative, offer no solutions and constantly criticize council and its decisions. Let's try to work together, and to make our council meetings more welcoming, inclusive and open to new ideas. Treat each other like we would want to be treated. If we can conquer this obstacle, there will be no end to what cities and towns can do for the good of our state.

Take the Civility Pledge

In 2021, the Municipal Association's board of directors named restoring civility in local government a top priority. The Association has since used civility as a key theme among its speakers, workshops and other materials to help leaders listen, learn and de-escalate heated situations.

Parts of this ongoing initiative are the different versions of the civility pledge, which can remind elected officials, staff and residents of the importance of mutual respect and collaboration to keep meetings and discourse on track.

Municipalities can use the personal pledge as a reminder at the top of meeting agendas, emphasizing the importance of civil behavior for everyone present.



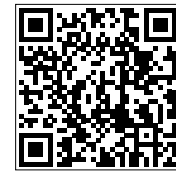
Personal pledge

"I pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of my city or town."

Sample resolution and other resources

The pledge is also available in a longer format as a resolution that city and town councils can adopt as a resolution to reaffirm their commitment to civility. The resolution reviews the critical need of civility for democratic self-governance, and allows the council to pledge "to practice and promote civility within the governing body" for the benefit of all.

The text of the resolution, as well as a variety of other resources including articles and podcasts, can be found at www.masc.sc (keyword: civility).



8 Graduate From MEO Institute of Government

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government graduated eight officials during the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting in Charleston.

The summer 2022 graduates of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government are: Councilmember James B. Blassingame of Sumter, Councilmember Melissa Enos of Goose Creek, Councilmember Tiffine R. Forester of Fairfax, Councilmember Bryant Gardner of Darlington, Councilmember Leslie Hayes of Bamberg, Councilmember John Krajc of Myrtle Beach, Councilmember Kevin Phillips of Port Royal and Councilmember Robert Renner of Edisto Beach.

Since these graduates have completed the required 25 hours of instruction available through the Institute, they are now eligible to participate in the Advanced MEO Institute.

The next Advanced Institute sessions will take place October 19 in Columbia. Participants will be able to choose one of two courses: "Advanced Budgeting and Finance" or "Advanced Leadership and Governance."

Also on October 19, the Advanced MEO Institute will offer its fall session of Advanced Continuing Education. That session will cover ethics and civility, as well as municipal courts.

The MEO Institute also tracks those city and town councils on which all sitting members are MEO graduates. The current MEO Honor Roll cities are Arcadia Lakes,



Beaufort, Folly Beach, Inman, Jonesville, Moncks Corner, Mullins, Newberry, Port Royal, Prosperity, Santee and Walterboro.

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

Civility, Association Successes Highlighted at 2022 Annual Meeting



Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon succeeded Rock Hill Councilmember Kathy Pender as the Municipal Association's president.



Municipal Association Executive Director Todd Glover explained the Association's focus areas and upcoming projects.

Delegates from across South Carolina's cities and towns elected Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon as the new president of the Municipal Association of SC during the 2022 Annual Meeting.

In accepting the presidency, Osbon recalled his election as mayor in 2015, and wanting to learn more about municipal governance.

"I knew I wanted to learn more about the Municipal Association and get involved in the many education and training opportunities that they offer us. I was impressed," he said. "And when you elected me to the board of directors, I learned even more about the services of the Association and what it offers to our cities and towns. It's this level of service and added value that I want to continue and even expand in this upcoming year."

He also called attention to the Association's expansion of its federal advocacy efforts. In the past year, he has joined Association staff in Washington, D.C., to meet with the state's U.S. senators and representatives.

"Our advocacy team continues to build positive relationships with legislators, legislative staff and leadership at the state level as well. It's this spirit of cooperation with other stakeholders where we have seen so many legislative successes this year," he said.

Rock Hill Councilmember Kathy Pender, the Association's outgoing president, also called attention to the

Association's accomplishments in the past year, including collaborating with local and state officials on American Rescue Plan funding, and the addition of a new Association field services manager to help answer local questions.

Pender was one of many speakers to discuss civility in government, named by the Association's board of directors as a top priority in 2021. Leaders in every part of the state have faced incivility and a lack of respect in council meetings and community interactions, she said.

"Even when it's tough and frustrating, keep listening and talking with your colleagues and your residents. Don't become one of those elected officials who only responds to their friends and the like-minded. Be willing to learn from one another. Our communities, our towns, our cities deserve that, and they will be stronger as we get better at engaging others in meaningful dialogues," she said.

Association Executive Director Todd Glover called attention to some of the Association's initiatives relating to the other major priorities, including workforce development, where the upcoming Build the Bench program will aim to increase the number of qualified city managers and administrators available in South Carolina.

The economic development priority includes numerous projects, including the Recruitment Training Program, through which 26 cities and towns so far have learned the steps to successfully

pull in new businesses to locate in their community. The City Connect Market, meanwhile, is a cooperative purchasing program that plugs into a nationwide network and allows South Carolina's municipalities to use the purchasing power of more than 700 other governments. An upcoming initiative, We Shop SC, will provide an e-commerce platform for all Main Street South Carolina communities, through which local businesses can pay a small monthly fee to sell their products and services online.

"This is assisting our small businesses, and by strengthening our small businesses, we strengthen our cities and towns," Glover said.

He also introduced some of the individual features of the Association-wide civility initiative. This includes the civility pledge, crafted both in a longer form that councils can use in a resolution, and a short personal pledge that can be used in contexts like meeting agendas. Find the text of the personal civility pledge on page 5.

"We have to get to a point where we can disagree without being disagreeable. That if we're on opposite sides of an issue, that we're not enemies," Glover said. "We have to restore vision to our communities and get everyone behind that vision."

Find presentation materials for the Annual Meeting at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting). The page also includes links to the Municipal Association's 2022 Annual Report and 2022 Legislative Report.

2022

Civility Makes
the Difference

Annual Report

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM

Just as we've finally emerged from the two-year fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, government leaders across the country are facing down another outbreak: incivility in government.

We have entered an era where threatening, mocking, deriding and dismissing are the norm. Gone are the days when ideas were at least respected even when they were not heeded. Compromise and collaboration are treated as four-letter words, and pithy insults are more celebrated than thoughtful solutions.

As leaders of local government, you have seen and experienced this rapid decline. It has come from residents, anonymous online trolls, and even from colleagues at times.

Local governments innovate. They solve problems. They act. That's why I'm hopeful that local governments can lead the way in repairing our broken discourse. Together, we can chart a course back to governing without malice. We can return to the days of having disagreements without being disagreeable.

Last year, the Association's board of directors adopted a strategic plan that included restoring civility in government as a top priority. Leadership on this issue is something we take very seriously. Collectively, we can get the political discussion in our state back on track.

The English poet Lady Mary Montagu once wrote that civility "costs nothing and buys everything."

She was right.

When you're disagreeing with a colleague on council or a resident on Facebook, civility makes the difference. It's the difference between conversation and controversy, between a friendship and a falling out.

You'll be hearing about civility much more from the Association in the coming year at our events and in our publications. By offering speakers, workshops and tools to help local government leaders listen, learn and de-escalate heated situations, our local leaders can be the example of how to govern best.

South Carolina's cities and towns led the way during the last pandemic, and I know we'll handle this one just as well.

Please take the opportunity to look through this report to see the hard work that the gifted staff of the Association accomplished in the past year. We are honored to work for you and with you as you lead the incredible cities and towns of our state.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Todd Glover". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "Glover".

B. Todd Glover
Municipal Association of SC
Executive Director

Finding Common Ground: The Pillars of Civility

After the Municipal Association's board of directors identified promoting civility as one of its key initiatives, the Association developed a list of key ideas for elected officials and staff to use when making local government as effective, inclusive and courteous as possible.

Concentrate on what you have in common, not what separates you.

Be as eager to listen as to speak.

Your time is valuable. So is everyone else's. Respect it.

Act as you would expect someone to act in your home.

Concentrate on facts, not theories.

Ask questions to learn. Answer questions with respect.

Make your point about the issue, not the person.

Make your case on merits, not on what people want to hear.

Ask "what will persuade people in this room?" not "what will make a great tweet?"

Civility. Respect. Solutions.



Voices

South Carolina cities and towns created the Municipal Association of SC in part because officials knew collaboration would greatly amplify and strengthen their messages.

American Rescue Plan funding advocacy

In 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9-trillion pandemic relief bill that provided \$65.1 billion to municipal governments nationwide. In South Carolina, the smaller municipalities, known as nonentitlement units of local government for ARP purposes, had to wait for the state to request ARP funds be distributed to them. The transformative projects these cities and towns wanted to pursue continued to grow more expensive and difficult during the months-long delay between the funds' availability and their distribution. The Municipal Association became part of a team that appealed to the governor's office to draw down these funds, working with the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority, the SC Department of Administration, and the accelerateSC pandemic advisory team. The Association also worked with the General Assembly to ensure that all cities and towns would have fair access to the state's ARP funding for infrastructure.

The rules governing how cities could spend their ARP dollars are complex, and the Association has employed Legislative and Public Policy Advocate Erica Wright to learn everything possible about ARP funding. The Association has provided clarifications on the guidance material coming from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and it has served as a local resource for cities and towns across the state.

The City of Orangeburg decided to use its ARP funding for impactful purposes including public safety enhancements, affordable housing, grants for nonprofits and premium pay for employees. City Administrator Sidney Evering said the city was grateful for the Association's guidance efforts.

"Erica served as an invaluable resource, especially during the period when ARP guidelines were being established and refined," he said. "We could always count on the Municipal Association to provide us with the latest updates, not only regarding the guidelines, but also planned fund uses by peer cities and towns."

Federal advocacy engagement

In addition to the legislative wins at the State House — for example, the passage of H3050, the law enforcement "betterment" bill that established several policing reforms — the Association also expanded upon its growing relationships with the Congressional delegation. Meetings in Washington in January connected Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon, first vice president of the Association; as well as Association staff leadership with Sen. Tim Scott, Reps. Jim Clyburn and Joe Wilson, and also staffers from other members' offices.

So far, the Association has hosted Congressional briefings to better connect city and town leaders with Nancy Mace of the 1st District and Tom Rice of the 7th District. Rice described his briefing session in Myrtle Beach as a valuable "opportunity to answer questions from the incredible local municipal leaders who serve our community so well."

New Municipal Association app

The Association previously offered single-use event apps for major conferences, but in 2022 it launched an app to give users a mobile-friendly way to connect to all of its educational, legislative and support resources. The app is now delivering content to members on the devices they use every day, with material ranging from the Association's training calendar, municipal directory, staff listing, municipal job openings, podcasts and articles.

The app still connects conference attendees with what they need to know about the Annual Meeting or Hometown Legislative Action Day. Users can read about each meeting session and learn more about speakers, sponsors and fellow attendees.



446

General Assembly bills
tracked in the Association's
Legislative Tracking System

15,352 listens

to the City Quick Connect podcast, more than
doubling the streams from the previous year



424,737 total visits

to www.masc.sc, with a total

1.1 million page views

A 5-part video series

explained council meeting executive session
issues during Sunshine Week in March



2,000+ engagements

on 680+ posts on the Association's Twitter,
Facebook and Instagram accounts



Knowledge

Education is a core tenet of the Association with multiple training opportunities available throughout many programs and services.

On-demand training

The Association began using a learning management system for the online, on-demand sessions of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government and the Planning and Zoning Orientation Training. The new system provides a user-friendly way for participants to keep track of their course progress and registrations. The Association's Risk Management Services is now moving its training institute to the same platform.

Field services outreach

The Association's field services managers expanded their numbers in 2022, allowing them to give more attention to each municipality. Ashley Kellahan joined the team of Charlie Barrineau and Jeff Shacker as the Association's third field services manager. The team is available to South Carolina's cities and towns to assist local officials with addressing significant challenges, including the large numbers of questions during the past year about proper handling of American Rescue Plan funding and business licensing standardization. Beyond answering questions, the field services managers regularly attend city and town council meetings and conduct training sessions and goal-setting workshops.

Retail Recruitment Training

In 2021, the Municipal Association began training sessions to help cities and towns develop professional recruitment strategies using marketing analyses, recruitment packets and personal outreach efforts at trade shows and other events. Two rounds of the six-session course have completed, which included the City of West Columbia among 25 other municipalities.

City Administrator Brian Carter and other West Columbia officials attended. He described the materials and presentation as impressive and valuable, and said his staff is now confident in its ability to recruit retailers.

"Using the lessons we learned and the materials we created during our training, my team developed a strategic approach for meeting with various retailers and successfully developed over 40 leads. We are already seeing some of those leads turn into new business in West Columbia," Carter said.

MCAA 101

The Municipal Court Administration Association of SC's 101 training, launched shortly before the pandemic, completed its first full cycle, and so far, 52 participants have taken at least one of the sessions. The training was the brainchild of Pam Larson, Clerk of Court for the City of Greenville Municipal Court. She conceived of the training to help the many inexperienced court administrators with the basics of the job, and to help seasoned administrators refresh their understanding of the legal requirements.

Main Street South Carolina

In 2019, the Association's downtown development technical assistance program, Main Street South Carolina, established four levels for participating communities — Accredited, Aspiring, Classic and Friends — to provide better assistance tailored to each community's needs and readiness. Today, there are 31 communities across all levels.

Main Street Walhalla is at the Aspiring level, where communities participate in training, community assessment and receive local-capacity-building support. Libby Imbody is the director of Main Street Walhalla. "In just two short years we have gone from a drive-through town to truly the 'Main Street to the Mountains.' We have very [few downtown] vacancies, have opened over 20 new businesses, and can boast a \$26-to-\$1 return on public investment," Imbody said.

613 total participants for all sessions of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government, including in-person and online sessions.

194 municipalities with at least one Municipal Elected Officials Institute graduate, representing **72%** of all municipalities.

Since 1986, there have been a total of **1,783 MEO graduates**, and since 2016, there have been a total of **284 Advanced MEO graduates**.

26 municipalities represented at the Association's two cycles of Retail Recruitment Training.

3,198 municipal contacts made by the Association's field services managers after they began using a trackable reporting system in September 2021. This included 260 cities and towns out of the total 271.

3,084 technical assistance requests made by municipalities after the reporting system started. The largest category of requests was American Rescue Plan questions — **648 questions** —and the second largest was business licensing — **330 questions**.

65 council training sessions led by the field services managers for the year.

26 goal-setting sessions led by the field services managers for the year.

