



UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



2017 advocacy initiatives promote safety, prosperity, services

Hundreds of local government officials took part in a state-wide process in the summer and fall that identified major issues and concerns that cities and towns face in South Carolina. To provide solutions to those challenges, the board of directors of the Municipal Association of SC approved the 2017 advocacy initiatives for cities and towns. Each action item represents a change to state law that would give local governments more tools to meet these challenges. These initiatives are intended to encourage business growth and development, provide quality services, improve law enforcement training, repair and maintain roads, and reduce blight.

The Advocacy Initiatives will be presented at the 2017 Home-town Legislative Action Day on February 1. The deadline for preregistration is January 18.

Encourage business growth and development

For businesses, time is money. Implementing standardized business licensing practices saves businesses time and supports local economic growth.

Action Item

- Standardize business license tax collection across the state.

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Provide quality services

Residents and businesses expect a positive quality of life and economic prosperity in their hometowns. To achieve this, dependable and consistent revenue sources are necessary to support the efficient and effective delivery of municipal services.

Action Item

- Increase funding for the Local Government Fund to the level that state law requires.
- Increase options for municipalities to roll back property taxes and to raise revenue to support specific capital projects.
- Allow cities to annex certain enclaves by ordinance.

Increase law enforcement training

Law enforcement agencies face the challenge of recruiting, hiring and training highly qualified officers. Increased funding for quality training will result in safer streets and communities.

Action Item

- Support reliable funding for the Criminal Justice Academy in order to make more training opportunities available to law enforcement officers.

- Increase funding for body-worn cameras.

Repair roads

Repairing and maintaining existing roads and infrastructure includes more than filling in potholes. It's about encouraging and supporting statewide economic development with infrastructure that can accommodate new industry and support existing industry.

Action Item

- Support reliable funding sources for roads.
- Increase municipal representation on county transportation committees.

Reduce blight

Dilapidated structures pose a public safety danger in cities and towns of all sizes. Additional tools to clear blight will protect the safety of residents and visitors and strengthen economic development opportunities for business owners.

Action Item

- Establish options for cities and towns to recover public funds that are spent to demolish or clean blighted property.

For more information about the Advocacy Initiatives and HLAD, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: HLAD).



Public works employees shoulder holiday waste

After all the holiday gifts are unwrapped, a familiar scene emerges—piles of giftwrap, packaging materials, boxes, ribbons and cards.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, Americans produce about 25 percent more trash, \$11 billion worth of packing material and 15 million discarded Christmas trees, according to the National Environmental Education Foundation.

So for cities and towns that provide trash pickup, the holidays can be a heavy lift. But despite the increased load of garbage generated during this season, municipal maintenance and sanitation employees work hard to maintain normal pickup schedules—no elves required.

The City of Goose Creek maintains its regular schedule and treats Christmas trees and other holiday waste as normal yard debris, according to City Administrator Jake Broom. During times of high volume, the city shifts some crews from its maintenance division over to its sanitation division to help keep up with the regular schedule.

"We take a lot of pride in not letting periods of high volume throw us off schedule," said Broom. "And we try to provide the most consistent, dependable service possible to our residents."

The City of Clinton handles holiday garbage just as it would any other pickup, said City Manager Frank Stovall.

The city encourages residents to recycle and reuse if possible. However, Clinton does not have a curbside recycling program, so residents must go to the central recycling facility. If the waste can fit into the garbage can and is not a natural item, like a live tree, then Clinton

officials ask residents to put the material in the garbage can. If it doesn't fit in the can and is a manmade item, like a large box, then it should be placed curbside for pickup by the grapple truck, Stovall said. The city runs a separate grapple truck for natural debris like limbs and live trees, so those items should be placed curbside as well, he said.

The Town of Batesburg-Leesville collects residents' Christmas trees as long as they are placed curbside. They are collected, taken to the town landfill and mulched by the town. Trimmings, boxes and wrapping paper are placed in roll carts by residents and are taken away with the regular trash pickup service, according to Public Works Supervisor David Padgett.