In 2021, Main Street SC's reinvestment statistics show:

- **702 new jobs** created
- **\$76 million** in private and public investment
- **183 new businesses** opened
- **287 buildings** rehabilitated
- **112 completed construction projects**
- **13,906 volunteer hours** contributed



Solutions

Cities and towns from across South Carolina face common challenges, but municipal officials can find efficient solutions by working together through the Association.

Business licensing standardization process

In 2020, the General Assembly passed the SC Business License Tax Standardization Act, or Act 176, which established a standardized process for business license administration across the state. A major win for business-friendly practices in the state, it also created numerous challenges for the 231 municipalities and nine counties with business licenses to standardize their practices for this significant revenue source.

With most of the law's provisions going into effect in 2022, cities and towns worked hard on compliance with the Municipal Association throughout 2021. In total, Association staff helped 223 municipalities and counties rebalance their business license rates to comply with the law's revenue neutrality requirement.

Education was a major component of the standardization effort as well. The Association's Local Revenue Services department held in-person and virtual training sessions on business licensing for licensing officials. The Association's General Counsel Eric Shytle rewrote the highly detailed SC Business License Handbook to reflect the requirements of Act 176.

An important change required by the law is the creation of the Local Business License Renewal Center. The online business license renewal center launched in 2022 and it allows businesses to renew their business licenses for every city, town and county in the state. In the Renewal Center's first renewal cycle, 120 taxing jurisdictions used the new system, 5,040 business license renewals were submitted through it, and about \$3.1 million in business license taxes passed to the jurisdictions through the system.

The launch of the Renewal Center brought positive reviews from businesses and licensing officials for its ease of use and its ability to save time for everyone. Teresa Eaton, licensing, permitting and court manager for the City of Florence, described the Association's Local Revenue Services as diligent in bringing officials around the state on board with the Renewal Center.

"I want to thank the Municipal Association for putting the time, energy and financing into making the Renewal Center happen. VC3 [the Association's technology partner] has done an excellent job of building and tweaking it to make it user-friendly for customers and municipalities," she said.

City Connect Market

The Association introduced the City Connect Market in 2021, a cooperative purchasing partnership with HGACBuy, which allows South Carolina cities and towns to take advantage of volume discounts on their purchases, and eliminate the need for each municipality to handle every competitive bid process independently. The program helps with purchasing in 41 major categories of products — which can cover everything from fire trucks to ambulances, public works equipment, police officer body cameras and playground equipment — as well as with services, all offered by more than 800 contractors.

Cyber insurance policies

Municipal governments are significantly vulnerable to cyber attacks, which can be very costly and are becoming more difficult to insure. Cyber insurance policies are critical for the financial protection of cities and towns. When the Association's SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund received short notice that its existing cyber insurance carrier would not renew coverage, SCMIRF moved rapidly to find a new carrier and maintain this critical protection for members.

223 cities and counties received assistance with business license rebalancing.

\$4.7 million of total value insured through SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund.

42 member-specific training sessions hosted by Risk Management Services Loss Control.

5,040 business license renewals for 120 taxing jurisdictions submitted through the Local Business License Renewal Center.

10,766 courses completed through LocalGovU, the online training portal for the Association's Risk Management Services.

17 purchases made through the City Connect Market in its first year, totaling **\$8.8 million**. Purchases include 11 fire trucks, 440 police body cameras and 300 sanitation roll carts, among others.

130 SC Municipal Insurance Trust members, including the Town of Olar joining as a new member.

\$450,000 grant funds available through SCMIT and SCMIRF grants. The programs have awarded a total of more than **\$4.4 million** to date.

\$300,000 in Hometown Economic Development Grant funds awarded to 12 cities and towns.

18,996 employees and volunteers insured through SCMIT.

363 member visits conducted by Risk Management Services for SCMIT and SCMIRF members, addressing police and fire consultations, scheduled annual reviews and assessments.

Recipients:

- Beaufort
- Cayce
- Donalds
- Georgetown
- Greeleyville
- Honea Path
- Moncks Corner
- Pacolet
- Pelion
- Seabrook Island
- Society Hill
- Westminster

132 SCMIRF members, with the Town of Olar and City of Hanahan joining as new members.



Internal Services

The internal services of the Association, such as technology, finance and human resources, serve a critical role in providing support to the staff so that the organization can deliver valuable services to South Carolina's cities and towns and continue to seek ways to improve its efficiency.

Enhancement of IT systems

The Association often works to make its operations function as a model for certain city and town operations, including through its investments in its IT infrastructure and building maintenance. In the past year, the Association upgraded many of its systems and equipment to improve cybersecurity and to make virtual meetings and hybrid meetings more feasible. This includes the installation of cameras, microphones and monitors in conference spaces.

The Association also implemented multi-factor authentication for its digital network, which requires multiple steps to authenticate a sign-in, for example, requiring entry of a text message code when changing a password.

In previous years, the Association would perform its annual IT disaster recovery exercise at a single off-site location. For the first time last year, staff performed the exercise remotely from multiple locations.

Risk Management Services claims efficiency

The SC Municipal Insurance Trust and SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund now each have their own claims manager, which helps both programs receive the attention they need for every case. The new structure also allows the claims managers to focus on their own specialties in the constantly changing world of government liability and workers' compensation.

Risk Management Services also worked with software partners to upgrade the document management and workflow processing tool used by the claims department. The program improves document access and creates email integration for invoice processing and document management.

New studio space

From instructional videos to conference sessions to *City Quick Connect* podcast episodes, the Association often records audiovisual material, but lacked a dedicated space to do so. Beginning in 2022, the Association has a permanent recording space to make production faster and more efficient.

Directory of Services

More than 90 years ago, a small group of local elected officials realized they had to work together to meet the challenges of the changing times. With this mission in mind, they organized the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

The Municipal Association is still dedicated to the principle of its founding members: to join together to pursue initiatives cities and towns can carry out more efficiently and effectively by working together through the Association than by working individually. A nonpartisan, nonprofit association representing all of the state's 271 incorporated cities and towns, the Municipal Association fulfills its mission through **shared voices, knowledge and solutions**.

Voices

From the very start of the Association in the early 1930s, South Carolina municipal officials understood that only by working together could they effectively communicate the needs and views of municipal government to state and federal lawmakers.

Lobbying the State Legislature and Congress

The Association advocates for changes in state law that enable local elected officials to address municipal challenges. Partnerships play an important part in the Association's advocacy efforts. The Association also monitors federal legislation through the National League of Cities and advocates on behalf of South Carolina cities and towns when federal issues affect the state. *Staff Contacts: Casey Fields, Joannie Nickel, Scott Slatton, Erica Wright*

Regional Advocacy Meetings

Each fall, the Association hosts 10 Regional Advocacy Meetings around the state to talk about the challenges facing cities and towns and how changes to state law could help them meet those challenges. Based in part on input gathered during these conversations, the Association's legislative committee and board of directors set the Association's annual Advocacy Initiatives. *Staff Contact: Casey Fields*

Legislative Tracking and Reports

During the South Carolina legislative session, the Association actively monitors bills impacting cities and towns and updates the Association's online tracking system to reflect relevant daily bill activity. The online tracking system gives municipal leaders another tool they can use to follow subcommittee, committee and floor action.

Each Friday during the legislative session, municipal officials receive *From the Dome to Your Home*, which recaps the week's major legislative events and previews the upcoming week's activities. The report is posted on the Association's website, emailed and shared with more than 5,000 social media followers. The legislative team expands on the report with additional information through regular episodes of the *City Quick Connect* podcast during the legislative session.

At the end of the legislative session, the Association produces its annual legislative report recapping work on the Advocacy Initiatives and legislative action on major bills of municipal interest. *Staff Contact: Casey Fields*

Hometown Legislative Action Day

In February, Hometown Legislative Action Day draws local officials from all over the state to Columbia to get updates on current legislative issues, visit their local legislators at the State House and connect with legislators at the Association's annual legislative reception. *Staff Contacts: Ken Ivey, Scott Slatton*



Public Engagement

Legislators, business leaders, the news media and key influencers learn about successes in cities and towns through online and print resources.

Social Media Channels

The Association's Twitter (@MuniAssnSC) and Facebook (MuniAssnSC.StrongSCcities) accounts provide up-to-the-minute information on State House activity and share good news stories about cities and towns. A regular schedule of social media posts highlighting *Uptown* stories amplifies the online version of the monthly newsletter and resources on the Association's website. The Association's Instagram account (StrongSCcities) highlights the strength and services of South Carolina's 271 cities and towns. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

City Connect Blog and City Quick Connect Podcast

The *City Connect* blog offers short, timely updates on a variety of issues. The blog packages information in a format that is useful not only to local officials but also to the news media, legislators and the public. The *City Quick Connect* podcast gives listeners a chance to hear the latest from Municipal Association staff and others about the issues, the legislation and the support services impacting cities and towns. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

Municipal Association Mobile App

The Association app provides a mobile-friendly way to interact with the Association and connect to educational and legislative resources. Through the app, users can access the municipal directory, Association staff listing and municipal job openings, or view the calendar to see sessions and speakers at upcoming events. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

Knowledge

The Association plays an important role in developing municipal elected officials' and employees' knowledge and skills through a wide range of training programs, publications and meetings.

Affiliate Associations

The Municipal Association supports 11 affiliate organizations by providing training and networking for a variety of local government positions with specialized training needs.

In addition to traditional face-to-face training and networking opportunities, the affiliate associations offer online communities for members to share best practices and to pose specific questions related to their local government responsibilities. *Staff Contact: Ken Ivey*

Association of South Carolina Mayors

The Association of South Carolina Mayors provides opportunities for its members to more fully engage in advocating for issues that affect cities and towns, network, take part in educational activities, and share ideas and best practices. *Staff Contact: Casey Fields*

Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

The Municipal Court Administration Association of South Carolina offers training at two workshops for court administrators, clerks of court, municipal judges and other municipal employees involved in court administration. The Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization and the Office of Victims Services recognize these workshops for continuing education credits. Additionally, the Association offers MCAA 101, a three-part training on the basics of court administration.

Staff Contact: Sara Whitaker

Municipal Technology Association of SC

The Municipal Technology Association of SC promotes municipalities' effective use of technology. MTASC exposes its members to a broad range of technology systems, platforms and solutions. The training serves IT staff and those with GIS responsibilities, in addition to employees who work in other departments but have technology-related duties. *Staff Contact: Sara Whitaker*

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

Twenty of the municipal electric utilities are members of the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems. Originally, SCAMPS existed solely for its members to help one another during times of disaster. Although mutual aid is still the backbone of SCAMPS, the affiliate's scope also includes legislative initiatives and training. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

The SC Association of Stormwater Managers offers its members quarterly training on stormwater management policies and best practices. The SC Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors recognizes the quarterly training sessions for continuing education credits. *Staff Contact: Sara Whitaker*

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

The South Carolina Business Licensing Officials Association promotes best practices for administering and enforcing the local business license tax. Through rigorous training sessions, members learn skills and practices that make licensing in their cities and towns more efficient and business-friendly.

The professional designation programs of Accreditation in Business Licensing and Masters in Business Licensing reflects members' dedication to continuing education. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

SC Community Development Association

The South Carolina Community Development Association provides educational forums for its members to address economic and community development needs. Members include municipal, county, regional and state community development professionals; employees of private companies with an interest in community development; elected officials; and volunteers. *Staff Contact: Sara Whitaker*

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

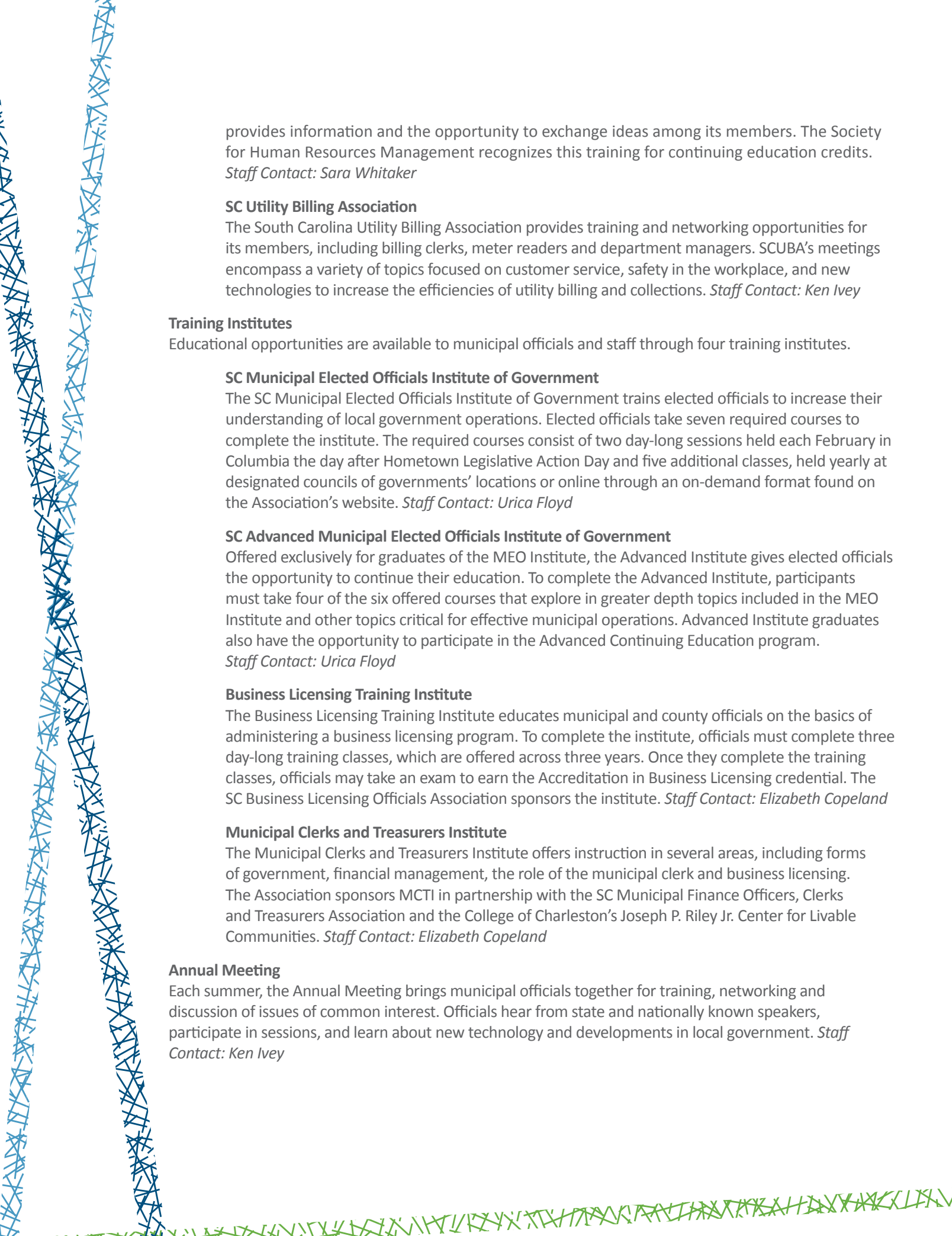
The South Carolina Municipal Attorneys Association's annual meeting covers issues important to municipal attorneys, whether working as municipal staff or as a municipality's outside counsel. The Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization approves this training session for continuing education credits. *Staff Contact: Eric Shytle*

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

The South Carolina Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association offers training programs covering the diverse responsibilities of its members. All of the training sessions qualify for a combination of continuing education credits for certified municipal clerks, certified public accountants and certified public treasurers. MFOCTA sponsors the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute with the Municipal Association and the College of Charleston's Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

SC Municipal Human Resources Association

The South Carolina Municipal Human Resources Association promotes sound human resources administration and encourages innovative programs. Through its training programs, MHRA



provides information and the opportunity to exchange ideas among its members. The Society for Human Resources Management recognizes this training for continuing education credits. *Staff Contact: Sara Whitaker*

SC Utility Billing Association

The South Carolina Utility Billing Association provides training and networking opportunities for its members, including billing clerks, meter readers and department managers. SCUBA's meetings encompass a variety of topics focused on customer service, safety in the workplace, and new technologies to increase the efficiencies of utility billing and collections. *Staff Contact: Ken Ivey*

Training Institutes

Educational opportunities are available to municipal officials and staff through four training institutes.

SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

The SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government trains elected officials to increase their understanding of local government operations. Elected officials take seven required courses to complete the institute. The required courses consist of two day-long sessions held each February in Columbia the day after Hometown Legislative Action Day and five additional classes, held yearly at designated councils of governments' locations or online through an on-demand format found on the Association's website. *Staff Contact: Urica Floyd*

SC Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

Offered exclusively for graduates of the MEO Institute, the Advanced Institute gives elected officials the opportunity to continue their education. To complete the Advanced Institute, participants must take four of the six offered courses that explore in greater depth topics included in the MEO Institute and other topics critical for effective municipal operations. Advanced Institute graduates also have the opportunity to participate in the Advanced Continuing Education program. *Staff Contact: Urica Floyd*

Business Licensing Training Institute

The Business Licensing Training Institute educates municipal and county officials on the basics of administering a business licensing program. To complete the institute, officials must complete three day-long training classes, which are offered across three years. Once they complete the training classes, officials may take an exam to earn the Accreditation in Business Licensing credential. The SC Business Licensing Officials Association sponsors the institute. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

The Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute offers instruction in several areas, including forms of government, financial management, the role of the municipal clerk and business licensing. The Association sponsors MCTI in partnership with the SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association and the College of Charleston's Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

Annual Meeting

Each summer, the Annual Meeting brings municipal officials together for training, networking and discussion of issues of common interest. Officials hear from state and nationally known speakers, participate in sessions, and learn about new technology and developments in local government. *Staff Contact: Ken Ivey*

Technical Assistance

Field Services

The Association's three field services managers travel the state to offer hands-on technical assistance, training and consultation to help municipalities address challenges. *Staff Contacts: Charlie Barrineau, Ashley Kellahan and Jeff Shacker*

Main Street South Carolina

Main Street SC helps its members revitalize their downtowns into vibrant centers of commerce and community by using the National Main Street Center's Main Street Approach,[™] which focuses on historic preservation and placemaking. Main Street SC provides member programs of varying levels of preparedness and resources with knowledge and tools to develop community-driven and comprehensive revitalization strategies. At the startup level, members build capacity for downtown revitalization. At the Aspiring Main Street level, participants receive three years of technical assistance and then transition into a Classic Main Street program. Members at the highest level meet national accreditation standards. Each year, Main Street SC honors exceptional member accomplishments through its Inspiration Awards. *Staff Contact: Jenny Boulware*

Information Resources

The Association's print and online resources address hundreds of topics related to municipal government.

Publications

- *Annexation Handbook*
- *Comprehensive Planning Guide for Local Governments*
- *Election Handbook*
- *Forms and Powers of Municipal Government*
- *Handbook for Municipal Officials in South Carolina*
- *The Municipal Association of South Carolina 1930 – 2015: A History of Shared Voices, Shared Knowledge, Shared Solutions*
- *How to Conduct Effective Meeting*
- *Incorporation Handbook*
- *Model Employee Handbook for SC Municipalities*
- *Municipal Officials and Legislative Directory*
- *Public Official's Guide to Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act* (published by the SC Press Association)
- *Raising Hometown Voices to a New Level of Influence*, an advocacy guide
- *South Carolina Business Licensing Handbook*
- *Tips for Hometown Media Success*

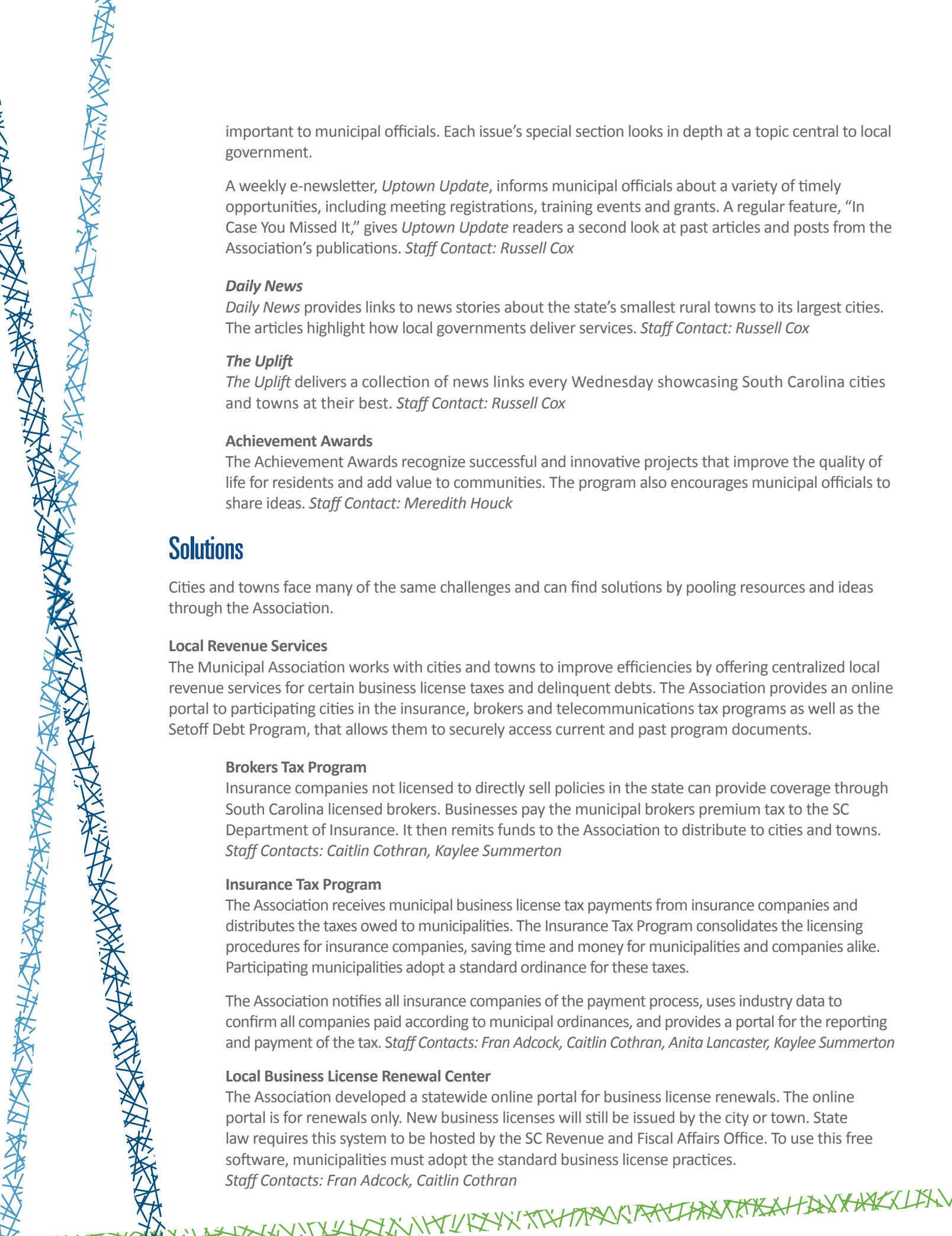
Staff Contact: Eric Budds

Website

The Municipal Association's website, www.masc.sc, offers more than 2,000 pages; 2,000 documents, presentations and links to external resources; and more than 600 in-state municipal job postings. With a responsive design to fit the needs and formats of mobile and desktop devices, the site includes a powerful search engine and information center to help users navigate to specific resources of interest. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

Uptown

The monthly newsletter in print and electronic formats features articles on a variety of topics



important to municipal officials. Each issue's special section looks in depth at a topic central to local government.

A weekly e-newsletter, *Uptown Update*, informs municipal officials about a variety of timely opportunities, including meeting registrations, training events and grants. A regular feature, "In Case You Missed It," gives *Uptown Update* readers a second look at past articles and posts from the Association's publications. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

Daily News

Daily News provides links to news stories about the state's smallest rural towns to its largest cities. The articles highlight how local governments deliver services. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

The Uplift

The Uplift delivers a collection of news links every Wednesday showcasing South Carolina cities and towns at their best. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

Achievement Awards

The Achievement Awards recognize successful and innovative projects that improve the quality of life for residents and add value to communities. The program also encourages municipal officials to share ideas. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

Solutions

Cities and towns face many of the same challenges and can find solutions by pooling resources and ideas through the Association.

Local Revenue Services

The Municipal Association works with cities and towns to improve efficiencies by offering centralized local revenue services for certain business license taxes and delinquent debts. The Association provides an online portal to participating cities in the insurance, brokers and telecommunications tax programs as well as the Setoff Debt Program, that allows them to securely access current and past program documents.

Brokers Tax Program

Insurance companies not licensed to directly sell policies in the state can provide coverage through South Carolina licensed brokers. Businesses pay the municipal brokers premium tax to the SC Department of Insurance. It then remits funds to the Association to distribute to cities and towns. *Staff Contacts: Caitlin Cothran, Kaylee Summerton*

Insurance Tax Program

The Association receives municipal business license tax payments from insurance companies and distributes the taxes owed to municipalities. The Insurance Tax Program consolidates the licensing procedures for insurance companies, saving time and money for municipalities and companies alike. Participating municipalities adopt a standard ordinance for these taxes.

The Association notifies all insurance companies of the payment process, uses industry data to confirm all companies paid according to municipal ordinances, and provides a portal for the reporting and payment of the tax. *Staff Contacts: Fran Adcock, Caitlin Cothran, Anita Lancaster, Kaylee Summerton*

Local Business License Renewal Center

The Association developed a statewide online portal for business license renewals. The online portal is for renewals only. New business licenses will still be issued by the city or town. State law requires this system to be hosted by the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. To use this free software, municipalities must adopt the standard business license practices.

Staff Contacts: Fran Adcock, Caitlin Cothran

Setoff Debt Program

The SC Department of Revenue receives payments for delinquent debts, such as utility bills, taxes and court fines, by reducing state income tax refunds by the amount of the debt. The department forwards the debt payments it receives to the Association, which in turn forwards the amounts to the reporting municipality or claimant agency. The Association provides software to all participating entities to streamline their program administration and ensure compliance with state regulations.

Staff Contacts: Caitlin Cothran, Anita Lancaster

Telecommunications Tax Program

The Association centralizes the business license tax due to municipalities from telecommunication companies. Each December, the Association sends a notice to all telecommunications companies for the municipalities participating in the program. By law, municipalities can assess this tax only on the voice portion of a phone bill. The contract streamlines the payment process for telecommunications companies. It also saves cities and towns time and money by eliminating the need for each to perform the same processes. *Staff Contacts: Caitlin Cothran, Kaylee Summerton*

Risk Management Services

The two self-funded insurance programs administered by the Association's Risk Management Services staff are prime examples of strength and efficiency through the combined efforts of member cities. Each program operates under the direction of a board of trustees composed of representatives from its membership.

The SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund provides all lines of property and casualty coverage, including general liability, law enforcement liability, public officials' liability, cyber liability and property and automobile coverage.

The SC Municipal Insurance Trust, provides workers' compensation coverage for municipal employees.

RMS provides grants, attorney hotlines, employee training and loss control services to members. These services help members improve risk management efforts, prevent claims and reduce the cost of insurance. *Staff Contact: Heather Ricard*

Training

RMS members have access to online and in-person training at no charge.

- Customized, on-site training: RMS provides training for members in their hometowns, allowing city employees to attend sessions together.
- Online training: The online training opportunities include a variety of risk management, human resources, safety and law enforcement topics, including use of force and pursuit driving.
- Statewide and regional training: RMS offers members regional training sessions on topics such as law enforcement liability, OSHA training, risk management 101 and defensive driving.
- Risk Management Institute: RMI offers participants from SCMIT- and SCMIRF-member organizations specialized training in the role of risk manager and safety coordinator.
- *RiskLetter*: The quarterly e-newsletter provides information on a wide range of risk management topics.
- Law enforcement simulator: RMS offers members access to a law enforcement training simulator that allows officers to practice their decision-making skills and responses to resistance.

Loss Control/Technical Assistance

RMS helps its members build effective safety and loss control programs.

- Model policies and procedures manuals for law enforcement and fire services: SCMIT and SCMIRF members receive updated fire and law enforcement policies.
- One-on-one technical assistance visits: The loss control staff meet with member organizations to evaluate their safety and loss control programs.
- Legal hotlines: SCMIRF members can access up to 10 hours of free legal advice on each legal hotline for labor and liability issues.
- Education tools: SCMIRF members have access to cybersecurity services through the online tool, eRisk Hub, in addition to specialized toolkits, such as parks and recreation liability, public officials' liability, sewer backups, special events liability and workers' compensation.

Grants

The RMS grant program helps RMS members purchase products or equipment to reduce the frequency and severity of claims.

- SCMIRF awards the Law Enforcement Liability Reduction Grant Program grants to member law enforcement agencies to purchase stun guns or Tasers, Taser cameras, body cameras and other equipment.
- SCMIRF awards the Public Works Property and Liability Reduction Grant Program grants to member public works and utilities departments to purchase items to address the frequency and severity of claims, including back-up cameras, collision avoidance systems, concrete scarifiers, sewer cameras, meter locks and other equipment.
- SCMIT awards grants to member law enforcement, fire and public works departments to purchase work-zone safety equipment, soft body armor and other protective gear.

South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust

The South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust allows cities to set aside funds for nonpension benefits, such as retiree healthcare, as required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. Each member shares in the trust's administrative- and investment- related expenses, lowering the overall cost of compliance for each local government. *Staff Contact: Heather Ricard*

Hometown Economic Development Grants

The Municipal Association's Hometown Economic Development Grants provide cities and towns with funds to implement economic development projects that will have a positive effect on the quality of life in their communities. The Hometown Economic Development Grants are awarded annually. *Staff Contact: Scott Slatton*

Technology Services

The Association, in partnership with VC3, provides discounted technology services to cities and towns. VC3, an information technology company headquartered in Columbia, designs and hosts municipal websites; designs and implements computer networks; and provides security, disaster recovery, strategic technology planning and voice communication services. *Staff Contact: Jake Broom*

City Connect Market

City Connect Market, a cooperative purchasing partnership between the Municipal Association of SC and HGACBuy, allows South Carolina's cities and towns to take advantage of volume discounts when purchasing everything from fire trucks to roll carts to professional services. The partnership improves pricing and can help eliminate the need for each municipality to handle all details of each competitive bid process. *Staff Contact: Jake Broom*

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Lynn Miller

Accounts Payable Coordinator

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Tony DesChamps

SCMIT Claims Manager

Amy Gillian

Administrative Assistant

Joy Gloster

Data and Training Analyst

Jennifer Gray

Financial Manager for RMS

Mike Hainley

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Brenda Kegler

SCMIT Associate Claims Adjuster

Amy Lindler

Technology Operations Manager

Cindy Martellini

SCMIRF Claims Manager

Bethany Pendley

Loss Control Manager

Judy Phillips

Senior Claims Adjuster

Christopher Radcliff

Public Safety Loss Control Consultant

Harriett Robinson

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Chassidy Sistrunk

Senior Underwriter

Sharon Turner

Underwriter

Mike Waslewski

Assistant Claims Manager

Rem Williams

Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Mike Woodall

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

To reach staff via email,

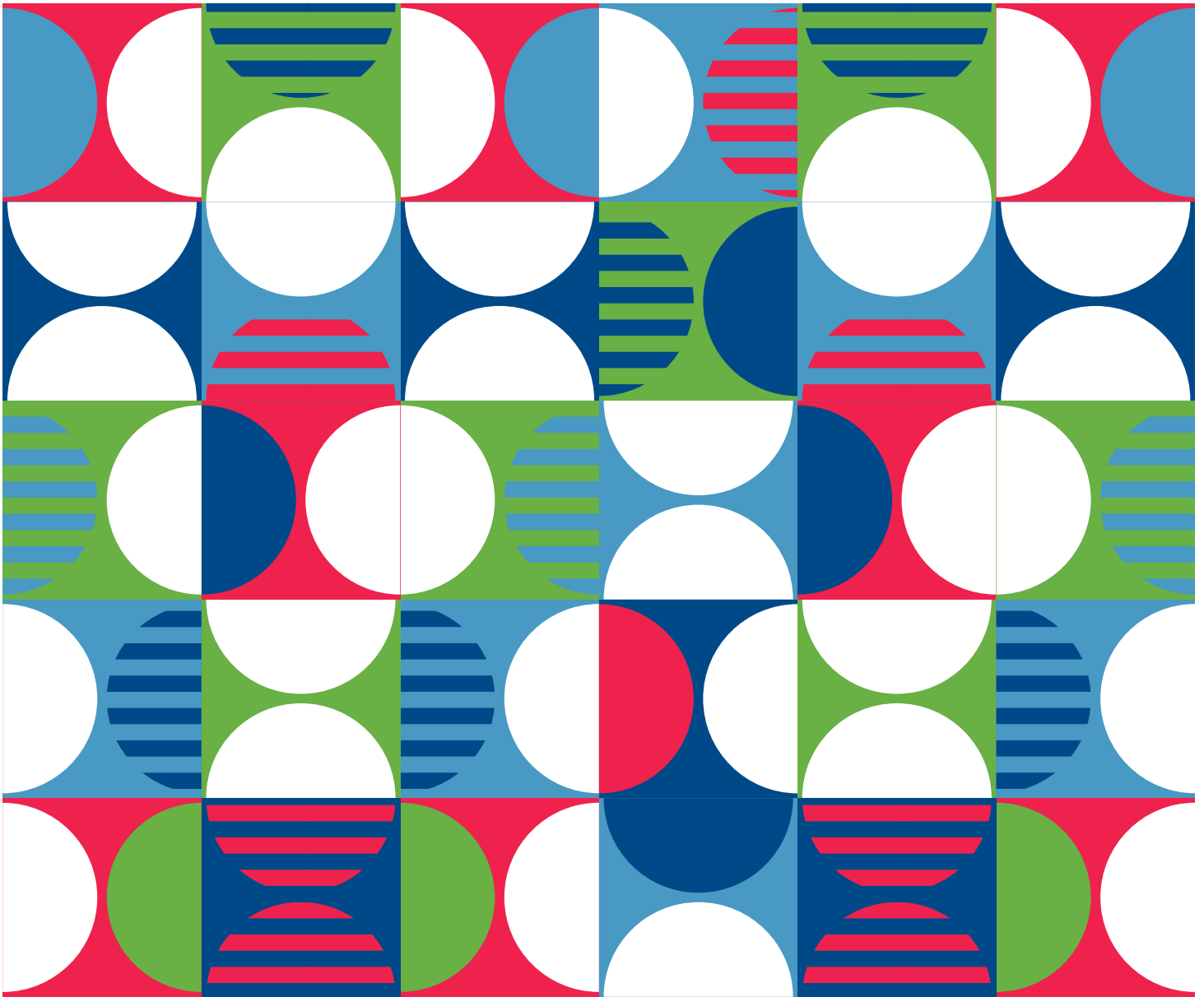
address as follows:

first initial last name@masc.sc

(ex. tglover@masc.sc)

Main Phone: 803.799.9574

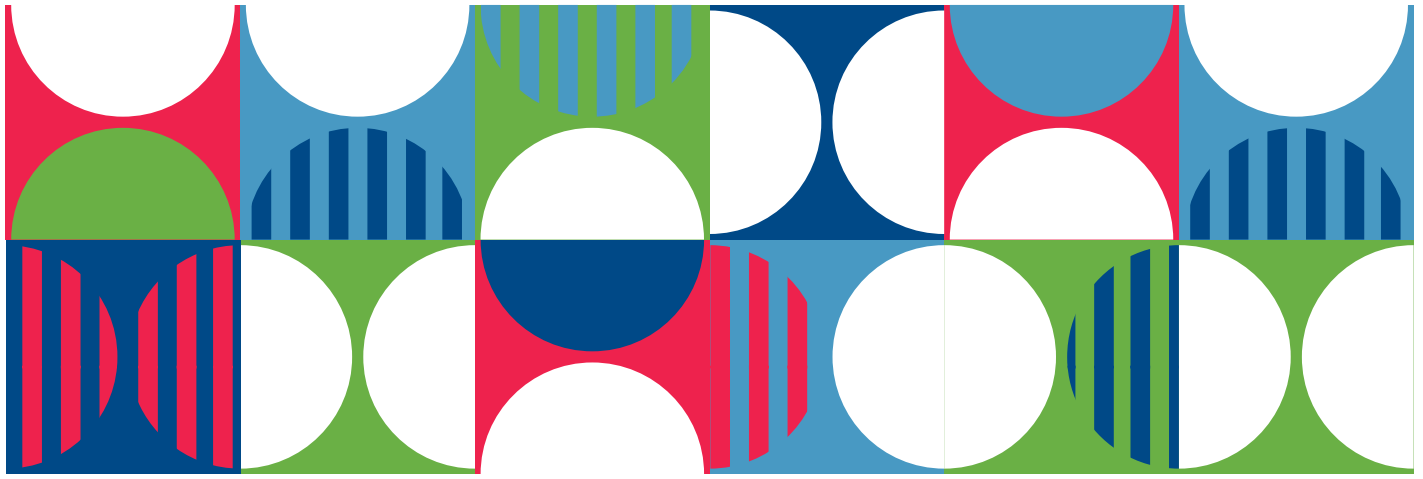




2022 Achievement Awards Main Street Inspiration Awards

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM





2022 Achievement Awards

Started in 1986, the Achievement Awards program gives cities and towns deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina.

This year, 24 municipalities entered the Achievement Awards program. Videos highlighting this year's winners are available on the Association's website at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement).

Population 1,000 – 5,000: Town of Edisto Beach Edisto Beach First Master Recreation Plan

The Town of Edisto Beach uses many documents to develop its parks, trails and beach access points: a comprehensive beach management plan, a town-wide comprehensive plan and others. Recognizing the inefficiency of using multiple documents, the town council decided to update, prioritize and align all of its recreation planning documents into a comprehensive Master Park and Recreation Plan.

The town engaged a professional planning firm for the project, paid for primarily by a SC Park and Recreation Development Fund grant and town funds. The town used its request-for-qualifications process for the vendor, and obtained endorsements for the project from the Colleton County legislative delegation — both requirements of the PARD grant.

The planning process sought extensive public input ranging from focus groups to a multi-day open house workshop. The outreach efforts garnered strong engagement from residents, with more than 600 respondents contributing to a survey, and more than 250 participants contributing to an online map exercise.

With the new plan in hand, the town has prioritized its recreation projects and identified funding opportunities every year. The town used the plan recommendations to seek grants for a fishing pier, restroom facilities and the repaving of a bike path. The comprehensive plan will guide recreation improvements in Edisto Beach for years to come.

Contact Mark Aakhus at maakhus@townofedistobeach.com or 843.696.4215.

Population 5,001 – 10,000: City of Hardeeville

City of Hardeeville New Recreation Center

As one of the fastest-growing cities in South Carolina, Hardeeville focused on improving its facilities and offerings, creating a better community for its residents and visitors. For more than a decade, the city worked toward the dream of building the Hardeeville Recreation Center, and received a boost for the initiative in 2018 when a landowner donated more than five acres toward the project.

The project was initially intended to be a simple gymnasium, but the scope grew significantly as the city met with nonprofit groups, schools, the Jasper County government, and undertook formal studies to assess community needs. In 2021, the \$8.5 million facility opened, paid for primarily with hospitality tax funding.

The 38,000-square-foot facility offers a collegiate-sized basketball court with seating for 1,000 spectators, two racquetball courts, an indoor walking track, a fitness center, a rentable community room, classrooms and a concession stand.

The center is a game-changer for the region's recreation opportunities. It hosts a variety of programs, high school and youth athletics, team sports, community events and special events. Future plans include building a walking trail to connect the center to the city's recreation complex park.

Contact Neil Parsons at nparsons@hardeevillesc.gov or 843.784.2231.

Population 10,001 – 20,000: City of Beaufort

Mossy Oaks Stormwater Drainage Project

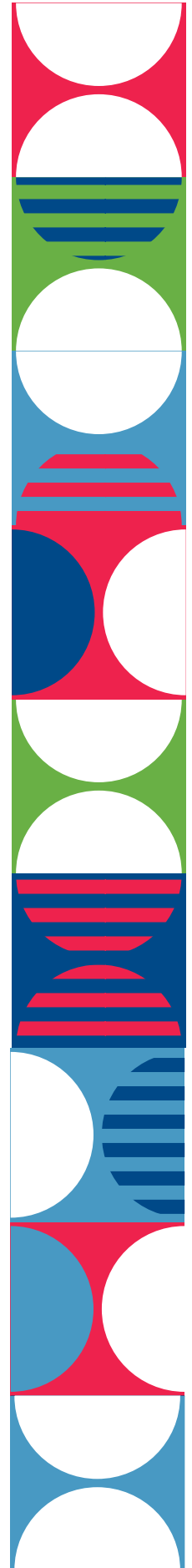
Suffering from repeated flooding during heavy rains, king tides and storm surges, Beaufort's Mossy Oaks neighborhood, home to 1,500 houses, experienced many drainage challenges. The issues of inadequate pipes and overgrown ditches were compounded by the vulnerabilities of slab-built homes, and after the neighborhood suffered three damaging floods in 11 months, Beaufort identified it as the top priority for mitigation among its flood-prone areas.

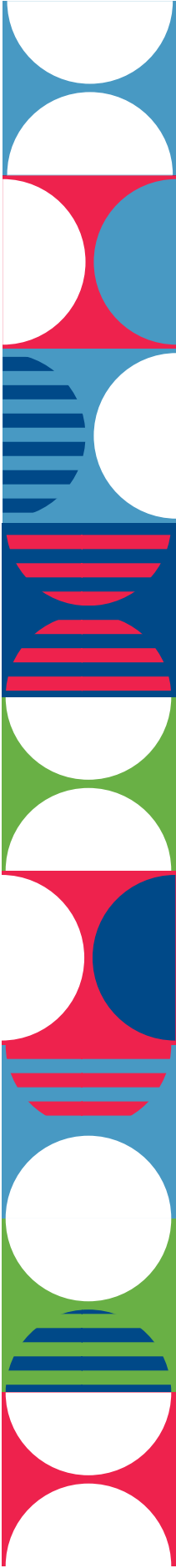
The city created a multijurisdictional task force for the effort, including the Town of Port Royal, Beaufort County, state agencies, utilities, nonprofits, neighborhood groups and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Over several years, the city conducted an engineering study and identified funding, including \$5.9 million from bonds, \$1.5 million from grants and \$580,000 from community partners.

The project installed improved drainage pipes at corrected elevations and tidal flap gates to control water flow into the marsh. After permitting and bidding, the construction took nine months — two months less than planned — and was completed under budget. The numerous partnerships involved in the effort allowed for utility collaboration, so that new water, sewer and electrical lines could be installed during construction. Ongoing outreach efforts and two-way communication with residents meant that those affected by construction were kept informed of the process.

Since completion of the project, Mossy Oaks has experienced no significant flooding, even during a storm event that dropped 7 inches of rain in less than 24 hours. For future stormwater projects, Beaufort will use the planning, construction and communication methods employed for Mossy Oaks as it addresses one of the objectives in its strategic plan: "plan for sea-level rise."