There are ways to lighten the load for both city landfills and the environment as a whole.

Samantha Yager, recycling coordinator for the City of Columbia, said that since the city switched from recycling bins to roll carts, the amount of recycled materials has increased 38 percent, while garbage has decreased 11 percent.

"Historically, the holidays are always a high-volume time for both recycling and garbage," she said. "So this year, we'd really love to see the garbage continue to go down by recycling more."

The city's cooking oil recycling program also experiences a spike in donations around the winter holidays, as families, friends and work colleagues gather for rich meals at homes, restaurants and office parties. In Columbia, recycling the cooking oil not only keeps pipes from getting clogged but also helps fuel the city's diesel trucks.

NEWS BRIEFS

The South Carolina Recreation and Parks Association awarded **Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols** its highest honor, the SCRPA Robert L. Reid Lifetime Achievement and Hall of Fame Award. The award recognizes lifetime achievement in the parks and recreation profession by an individual who promotes the profession through presentations; writings; and service in the community, state and nation.

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association named **Seabrook Island** one of the nation's best restored beaches of 2016. Seabrook Island was one of six winners chosen from the west, east and the Gulf coasts. Beach restoration is the process of placing beach-quality sand on beaches to address erosion for purposes of storm protection, habitat restoration and recreation.

The **City of Greenwood** received a four-bloom rating out of a possible five blooms from America in Bloom, a beautification nonprofit. Greenwood also received an outstanding achievement award for floral displays and special recognition for community involvement efforts.

The **City of Columbia Solid Waste Division** was recognized for its conversion from 18-gallon bins to 95-gallon roll carts. The state chapter of the American Public Works Association awarded the division Project of the Year for the environment category, and the National Recycling Coalition gave it an honorable mention for Outstanding Community or Government Program.



There's no single way to pick up leaves

As the air turns crisp and trees transform into shades of gold and red, public works and sanitation departments kick into high gear to prepare for cleanup.

Leaf pickup may seem like simple city upkeep. But there's a lot riding on it. Cities prevent slippery leaves from causing accidents on roadways, keep debris from backing up storm drains and ensure happy residents when they devote the necessary resources and staff to faithful leaf pickup.

When the leaves fall, the City of Clinton uses two driving vacuum trucks for collection, said City Manager Frank Stovall. Each truck is operated by a single person and uses a boom-mounted vacuum pipe and hose controlled from inside the truck's cab in order to vacuum up the leaves from the curb or the side of the road. The advantage is that the number of personnel involved in leaf collection is minimal, and residents don't have to bag their leaves but can rake or

blow the leaves to the street to have them picked up, Stovall said.

The city's vacuum trucks work year-round, picking up leaves in the fall and early winter and grass clippings in the warmer months. Until this year, the city ran one vacuum truck every week year-round and a second truck during peak leaf pickup season. However, the city recently restructured its sanitation operation and reduced the vacuum service to every other week between March and October and weekly from October to March, Stovall said.

"The reduction allowed us to use the off weeks in the summer to reassign personnel to other tasks that are more labor intensive in the summer months, such as cutting grass," he explained. "Since the amount of grass we vacuum up was always relatively small, there has really been no impact on the customers."

Clinton's streets and sanitation division at the Department of Public Works strives

to vacuum up loose leaves quickly after they have been put out on the curb to avoid complaints from residents about wind blowing freshly raked leaves around a neighborhood, and to prevent rain showers from washing the leaves into the storm drain system, Stovall said.

A big challenge is how to keep up if a piece of equipment fails, he said.

Year round or seasonal? Bags or no bags?

The City of Goose Creek handles leaf pickup no differently than regular yard debris, according to City Administrator Jake Broom. Leaves are picked up year-round. The city uses rear-loading trucks to collect the leaves and yard debris but requires all leaves to be in paper bags or in the city's designated brown yard debris roll carts. Residents can purchase a 95-gallon roll cart for yard debris for \$65. The benefit of the paper bags is that they are biodegradable, but most residents

seem to prefer the convenience of the roll carts, Broom said.

The yard debris roll carts allow the residents to do yard work over the course of a week without piling debris on the curb.

“If your collection day is Friday, but the only time you have available to rake is Sunday, the roll cart allows you to store the leaves until your collection day without creating an eyesore in front of your home,” Broom said.

The carts keep the leaves contained during periods of wind or rain and help prevent the leaves from clogging storm drains. Residents also enjoy the convenience and ease of rolling the carts around in their yard while they work, rather than trying to rake leaves onto a tarp or into a wheelbarrow and then hauling them to the curb, he said.

While leaf pickup duties occupy a lot of time for employees in the fall, keeping the leaves out of storm drains is worth the effort, Broom said.

“During last year’s historic flooding, despite our high rainfall totals and proximity to the coast, we had almost no incidents of flooding,” he said. “I attribute that in large part to our proactive ditch and drainage maintenance program and our residents’ diligence when it comes to keeping the stormwater system free of leaves and yard debris.”

In the Town of Batesburg-Leesville, residents bag their leaves and set them curbside for the town to collect on a weekly basis, year-round, according to Public Works Supervisor David Padgett. Bagged leaves are collected by hand, normally by two men with a dump-body truck. Bagged leaves are carried to the limb and leaf landfill, where they are cut open and dumped on the ground.

The town also deploys a street sweeper to remove leaves that flutter into the gutter along its 14 miles of curbed roads, Padgett said. Leaves in parks and common areas around town are raked or blown into a pile and trucked to the



Goose Creek public works employees use rear-loading trucks. Credit/Goose Creek

limb and leaf landfill. Leaves in the parks and common areas generally are only removed in the fall.

The benefit of bagging leaves is that it requires the town to purchase a minimal amount of equipment, Padgett said. They already have the trucks and manpower, and therefore it is an effective and efficient way to complete this task, he said.

Residents are responsible for the purchase of bags, and most are nonbiodegradable, though some residents use biodegradable bags. Town employees who collect the bagged leaves discard all the bags into a trash dumpster after dumping them out at the town landfill. The leaves dumped at the landfill serve as an exceptional cover material for mulched limbs. This assists with the decomposition of landfill materials.

One noticeable drawback to the way the town performs leaf collection, however, is that people occasionally mix in trash with the leaves, requiring it to be removed by staff after dumping the bags out on the ground, Padgett said.

Batesburg-Leesville does not use yard debris roll carts. It can be a very effective and environmentally friendly way to perform this service, but Padgett said they have found that most of their residents have more than a roll cart full of yard

debris weekly, and the method doesn’t allow for the removal of limbs and leaves.

Burning, raking, mulching

In Ware Shoals, Town Administrator Heather Fields said residents are asked to bag their leaves for year-round pickup. Those bags, which are taken to the 2,200-population town’s specific landfill for limbs and leaves, are not required to be biodegradable. If residents choose to burn leaves instead, the fire chief may issue a permit to do so, after inspecting what, where and how residents propose to burn the materials.

The job can be tougher for small towns with fewer resources.

In the Town of Lowndesville, which has a population of about 150, residents take leaf collection into their own hands.

“We’re so small that we don’t have pickup service at all,” said Lowndesville Mayor Rufus Waters. He said town residents don’t even burn their leaves anymore. Instead, they take their trash, yard debris and recyclables to a central location where each goes in a designated bin.

“Most people just mulch those into their yard, or rake them up and take them to the (county) convenience center,” Waters said.



At Criminal Justice Academy, support may be coming

With the start of the first regular session of the 122nd General Assembly, state lawmakers will have a fresh opportunity to significantly improve training and recruitment of law enforcement officers in South Carolina.

The growing public attention to police activities, the tension between police and some residents, and the heavy legal expense to cities and their insurers should make a compelling case for well-reasoned reforms and additional funding. Additional funding for training at the Criminal Justice Academy is one of the Municipal Association's advocacy initiatives for 2017.