Contact Kathleen Williams at kwlliams@cityofbeaufort.org or 843.470.3508.





Communication: City of Charleston Public Meeting Engagement Portal

First occupied as City Hall in 1818, Charleston's city hall has the second-oldest council chambers in continuous use in the nation. Although historic, the facility did not have enough space to facilitate to social distancing during the pandemic, limiting the capacity for public participation. The city needed to continue its meetings while still adhering to its ordinances, which require public participation, and promoting safety and transparency.

After a period of setting up virtual meetings manually, the Mayor's Office of Innovation launched its own Public Meeting Engagement Portal. Through this system, residents can sign up to speak at meetings or submit comments on agenda items. The portal also allows city staff to create and manage meetings, and download speaker lists and comments in various formats.

After 17 months of virtual sessions, meetings returned to in-person formats. Even so, use of the portal has continued, providing a convenient way for residents to participate in public meetings without traveling to City Hall. The portal has expanded to serve 18 committees and commissions.

The portal enhanced public engagement as well. In 2019, before the portal's development, Charleston City Council received 319 comments in person and by phone. From April 2020 to February 2022, council received 2,810 engagements.

Developed entirely with existing city resources, the portal receives continuous refinements. Planned enhancements include the ability for staff to create or modify meeting templates, IP address mapping to determine the approximate locations that comments come from and options for limiting the number of submissions from an IP address. The city plans to share this platform for other cities to adopt.

Contact Tracy McKee at mckee@charleston-sc.gov.

Economic Development: City of Florence Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award

The Food, Artisan, and Warehouse District: A Unique Approach to Cultivate Entrepreneurship and Catalyze Redevelopment

Aiming to connect its revitalizing downtown with surrounding neighborhoods, Florence's Food, Artisan and Warehouse District spurs new development in a struggling corridor, reduces food insecurity in the area, preserves the area's historic warehouse architecture and promotes unique land uses not previously allowed.

The overlay district, created to fulfill numerous comprehensive plan action items, has led to projects involving a wide array of partners. It bolstered access to healthy food in what has been a food desert, and now offers a downtown Save-A-Lot grocery store that's operated by a local entrepreneur. The city developed its health and wellness campus in the area, which includes the Barnes Street Community Center and an inclusive playground. It also transformed a former warehouse into the City Center Market, a city-owned and operated farmers market facility with rentable commercial kitchen space for entrepreneurs scaling up their businesses. Development efforts in the district have led to the establishment of a locally-owned artisan sauce plant.

The city invested \$3.7 million of tax increment financing district funding for the City Center Market and improved infrastructure in the district. It contributed \$625,000 in conditional grant funds for the grocery store, joining the Palmetto Housing Authority's \$1.8 million investment in the business. The store also received grants from Save-A-Lot and the SC Community Loan Fund.

Perceived barriers to development in the district are now falling rapidly. The city entered a conditional grant agreement with a private developer for a \$65 million mixed-use investment in the district.

Contact Clint Moore at cmoore@cityofflorence.com or 843.665.2047.

Public Safety: Town of Bluffton

Mental Health is a public safety issue: Addressing the human elements of policing to prevent officer suicide

Frequent exposure to life-threatening circumstances creates acute mental health challenges for many police officers. They are more likely to suffer depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and more officers die by suicide than in the line of duty. The Bluffton Police Department responded to this threat to public safety by creating a multifaceted program promoting officer wellness and normalizing mental health assistance — a frequently stigmatized concept in police culture.

Many of the department's initiatives derive from the focus areas of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which published a report in 2015 on reducing crime while building public trust. The initiatives include suicide awareness training for officers, and resilience training for officers and their spouses. The department offers officers a sabbatical benefit, providing eligible participants with a month off with pay, and a bonus. The program provides officers and their families free counseling through an employee assistance program, and connects officers with Copline, a 24/7 hotline for them to seek support from peers. The department also established a new position responsible for officer recruitment and wellness.

In one of the most visible efforts, the department is building a Reflection Plaza at its headquarters, which is dedicated to its Officer Jonathon Garcia, who died by suicide. The facility is intended as a safe space to communicate and take a break from policing demands. It received \$35,000 in private donations and \$40,000 from the town's capital improvements budget.

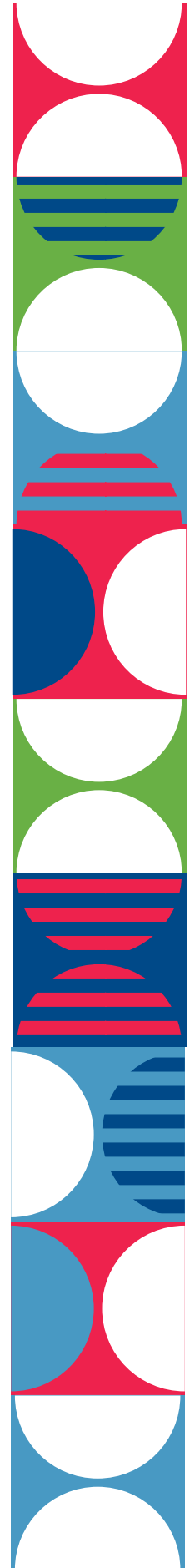
Multiple recruits have said they joined the Bluffton Police Department because of its approach to officer wellness. In 2022, all seven officers eligible to take a sabbatical are doing so.

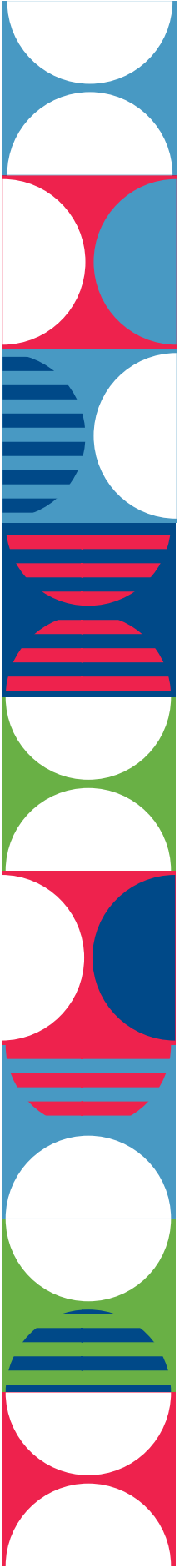
Contact Debbie Szpanka at dszpanka@townofbluffton.com or 843.540.2274.

Public Service: City of Rock Hill

Rock Hill Piedmont Community Vaccination Clinic

The growing availability of COVID-19 vaccines in early 2021 created a sense of hope and relief in the face of pandemic disruptions, but in York County, vaccine distributions lagged other areas. After Piedmont Medical Center asked for help to raise its capacity for large-scale vaccination, Rock Hill Mayor John Gettys offered for the city to take the lead in establishing a vaccine clinic, in partnership with the hospital and the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control.





The coalition launched a whirlwind operation to transform a former department store at the Galleria Mall into a clinic, and just eight days after the initial community leaders meeting, the facility began vaccinations. The city provided logistical support, obtained donations of needed supplies, and tracked expenses for reimbursement through federal relief funds. It also developed a volunteer signup process and communications plan. Rock Hill's bus system created a temporary bus stop to bring patients to the clinic, which helped with outreach to the area's population. Piedmont Medical Center obtained the vaccine supplies and managed appointments through the federal vaccine management system.

The clinic sought to administer as many vaccinations as possible while providing an experience consistent with the City of Rock Hill's focus on customer service. In 59 days of operation across four months, the clinic administered more than 50,000 shots. With anywhere from 70 to 100 volunteers needed every day, the clinic ultimately brought more than 1,600 total volunteers. Patients praised the clinic's efficiency and the helpfulness of its volunteers.

Contact Katie Quinn at katie.quinn@cityofrockhill.com or 803.326.3791.

Public Works: City of Aiken Downtown Stormwater Relief

The largest privately-owned urban forest in the nation, the 21,000-acre Hitchcock Woods, has for decades faced persistent challenges of erosion, water contamination and wildlife habitat loss as a result of the stormwater runoff received from Aiken's downtown. A task force appointed by Aiken Mayor Rick Osbon developed a comprehensive stormwater plan to tackle this problem.

Through these efforts, the city developed a continuous monitoring and adaptive control system. Using National Weather Service forecasts, the control system is an innovative method of holding stormwater in underground vaults where a cloud-based computer system determines when and how much to release from the vaults in a way that minimizes the environmental impacts of erosion and water contamination in the Sand River.

The city partnered with the nonprofit Hitchcock Woods Foundation, which eased past frictions between it and the municipal government. Clemson University gave technical assistance.

The \$15.8 million project received funding in part from Aiken's 1% capital projects sales tax, hospitality tax funds, federal American Rescue Plan funds, a loan from South Carolina's State Revolving Fund and a SC Department of Health and Environmental Control grant. The Hitchcock Woods Foundation provided the needed land and easements for the construction.

The project's first phase will complete construction in 2022, with funds allocated to monitor the project's effectiveness. The effort also includes landscaping upgrades around the infrastructure, which will improve the recreational and educational offerings of Hitchcock Woods.

Contact Mary Catherine Lawton at mlawtown@cityofaikensc.gov or 803.221.8216.

Other Entries

City of Abbeville Creation of Community Development Department

With its development and tourism functions spread among multiple departments and no single business recruitment and retention strategy in place, Abbeville faced numerous unoccupied buildings in its downtown, and a lack of population growth. The city established its Community Development Department in 2018 to bring together all efforts to promote and cultivate the community.

The department aimed to modernize communications with residents and visitors, establish dedicated grant writing and economic development staff positions and centralize the special event management process. About two-thirds of the department's budget is now paid through its own revenues, with another 22% paid with hospitality funding.

The department brought in nearly \$7 million in grants for infrastructure and historic preservation and disbursed nearly \$110,000 in small business grants. It also improved the professionalism and data tracking of its special events. The department's efforts have contributed to a 15% increase in downtown occupancy, with 15 new businesses opening in 2021.

Contact Austin Walker at awalker@abbevillecitysc.com or 864.828.1796.

City of Bishopville Bishopville Historic District Redevelopment Project

Seeking to remove dilapidated buildings along the railroad and remodel its historic railroad depot, the City of Bishopville obtained a long-term lease with the railroad companies owning the properties to work on the revitalization project. The redevelopment effort also included the installation of parking, sidewalks and lighting to encourage more pedestrian traffic in the downtown, all while making the northern entrance of the downtown more attractive.

Councilmembers from the City of Bishopville and Lee County worked with the county's legislative delegation to obtain \$450,000 in state funds for the project. The LINK Economic Development Appliance of Lee and Sumter counties helped obtain another \$450,000 from the SC Department of Commerce. The refurbished depot will host a farmers market and outside social events.

Contact Gregg McCutchen at gmbish@yahoo.com or 803.229.5307.

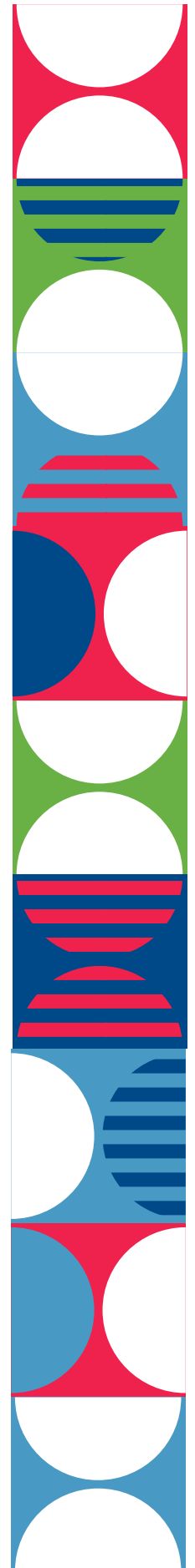
City of Conway Employee Mural Project

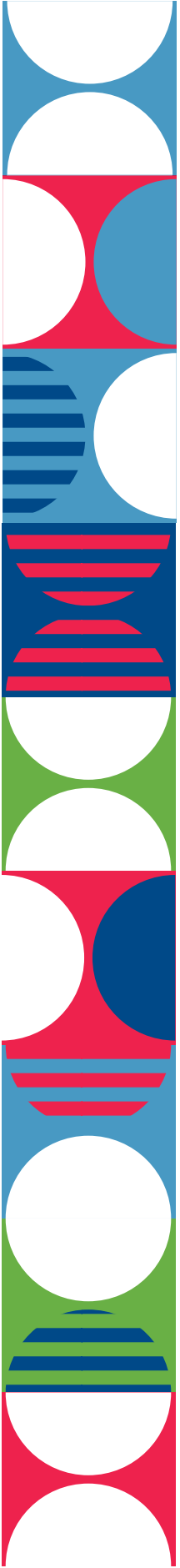
Conway's Employee Mural Project tackled two challenges: cultivating downtown public art on a limited budget, and improving the appearance of a highly visible building. The city decided to use a prominent building for a paint-by-numbers mural designed and painted by city staff. Ultimately the project involved 315 staff members working over several weeks.

The total project cost \$2,950, paid for by the general fund, employed a professional to prime the wall.

The project proved to be engaging for the community. Since the mural's subject matter was not initially apparent, news media and observers speculated about what the mural would depict. Employees were given time during work hours to paint the mural, but many volunteered their free time as well, and have expressed pride about their contributions to the final product. The downtown's various city-commissioned murals have inspired the private sector to add their own murals throughout the city.

Contact John Rogers at jrogers@cityofconway.com or 843.248.1760.





City of Fort Mill Second Saturday Service Initiative

During the pandemic, Fort Mill officials noticed a dramatic increase in litter along roadways and other areas. The town launched a volunteer program to collect litter and inspire residents to restore the town's green and public spaces.

Through the program, volunteers went out on the second Saturday of the month from April to October 2021 to collect trash. The schedule of early Saturday mornings improved safety since it limited the amount of traffic that volunteers encountered.

The town used general fund money to pay for gloves, safety vests, trash bags, safety sheets, and town-branded items as thank-you gifts. It also encouraged participants to post cleanup photos with the hashtag "#PickItUpPrideFortMill." A pledge card wall at town hall also highlighted the names of volunteers pledging to keep Fort Mill clean.

In 2021, the program brought together 162 volunteers collecting 137 bags of trash. Because of the program's popularity, the town brought it back for 2022.

Contact Christopher Sardelli at csardelli@fortmillsc.gov or 803.992.0021.

City of Fountain Inn Fountain Inn's Parade of Heroes

The City of Fountain Inn partnered with the Fountain Inn Museum to honor local veterans by establishing the Parade of Heroes display in its downtown. The donation-funded project featured the photos of 31 veterans on banners.

The museum handled photo submissions from loved ones and displayed the uniforms of many of those honored. The project collected oral histories of the veterans' stories. In the case of J. Lynn "Snab" Stenhouse Jr., the only known Black veteran from Fountain Inn to die in service, a digital artist converted a low-resolution image from a newspaper into an image that could be placed on a banner. Funded by the community, the only known photo of Stenhouse was preserved for posterity.

The project generated media coverage and foot traffic. Streetscape improvements are planned to double the number of pole banners in 2022.

Contact Kate Kizito at kate.kizito@fountaininn.org or 864.399.2781.

City of Goose Creek John McCants Veterans Park

As a rapidly growing community, Goose Creek sought to meet its expanding recreation needs through

the development of its Veterans Honor Plaza, which is aimed at providing recreation and ceremonial space for historically underserved groups.

The facility replaced a dilapidated baseball complex and honors the many veterans of Goose Creek, including its first Black city councilmember, John McCants, and the city's only Vietnam War casualty, USMC Pfc. Larry R. Gourdine. The Veterans Honor Plaza allows residents to purchase bricks and temporary banners dedicated to the veterans in their families.

The \$2.5 million park, paid for with the city's recreation fund, features a playground, athletic field, trails and a pavilion. Responding to significant demand, the park also includes a dog park.

Even before its Veterans Day dedication, the park drew crowds. Ideas for future developments range from monuments, public art and additional recreation equipment.

Contact Frank Johnson at fjohnson@cityofgoosecreek.com or 843.797.6220 x1113.

City of Greenville Shop Downtown Campaign

Seeking to support downtown Greenville's small and independent businesses after the economic downturn of the pandemic, the City of Greenville's Economic Development

and Communications departments, as well as Visit Greenville SC, the city's destination marketing organization, partnered to create a "Shop Downtown" campaign.

The initiative included print, digital and social media marketing as well as window clings for vacant storefronts. The effort also included a purpose-made logo featured on giveaways from canvas bags to tumblers. The city recruited dozens of businesses to participate in a gift card program, which continues to be used in promotions.

Funding came primarily through the city's operating budget, as well as \$25,000 in online advertising from Visit Greenville SC. Social media giveaway posts accounted for many of the city's most engaging posts for the year, and grew the city's social media audience. Merchants reported increased traffic to their stores, websites and social media.

Contact Michael Frixen at mfrixen@greenvillesc.gov or 864.467.5700.

City of Greer CenterG: Igniting an Economic Engine in Downtown Greer

When Greer CPW needed to dig up streets in the central business district to replace aging utility lines, the city seized the opportunity to completely rebuild a dated streetscape

with an appealing, accessible design. This project took seven years of planning and 36 months of construction.

It created a shared surface concept for the street and sidewalks — a single brick surface that feels inviting for pedestrians while providing parking. The city included LED streetlight improvements and work on a downtown arts center. The first phase included \$9 million invested by Greer CPW and funds obtained through Greenville County's legislative delegation, and the second phase was primarily funded by a general obligation bond.

Greer aimed to be as supportive to businesses as possible during the disruption, using an extensive communications campaign to stress that businesses remained open and providing shuttles to transport customers. The downtown has improved occupancy and development interest. New public-private investments include a hotel and municipal parking garage.

Contact Steve Owens at sowens@cityofgreer.com or 864.915.6941.

Town of Hilton Head Island Lowcountry Celebration Park

As a part of its effort to improve its reputation as a destination and encourage private development, the Town of Hilton Head Island created Lowcountry Celebration Park.

The park offers a lawn that can accommodate festivals, a pavilion stage, the Adventure Playground with a specially designed ship reflecting the history of the island's discovery, and the Sandbox Children's Museum. Lighted pathways lead to nearby shopping, dining and lodging, and the park's lagoon mitigates street flooding. The town created a tax increment finance district to fund the \$14 million park.

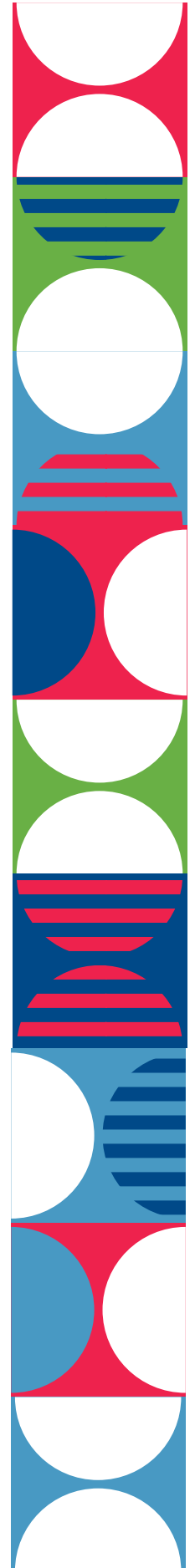
In the park's first year, nearby development has included a new hotel and renovation of an existing building, with more development expected. The lagoon has eliminated nearly all nearby flooding. The numerous concerts and festivals attracted to the park's lawn have helped reduce the overuse of other town parks.

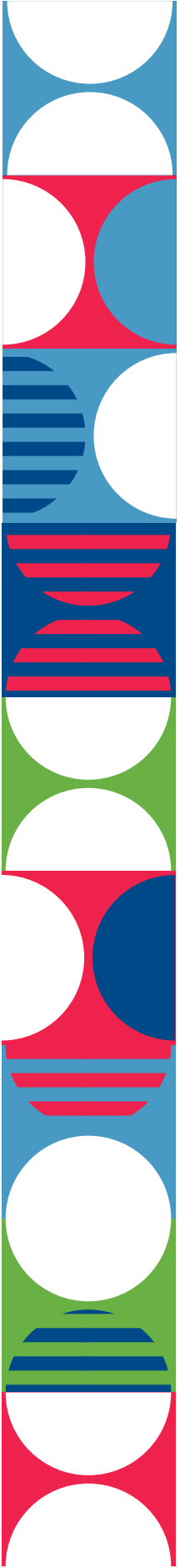
Contact Chris Darnell at chrisda@hiltonheadislandsc.gov or 843.341.4676.

Town of James Island Pet Waste Station Program

James Island residents, aiming to stop dog walkers from using the nearest residential garbage can for their dog waste, or even throwing the waste on the ground, began setting up kitchen trash cans with signs inviting walkers to use them.

Facing limited staff to address the issue, the town collaborated with the James Island Public Service District on a waste station system. The town installs the stations





and provides waste bags, while the JIPSD provides the cans and collects waste on their regular routes. The town has the cans cleaned quarterly, and the effort also recruits residents to keep the provided waste bags stocked.

The original eight-station pilot program cost \$4,832 annually, and each new station, made of easily available materials, costs about \$604. In the first year, the effort removed 3.5 tons of pet waste from the environment, and reduced the area's water contamination. James Island is now expanding the program and encouraging similar programs for nearby governments.

Contact Mark Johnson at mjohnson@jamesislandsc.us or 843.795.4141.

City of Laurens Welcome Plaza Project

An aging parking lot at the edge of Laurens' downtown served as one of the most noticeable features of those traveling into the district. The parking lot lacked shade, accessible parking and proper lighting. The city decided to rebuild it into a Welcome Plaza to better accommodate visitors, and to create an environmental focus, both through the installation of two electric vehicle charging stations and the use of sustainable, long-lasting paving materials.

The project also featured brighter and more durable LED

streetlights, and incorporated brick into the paving to match the downtown's historic look. It received funding from the city's budget, donations and a grant from the state's Park and Recreation Development Fund.

The city now plans to update other parking lots in the downtown, and evaluate other infrastructure to determine if it can improve accessibility for visitors and residents.

Contact Eric Delgado at edelgado@cityoflaurenscc.com or 864.872.2202.

Town of Lexington The Icehouse Amphitheater Pavilion

After Lexington opened the popular 900-seat Icehouse Amphitheater in 2016, it intended to sell a high-visibility outparcel to a developer. The parcel's size and topography made it unfeasible for private development, so town council decided to develop the Icehouse Amphitheater Pavilion on the site.

Paid for with development impact fees, as well as some hospitality tax funds and bonds, the facility provides a setup space for vendors during concerts, and a permanent home to the town's farmers market. The pavilion offers fans and heaters, and thanks to its electrical connection, it can accommodate food trucks without any need for generators.

The facility has become one of the latest symbols of an increasingly revitalized and thriving downtown. The farmers market has extended its hours, and the pavilion has hosted a popular two-day Christmas Market. Another outparcel at the amphitheater site has been bought by a developer to become a new restaurant and retail establishment, with additional plans to increase parking capacity.

Contact Laurin Barnes at lbarnes@lexsc.com or 803.600.2533.

Town of Mount Pleasant Mount Pleasant's Organic Turf Management Program

The Town of Mount Pleasant sought to address resident concerns about the environmental impacts of synthetic turf management products, by setting setting strict environmental goals for itself. The town developed an organic turfgrass management program, using the Carolina Park Recreational Complex, Pitt Street Bridge Park and Alhambra Hall venue as test sites. The program eliminates the need for pesticides by using soil biology management — the cultivation of beneficial microorganisms — to create healthy turf that is resistant to disease and insects, and reduces the need for products containing carcinogens.

Staff began the pilot program aiming to expand it

to all town facilities. Thanks to the cooperation of residents and organics companies, the testing phase did not require funding, and expansions in the program will receive general fund dollars. The program will next receive \$300,000 for landscape maintenance and supplies, and then an annual budget cycle of \$40,000 for equipment and \$20,000 for irrigation.

Contact Martine Miller at mwolfe@tompsc.com or 843.884.8517.

City of Simpsonville Simpsonville Arts Center

The historic downtown Simpsonville Elementary School, built in 1939, stood empty for nearly two decades after its closure in 2002. After the City of Simpsonville bought it and spent years assembling funding from a variety of sources, it transformed the building into a new arts center that can serve as an economic and cultural boon for years to come.

Renovations include an upgraded auditorium with updated plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems, as well as new lighting and sound systems. A \$500,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission jumpstarted the project, which also received funding from hospitality and accommodations taxes, and even a \$75,000 contribution from a state lottery winner who won \$1 billion in Simpsonville.

The local theater group, the Mill Town Players, has committed to a lease in which it will produce five seasons of shows at the new facility. The city also plans to lease space to artists, art teachers and others, and plans to hire a director for the Arts Center.

Contact Dianna Gracely at dianna@simpsonville.com or 864.967.5404.

Town of Summerton Dirt & Skirts

Lacking a grocery store and identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a food desert, the Town of Summerton partnered with the Summerton NAACP to create “Dirt & Skirts,” a series of pop-up, drive-through farmers markets. The project aimed to bolster South Carolina farmers while also giving the Summerton area’s consumers access to locally-grown produce, meats and other foods. The events also include a free mobile clinic to provide primary health care services.

Funds for the efforts have come from Summerton’s civic groups, individual donations and the Clarendon County Chamber of Commerce. The project aims to contribute to some of the goals outlined in the Summerton Comprehensive Plan, which envisions the development of new housing, dining, retail, offices and public spaces.

Contact Cedric Liqueur at cedricliq@aol.com

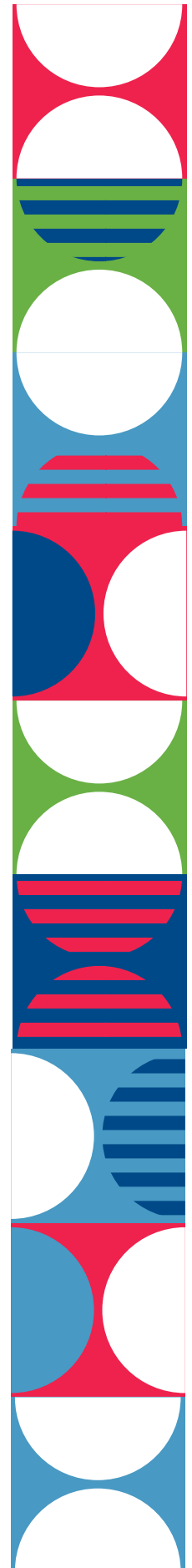
City of West Columbia Communications Blitz

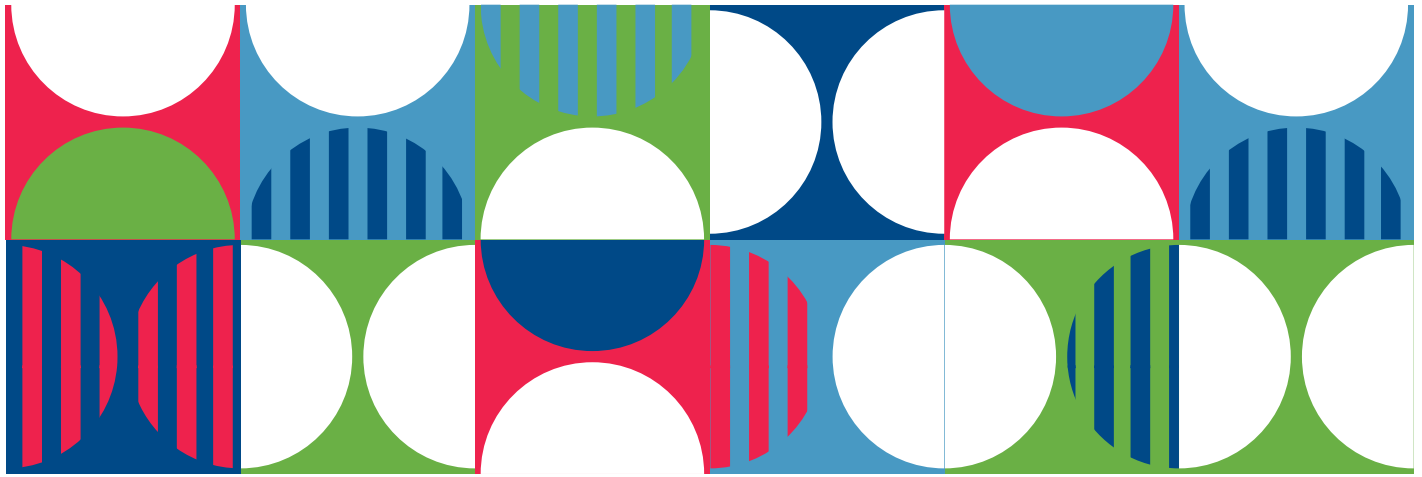
After the closures and disruptions of the pandemic in 2020, the City of West Columbia undertook a multifaceted communications campaign to highlight everything the city has to offer. Armed with a newly created brand, the city launched projects including the Real Faces/WeCo Places campaign, telling the stories of local entrepreneurs on pole banners that featured QR codes leading to online content about local businesses. The city also produced “Public Works of Art,” a campaign that wrapped sanitation trucks with the works of local artists.