But do state lawmakers have the information they need to recognize South Carolina's urgent need for greater law enforcement resources?

"I believe that they are aware of the needs but not how costly that need is or where the funds will come from," said Larry McNeil, former police chief of the Bennettsville Police Department, who

retired at the end of October from a 40-year career in law enforcement.

"We are all aware of the importance of training and the need, but some are not as familiar with the financial state of the Criminal Justice Academy."

During an October meeting of city managers and administrators, CJA director Jackie Swindler, who took the helm in September after more than 40 years in law enforcement, said he is pursuing ways to support hiring and training practices for police departments across the state.

The academy is funded by fines and fees from tickets, but Swindler wants that method of funding to end and be replaced by a permanent line item in the state budget. One of the Association's 2017 advocacy initiatives lends support to this change to CJA's funding stream.

But Swindler has other ideas to help connect new police hires with the training they need. He is asking for state funding in order to dispatch a mobile team to go into four regions of the state to do ongoing training at local departments.

Swindler also proposes an expansion

of new-officer training. Academy training for new officers will increase from 12 weeks to 15 weeks, if the Legislature approves his request. The extra weeks would include diversity training and strategies to prevent officers from putting themselves in situations where firing a gun is the only means of defense.

Swindler listed other topics he hopes the new three weeks of training will allow the academy to offer: officer positioning/posture, use of force, verbal judo, de-escalation, prejudices and biases.

Ryan Alphin, executive director of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Officers' Association, said the national average for initial law enforcement training is 18 weeks, far more than South Carolina's current 12 weeks.

Swindler also pointed to the importance of psychological tests and said he plans to seek state money to be able to reimburse police departments for the screenings they administer to job candidates.

"You do the test, send us the invoice, and we'll pay you. I strongly encourage you to use psychological screenings," he



Identifying your winning Achievement Award entry

If the garbage is picked up on time, the streets are safe, and clean water is pouring from the faucet, residents may take for granted all the work and expertise that went into those city services. Residents rarely learn of the remarkable tasks local governments and city staff must accomplish every day to keep a city running smoothly. The Association's Municipal Achievement Awards bring attention to these accomplishments.

Every city has an award-worthy project to enter in to the Achievement Awards. It may just take a bit of collaboration to discover it.

The City of Sumter begins the Achievement Award conversation each year with senior staff from each department discussing programs and asking questions to get a feel for the potential entries. Communications Director Shelley Kile works with the senior staff to compile a list of programs and follows up with staff to gather the details.

"When I work with the staff one-on-one, most are so humble that they don't consider the program they are working on to be award winning," said Kile. "Our police department felt this way when we won the Achievement Award for Project CheckMate in 2015. They were 'just doing their jobs.'"

From the detailed list, Kile works with the city manager and mayor to make the final decision about which program to submit.

While cities and towns have many successful projects and programs, a municipality may choose only one to submit for the Achievement Awards.

The awards entry form is available at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards). The submission deadline for the 2017 awards program is February 15 for online and hand-delivered submissions.

Mailed entries must be postmarked by February 15. The designated city contact person for each entry will receive a confirmation email by February 22.

Municipalities with a population of 20,000 or less can choose to compete in either a population or subject category. Municipalities with a population greater than 20,000 must compete in one of the five subject categories.

As part of the competition, cities participating in the subject categories must make an oral presentation to the judges on March 6 or 7 in Columbia at the Municipal Association's office. Association staff will assign presentation times after all entries are received.

The Association will recognize award winners at the Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast held in Hilton Head on July 22.

For more information regarding the 2017 Achievement Awards, contact Meredith Houck at 803.933.1215 or mhouck@masc.sc. Visit www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards).

2016 Achievement Award winners

- Population 1-1,000:
Town of Edisto Beach
- Population 1,001-5,000:
City of Isle of Palms
- Population 5,001-10,000:
City of Fountain Inn
- Population 10,001-20,000:
Town of Bluffton
- Communications:
Town of Mount Pleasant
- Economic Development, Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award: City of Sumter
- Public Safety: City of Anderson
- Public Service: City of Florence
- Public Works: City of Seneca

said. "I know it's hard on some budgets to be able to do that. It's being asked of us throughout the county. The public is saying, 'Please vet your officers.'"

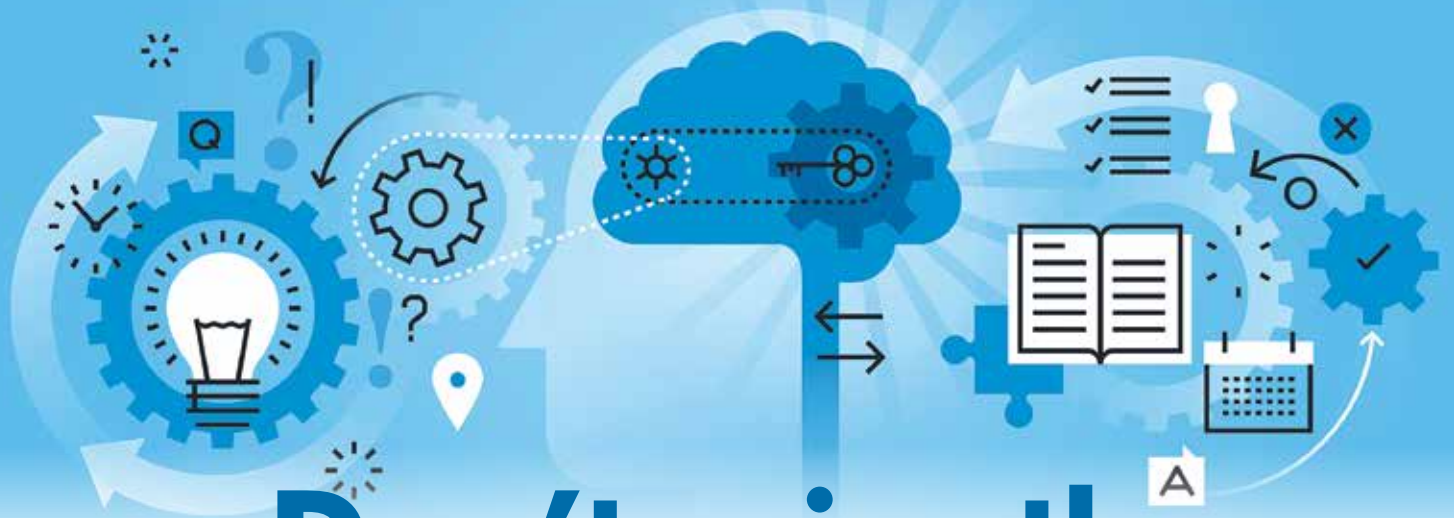
Alphin said the CJA has been underfunded for too long, and that the revenue stream of fines and fees has steadily diminished.

"It is important that the academy be added as a line item in the budget so that it can operate as a funded state agency," he said.

"We must all do our part to support Director Swindler and his staff to secure the much needed additional funding to build upon our basic training," Alphin said. "I am optimistic that the members of the General Assembly will hear us and provide additional funding so we can produce the best and brightest police candidates."

He emphasized what's at stake. "It is important to know that agencies should not lower their hiring standards to recruit additional candidates just to fill space. Our goal is to find high-quality candidates who want to serve the communities they live in."

Jackie Swindler, Larry McNeil and Ryan Alphin will participate in a panel discussion about hiring and training trends in local law enforcement at the Association's Hometown Legislative Action Day on February 1, 2017. For more information, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: HLAD).



Don't miss the affiliate experience

Professional positions in municipalities often have specialized job responsibilities without direct comparison in the private sector. The Municipal Association of South Carolina offers 11 affiliate associations for municipal staff which provide relevant and timely training tailored to these unique job functions. New for 2017 is the addition of the Building Officials Association of South Carolina, an organization dedicated to solving the challenges of administering and enforcing building and related codes.