The city upgraded its website and launched the WeCo Info app, which connects users with the city’s sanitation schedule, offers reminder notifications for sanitation routes, recycling information, as well as city news and special events. It also allows users to report issues to the city.

The city funded the campaigns through hospitality tax funding. In measuring its success, the city reported a 25.3% jump in social media engagement, email list growth, and even an increase of 199 new businesses from 2020 to 2021.

Contact Anna Huffman at ahuffman@westcolumbiasc.gov or 803.309.8638.





Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards

Main Street South Carolina empowers residents, business owners and local officials with the knowledge, skills, tools and organizational structure necessary to revitalize downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts into vibrant centers of commerce and community.

Main Street South Carolina is a service of the Municipal Association of SC and is accredited by the National Main Street Center. The program follows National Main Street's Four Point Approach — economic vitality, design, promotion and organization. Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members' achievements and successes in downtown revitalization.

Excellence on Main Street Award

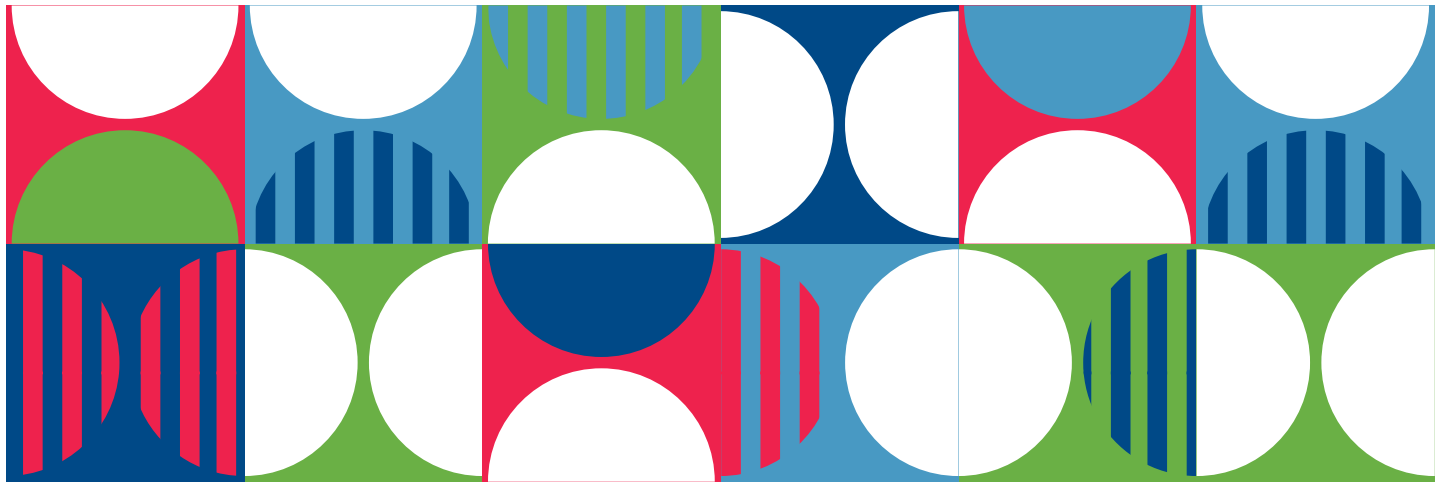
Laurens Lights Up the Night – Main Street Laurens

Aiming to make its Fourth of July celebration a more accessible community celebration, the City of Laurens moved the event from its amphitheater to its downtown courthouse square for 2021. In addition to a concert, fireworks, food trucks and recognition of local veterans, the celebration featured for the first time a video display projected onto the historic courthouse façade. The display used light mapping, in which the projections are specially designed to fit onto the three-dimensional architectural elements of the building.

The celebration developed as a collaboration between the city, Main Street Laurens, Laurens County and other community partners. Owners of the nearby Bailey Building opened their top floor to the projection equipment, making the display possible. Funding came from repurposed funds the city had budgeted for youth football before the pandemic led to the cancellation of that program, as well as community sponsorships.

Laurens Lights Up the Night became the largest single-day event ever in Laurens' history, attracting 3,000 guests. Downtown businesses and restaurants that stayed open late and offered specials to cater to visitors reported record sales. Because the city now owns the projection equipment, it has used the equipment for smaller-scale displays, including a Halloween-themed display. The city planned a larger event for Independence Day 2022, including a parade representing all of Laurens County.

Contact Jonathan Irick at mainstreetlaurens@gmail.com or 864.871.4429.



Inspiration Awards

Outstanding Partnership Award

Downtown Sumter – Creative Canvas Mural Project

After the success of the Butterfly Project featuring street sculptures, Downtown Sumter wanted to expand the district's public art offerings. Sumter County's cultural director partnered with the downtown development organization to secure a grant from the Central Carolina Community Foundation. Together, the groups pursued commissions for three murals in the area.

One of the murals, just off Main Street, features an underwater scene from Sumter's Swan Lake, showing the swans diving for food, while another alleyway mural celebrates Sumter iconography like the gamecock and iris. A postcard-style mural at the Sumter County Museum depicts local landmarks and historical figures.

The project matched the \$45,000 grant from CCCF with donations from the Bank of Clarendon, Main Street Society, Sumter County Museum, Sumter Economic Development and Sumter County Cultural Commission. Downtown Sumter plans to expand the district's public art projects further in the future.

Contact Leigh Newman at lnewman@sumtersc.gov or 803.436.2635.

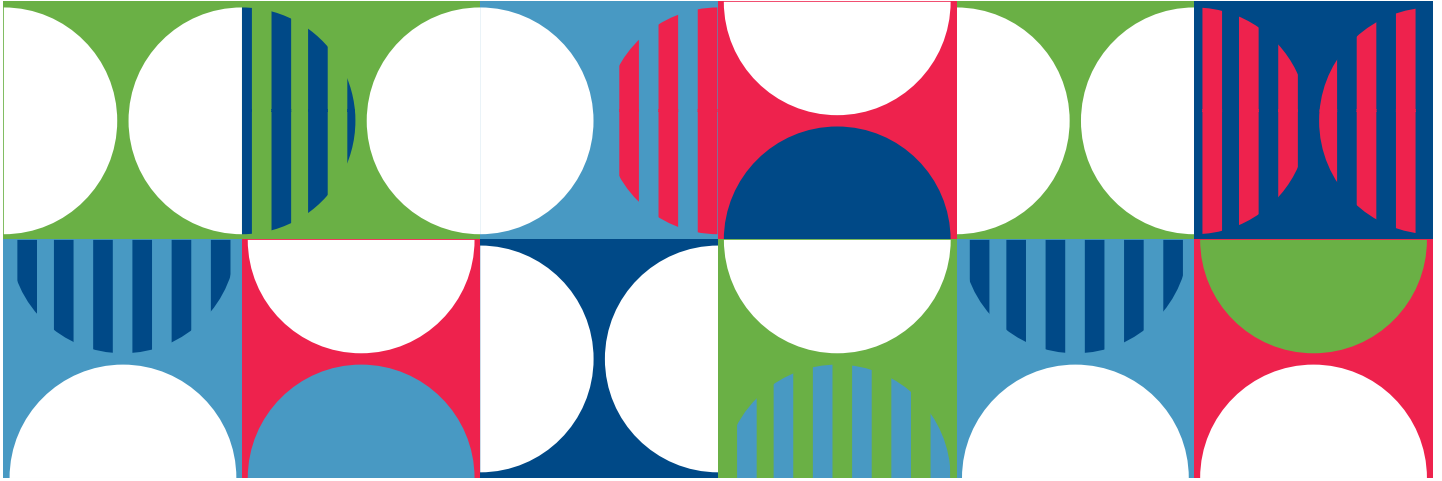
Outstanding Service Award

Main Street Laurens – Holmes Family

Seeing new opportunities in the resurgence of downtown building rehabilitation in their hometown of Laurens, the Holmes family decided to purchase and rehabilitate two commercial structures using local contractors. The family has also contributed to the downtown district with committee and board service. Barrett Holmes serves on the City of Laurens planning commission, his wife Beth Holmes serves on the city's historic preservation commission, and their son Barton serves on the board of Main Street Laurens.

The Midtown Building, bought by the family in 2019, is now the home of a coworking space, a corporate office and a new location for a local coffee shop. In 2021, the family bought the deteriorated Swofford Building, which was facing the possibility of demolition. Once its rehabilitation is complete, it will house The Tailored Oak, a steak restaurant, corporate offices and potentially retail space.

Contact Jonathan Irick at mainstreetlaurens@gmail.com or 864.871.4429.



Gaines Jontz Rehabilitation Award

Main Street Cheraw – 168 Second St.: Bistro on 2nd

The declining condition of historic storefronts in downtown Cheraw often makes rehabilitation economically unfeasible. This was the case when the owner of a 1,600-square-foot, circa-1907 storefront at 168 Second St. — previously used for storage — donated it to the city. The deteriorated building had excellent features, including an original pressed-tin ceiling, but no utilities.

The town sought proposals for ways that the building could contribute to downtown vitality, and found an answer from local contractor Axel Speer, with plans to renovate it as a restaurant space. After the town deeded it to him, he replaced the roof and floor, as well as its mechanical and electrical components. The \$250,000 investment used \$21,000 in town tax incentives, including a preservation grant funded by the Municipal Association’s Hometown Economic Development Grant, as well as Bailey Bill tax abatements projected to be worth at least \$30,000.

Bistro on 2nd has become the first of several evening-oriented restaurants in Cheraw, with other establishments opening or renovating since then.

Contact Robert Wolfe at rwolfe@cheraw.com or 843.337.7724.

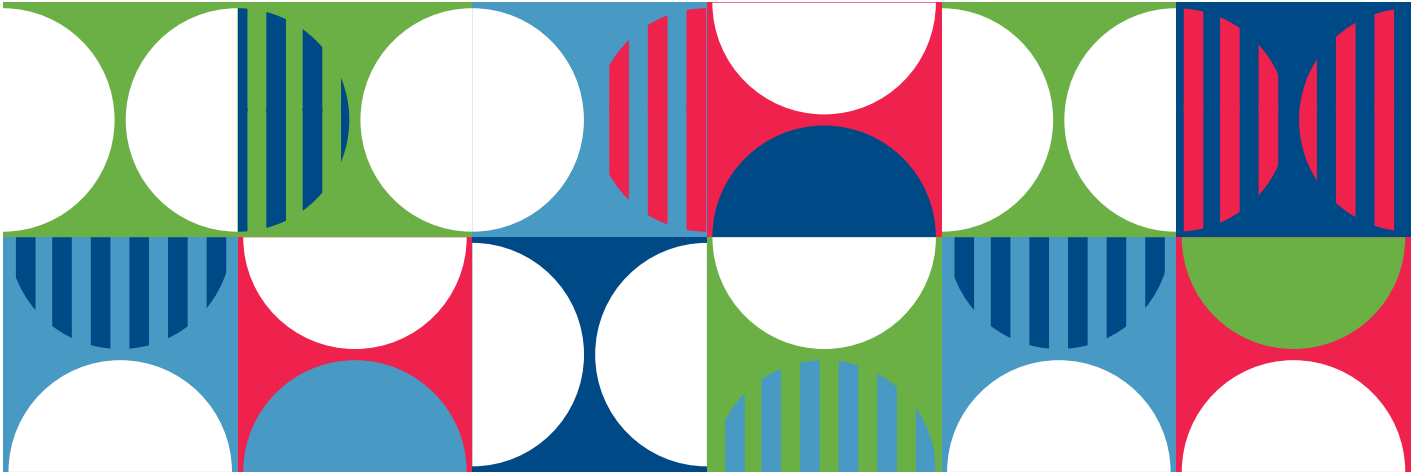
Master Merchant Award

Downtown Sumter – Julie Herlong

Offering a full bridal registry as well as jewelry, home goods and specialty foods, the gift shop Naomi and Warner had been a fixture in downtown Sumter for more than 60 years when Julie Herlong purchased it in 2013. Soon afterward, Herlong bought and restored a downtown building and moved the legacy business into it. The building now also houses Ages Antiques as well as a kitchen and dining area for Brubakers Café & Bakery, as well as an art studio.

Herlong is a longtime member of Sumter’s downtown revitalization board and historic preservation design review committee. She has also served on Downtown Sumter’s promotion committee. Every year, she participates in some of Downtown Sumter’s largest fundraising events, including the Sip and Stroll and Microbrew Festival. She has also sold food and drinks during the Fourth Fridays Concert Series.

Contact Leigh Newman at lnewman@sumtersc.gov or 803.436.2635.



Special Project Award

Downtown Florence – SC Pecan Music & Food Festival Rebranding

Founded in 2003, the South Carolina Pecan Festival originally focused on encouraging visitors to come to downtown Florence and see firsthand the changes and improvements happening in the once-derelict district. Although the festival grew dramatically over the next 17 years, its brand identity began to make less sense. Florence's pecan processing facility closed during that time, and attendees questioned why the festival was named for a nut not easily found at the event.

When planners and staff canceled the festival because of the pandemic in 2020, they took advantage of the downtime to assess the event's purpose, strengths and weaknesses. This led them to completely rebrand the event as the SC Pecan Music & Food Festival for 2021. The rebranding, which included a modernized logo, website and a GIS-powered festival app, was funded by the Florence Downtown Development Corporation and City of Florence, leveraging existing festival revenue and accommodations tax funds.

Contact Hannah Davis at hdavis@cityofflorence.com or 843.678.5912.

Business Licensing Essentials: Local Business License Renewal Center; AirBnb, Bite Squad and Uber

Every month in 2022, the Municipal Association's Local Revenue Services is hosting "Business Licensing Essentials," a series of virtual training sessions. The sessions focus on the methods for administering business license taxes correctly, efficiently and in a way that makes life easier for those doing business inside a city or town.

The August session focused on the Local Business License Renewal Center. Act 176, the SC Business License Tax Standardization Act, requires jurisdictions with a business license tax to accept license renewal payments from businesses through this online payment portal. Business owners can use the Renewal



Center to renew their business licenses in every municipality and county where they operate, with a single payment. The session in August focused on the steps that cities and towns must take to accept payments from the Renewal Center and operate their account.

The next virtual training session will take place Wednesday, September 14, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. It will focus on online commercial enterprises like AirBnB, Bite Squad and Uber. These services have emerged as typical examples of the sharing economy, in which sellers and customers connect with each other online. The differences between these services and traditional businesses with distinct physical locations has led to questions about how business licenses apply to them.

Learn more and find the recordings of past meetings, including the August session, online at www.masc.sc (keyword: business licensing essentials).



Act 150 Changes Voting Laws

The General Assembly passed Act 150 in May 2022, establishing early voting and changing the process for absentee voting statewide. The South Carolina Election Commission's Outreach and Special Projects Coordinator John Michael Catalano joined the Association's Annual Meeting to explain the effect of the changes to municipal elections.

Early voting

During the pandemic and elections of 2020, several rules about in-person absentee voting existed to help voters with social distancing during the pandemic. To ensure consistency the in-person absentee voting process is now replaced with a standard two-week early voting period.

For statewide elections, like the one coming in November 2022, voting hours will be Monday to Saturday for the two weeks before the election, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., with polls closed during this time on Sundays and holidays. For other elections, such as municipal elections and primaries, the hours will be slightly shorter: Mondays to Fridays, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Catalano noted that early voting turnout was low for the June primary this year, with about 100,000 people voting early out of about 565,000 voters total. Other states with early voting have seen the early voter numbers eventually increase to 50% of all voters, he said.

"We're expecting them to increase as voter education improves," Catalano said.

Absentee voting

Four of the previously existing reasons for absentee voting are still in place: the voter has physical disabilities, is 65 or older, is in the military or has family in the military, or is admitted to the hospital within four days of election day.

The law now has new reasons to allow absentee voting as well: employment obligations, attending to a sick or disabled person; confinement to a jail or pretrial facility, or absence from the person's county of residence. Those who vote absentee for any of these reasons must be absent for the entire early voting period and election day. Applications can be requested by phone, mail or in person at the county office.

Learn more at www.scvotes.gov/2022-election-law-changes.



Inman Mayor Cornelius Huff established the Mayor's Youth Council to learn from students of Chapman High School, teach them about local government and provide them with opportunities for civic engagement. Photo: City of Inman.

Connecting With Residents Through Personal Outreach

Mayor Dan Alexander is well-known in Seneca, where he was born and raised. It's also where he's been mayor for 24 years after serving on city council for another 10 years.

And in case anyone in town doesn't personally know him, they likely are familiar with his voice. For years, his "City Talk" show has been a fixture on the radio each Saturday morning. Broadcast from station 94.1 WSNW-The Lake in downtown Seneca, the program features Alexander along with city staffers and guests from nonprofits. Each month, Clemson Mayor Robert Halfacre joins Alexander on the show, and the two mayors talk about common issues facing the nearby municipalities.

"We wanted to come up with a way we could reach out to our community and have them involved," Alexander said. "It's a way to get the good news out about

what's happening in our community, the resources and the nonprofits that are out there."

The radio show is one example of the importance of outreach to residents by city leaders. Whether through online videos or mentoring local students, cities depend on that personal touch to help everyone know their leaders and become more involved citizens.

For Seneca, that means the mayor talking about upcoming events like Jazz on the Alley, or the city administrator and other staff talking about downtown development, recreation or emergency services.

"People will say, 'It was great to hear that on the radio,' or 'I appreciate you sharing the news about Seneca,'" Alexander said. "For me it's about transparency and letting people know what's going on. It allows all of us in the city to let the community know us better."

Each Wednesday morning, Alexander is interviewed by a radio station reporter for a live 30-minute show. Segments from that are paired with other interviews for the hourlong "City Talk" show that airs on Saturday mornings.

Riley Johnson, Seneca's events coordinator, said the program started in response to organizations and nonprofits coming to the city seeking funding.

"We said, we can't give you money, but we can give you exposure. We can put you in front of people. If you've got a yard sale, a benefit, a fundraiser, we can give you the exposure to double the attendance," Johnson said.

Johnson is responsible for putting the show together, managing the technology and booking guests.

"And what's really cool is it lets the mayor be out there more than behind a desk making decisions at a council

meeting. It's a chance [for residents] to get to know him better. And people want to be on his show," Johnson said.

In Aiken, City Manager Stuart Bedenbaugh keeps residents informed by recording a quick video for social media after each city council meeting.

"We wanted to do something that would fit in with the users of media today. Newspapers still have a market, but younger people and others now get their news from digital platforms," he said.

Just after each meeting, Bedenbaugh puts on a mic and a staff member films him giving a quick recap of the council's action. While the videos initially were posted immediately after the night meetings, he said the city learned more people viewed it if it was posted early the following morning.

"It's primarily to keep people informed of what their elected officials are doing; so citizens will know we passed a budget or purchased a piece of property or we are doing a water line replacement," Bedenbaugh said.

His advice to other cities: keep it short — Aiken's videos are typically 45 to 90 seconds. He advised cities to cover as much ground as possible, without dwelling on any item, because the videos are aimed at casual news consumers.

Personal outreach also can help the city as well as its residents. Just ask Mayor Cornelius Huff in Inman.

When Huff became mayor in 2014, he hosted an open meeting to find out what residents thought was missing in the city. When he heard the youth of Inman had little connection with it, he visited all the schools, from elementary through high school.

"I got to the high school, and to them, Inman was stagnant, dead," he said. "They said, 'Why don't you have us set up a council, a team to help you as the mayor?'"

The Inman Mayor's Youth Council was born.

Huff teamed with the school district and developed an application for juniors and seniors at Chapman High School. Thirty-five applied the first year for 25 slots.

"It was amazing. I told them I'm going to teach you about government and you're



Above: Aiken City Manager Stuart Bedenbaugh records brief video updates on each city council meeting after the meeting ends. Photo: City of Aiken. Right: The "CityTalk" radio show connects the residents of Seneca and Clemson with their government. From left: Clemson Mayor Robert Halfacre, Seneca City Administrator Scott Moulder, Kevin Hollis of 94.1 WSNW-The Lake, and Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander. Photo: City of Clemson.



going to teach me what's missing in our community and fix it," Huff said.

It took off. The team started getting involved in the community, holding events downtown, creating community gardens, sprucing up downtown with murals, visiting nursing homes.

"They even went out and rallied to get a coffee shop. They wanted to hang out downtown. The first staple of downtown Inman was the coffee shop they worked to get. We went from 13 empty stores downtown to one empty building in just three years," he said. "I tell people it stemmed from a strong city council and a youth council that made things happen."

The students attend every city council meeting, and Huff even had students run a meeting.

"It's amazing to watch them. Every child is not stuck on social media and video games. They want to learn if you give them your time," he said.

Huff has taken the students to other cities around the state to share the message.

"I tell cities they can learn from us. We've got the wheel going. We can give you information on how it started, do's and don'ts," Huff said.

It's all part of the personal connection

city leaders try to make through outreach to their communities.

Clemson's Mayor Robert Halfacre, who regularly joins the "City Talk" show in Seneca, noted that "nothing is more personal than holding public office in a small town or city."

"My promise, as mayor of our great city, has always been to hear people and respond, championing honest and open conversations," Halfacre said. "That means making ourselves available outside of a council meeting to hear from residents, taxpayers and business owners. Sometimes that also means speaking on a radio program or sharing information on social media. It means showing up in the places you're least expected. And most important for us, it has been holding town halls — which we call 'Conversations with Council' — that involve us coming out into our community and inviting input in places beyond the four walls of our council chamber."

Local government is the type of government closest to its residents, but municipal officials can still find new ways to connect personally with their constituents. Doing so, they can build better working relationships and make the governing process more accessible.



The 2022 graduates of the My Beach 101 program appear before Myrtle Beach City Council. Photo: City of Myrtle Beach.

City Orientation Classes Can ‘Bring the Water to the Horse’

Navigating the workings of municipal government can bring residents into contact with unfamiliar processes and rules, no matter if the person is brand new or a lifelong resident.

To help residents better understand their local governments, some cities are offering “Civics 101” classes — multiweek courses that allow groups of residents to get a behind-the-scenes look at how their cities operate and how they can be more engaged in the process of making a city work.

The goals of these programs can go beyond education. They can help increase the pool of residents who are willing to serve on local boards, committees and commissions. They can also cultivate a group of ambassadors to help explain to neighbors and friends how the city operates — overcoming confusion or even anger about the processes.

“One of the goals is to get people to be continually involved in government

— they may find a passion they didn’t know about, they may join a board or just have a little more input on a board or commission,” said Ayla Fitzpatrick, community/media outreach coordinator for the City of Greer. “We want to continue to engage the people who are passionate about the City of Greer.”

Fitzpatrick recently began working for the City of Greer, and plans to restart its Civics Academy that had just a few classes under its belt before the pandemic shut it down.

The original plan was to identify leaders in homeowners’ associations who might like to participate in the classes and share the information in their neighborhoods.

The first class took place in the spring of 2021 with 25 students. Fitzpatrick is planning a second class this fall 2022. The classes will be two hours every Thursday for eight weeks and will explore each

city department. Some classes will take place where the departments operate. Enrollment is open to all city residents on a first-come, first-served basis.

“These might be places the general public might not frequent,” Fitzpatrick said. “We want to give residents an inside look at how Greer operates, not just that these departments exist, but what is it they do.”

Some of the biggest challenges to restarting the program have been identifying those neighborhood leaders and encouraging them to be among the first to take the classes.

“It would be ideal to have ambassadors who have a constituency — people who want to build their communities up and encourage others to do the same thing,” she said.

For other cities like Myrtle Beach, these resident academy classes are an important tool to get newcomers involved in civic life.

My Beach 101 began in 2016 and offers classes twice a year to city residents on a first-come, first-served basis, said Neighborhood Services director Mary “Cookie” Goings.

The classes start with a welcome from the mayor and include presentations for every city department, including the police, fire and rescue departments.

“Most of the people in the class are people who just moved here,” Goings said. “We want them to be exposed to the rich history and diversity of our city.”

The last class is something of a sales pitch to interest residents in getting involved.

“One of the last presentations that we do is an introduction to our city’s boards and commissions,” Goings said. “And it is wonderful to see that some of our graduates are involved in those.”

Recent challenges have been pandemic-related, Goings said.

“This past year was the first time we have ever been virtual,” she said. “It was easier to start out virtual then shift to in-person than to go the other way.”

There also were issues with older participants who were not able to go online, so Goings’ team found a location where they could sit at a safe distance and wear masks.

“For the most part, once we were able to gather in person, it was wonderful,” she said.

Goings says sometimes departments have to take tough questions from residents.

“One of the things we tell every department is to be totally transparent,” she said. “If a resident asks a question and we don’t have an answer right then, we will find out and they will get an answer before the next meeting.”

The final class includes a question-and-answer session with the city manager.

“Any question they have that has not been answered, gets answered,” she said.

The Town of Bluffton also has welcomed many new residents as it has been one of the fastest-growing cities in the state. Educating those newcomers about how things work is an ongoing process, said Director of Communications and Community Outreach Debbie Szpanka.

“It’s educate, educate, educate and educate some more,” said Szpanka.

To accomplish that, Bluffton has taken its resident engagement workshops on the



The City of Greer launched its first Civics Academy in 2021. Photo: City of Greer.



In Bluffton, engagement workshops help residents better understand how their town government works. Photo: Town of Bluffton.

road in a “mobile town hall,” traveling to neighborhood association meetings, large employers and other locations for brief primers on how Bluffton’s government works. The town hall meetings are also available via livestreaming, and the town has been posting “bite-sized” videos of two to five minutes on social media to share the same information.

“Our job and our mission is to bring the water to the horse,” Szpanka said. “We are competing with every soccer game, every dinner that needs to be made, and we totally get that.”

When the program first began as a workshop, Szpanka says the focus was on how to volunteer with boards and commissions — “getting your voice heard.”

In order to educate new residents — many of whom moved to the area during the pandemic and have never seen the city council meet in person — the sessions now

do a little more to emphasize the cultural history and the inner workings of how things get done in Bluffton.

“Our objectives have changed as the needs have changed,” she said.

The town has also become more traditional in its efforts to reach residents — the mailed newsletter.

“While it is not a tool you hear about frequently these days, we are doing our best to hit every segment of our community and not forcing them to come to us,” Szpanka said. “When we mix it with the news they want to know about, like trash and recycling, you can mix in the other information about roles and parameters in a way they can digest.”

Municipal government might be the kind of government closest to residents’ lives, but it’s often not well-understood. Resident engagement courses can change that — making local government more comprehensible, and with a little luck, more accessible as well.



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Calendar

Scheduled in-person meetings are subject to change based on the Municipal Association's COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of the meeting. Information about events and how members can access the virtual events will be updated on the Association's website.

SEPTEMBER

1 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarter Meeting. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics include increasing rainfall, predevelopment hydrology, stormwater litigation, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control updates and an exhibitor showcase.

6 Regional Advocacy Meeting – Catawba Regional Council of Governments area. Rock Hill Operations Center.

7 Regional Advocacy Meeting – Lowcountry Regional Council of Governments area. Walterboro Wildlife Center.

8 Regional Advocacy Meeting – Santee Lynches Regional Council of Governments area. Manning City Fire Department.

13 Regional Advocacy Meeting – Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments area. The Edition at the Hartsville Museum.

14 Business Licensing Essentials – Airbnb, Bite Squad and Uber. Virtual.

14 – 16 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, Year 1, Session A. Hilton Columbia Center. Topics include teamwork, updates from the SC Department of Archives and History, types and forms of local and state governments, parliamentary procedure, purchasing and procurement, and conflict management.

20 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Forms of Municipal

Government and Municipal Economic Development. Appalachian COG: Greenville, Central Midlands COG: Columbia, Pee Dee Regional COG: Florence, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester COG: North Charleston, Waccamaw COG: Georgetown.

21 Risk Management Services Training: Employment Liability. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia, and online webinar. Topics include employment policies and procedures and recent developments in employee law.

21 – 23 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting. Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach. Topics include cybersecurity and SC Law Enforcement Division updates. Meeting features the Exhibitor Showcase.

OCTOBER

3 – 4 Municipal Court Administration Association 101 – Session B. Hilton Columbia Center. Topics include dispositions, finalization and an introduction to court financials.