The mission of each affiliate organization is to create a community of peers who learn through traditional face-to-face training, networking and sharing best practices and experiences. The Municipal Association manages and programs the affiliates with guidance from a board of directors elected from each affiliate's membership.

Affiliate members receive discounted registration on training and access to a members-only listserv, a group email network where users can post questions and seek feedback from colleagues.

"The value of affiliate participation cannot be overstated," said Eric Budds, deputy executive director of the Association. "The nominal costs associated with affiliate membership and participation is easily offset by the benefit of having a more knowledgeable, work ready and confident employee, who knows there is

a network of peers available, willing and able to support their success."

During the past year, the affiliate groups serving municipal staffs conducted approximately 32 specialized training events with more than 2,200 municipal staff members and associate members participating.

Affiliate memberships run on a calendar-year schedule. Current members will receive a renewal notice the first week of January. All municipal officials and staff are eligible to join by going to www.masc.sc (keyword: affiliates) or by contacting the Association's staff contact. Membership applications and renewals will be online beginning January 2. The online membership system will be unavailable January 19-26, due to system upgrades.

Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

MCAA offers training to court administrators, clerks of court, municipal judges and other employees involved in court administration. MCAA, which has 284 members, also offers opportunities for members to share ideas to make the business of court administration more efficient.

Staff Contact: Bill Taylor, btaylor@masc.sc, 803.354.4751.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

With 110 members, MTASC promotes the effective use of technology by

municipalities. Recent training sessions included information about network administration, cloud computing, geographic information systems and mobile applications.

Staff Contact: Sara Johnson, sjohnson@masc.sc, 803.933.1240.

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

All of the state's 21 municipal electric utilities are members of SCAMPS. Originally, SCAMPS existed solely for the utilities to help one another during times of disaster. Today, the group also focuses on legislative initiatives and provides training for elected officials, management staff and operational personnel.

Staff Contact: Eric Budds, ebudds@masc.sc, 803.933.1228.

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

SCASM offers its 206 members quarterly training on stormwater management policies and best practices. Training regularly includes updates on proposed changes to stormwater regulations and case studies featuring innovative programs and practices.

Staff Contact: Sara Johnson, sjohnson@masc.sc, 803.933.1240.

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

BLOA, with its 331 members, promotes best practices for

administering and enforcing the local business and professional license tax through training sessions and the professional designations of Accreditation in Business Licensing and Masters in Business Licensing.

Staff Contact: Scott Slatton, sslatton@masc.sc, 803.933.1203.

SC Community Development Association

SCCDA provides educational forums for its 151 members to address economic and community development needs as well as share best practices and successful case studies.

Staff Contact: Sara Johnson, sjohnson@masc.sc, 803.933.1240.

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

MAA offers an annual training session designed to address the specialized needs of municipal attorneys. This session is designed to comply with the Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization

requirements for continuing education credits.

Staff Contacts: Tiger Wells, twells@masc.sc, 803.933.1270.

Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

MFOCTA offers its 270 members training programs covering the wide range of responsibilities of finance officers, clerks and treasurers. It also sponsors the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute with the Municipal Association and the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities at the College of Charleston.

Staff Contact: Jeff Shacker, jshacker@masc.sc, 803.354.4750.

Municipal Human Resources Association

MHRA promotes sound human resources administration and encourages innovative programs. Through its training programs, MHRA provides information and the opportunity to exchange ideas among its 232 members and stay up to

date on changing state and federal labor law and court rulings.

Staff Contact: Sara Johnson, sjohnson@masc.sc, 803.933.1240.

SC Utility Billing Association

SCUBA provides training to its 205 members on utility billing, collections and customer service. Programs frequently focus on customer service skills, workplace safety, and best practices in utility billing and collections.

Staff Contact: Ken Ivey, kivey@masc.sc, 803.933.1205.

Building Officials Association of South Carolina

BOASC is comprised of building officials and inspectors from across the state. A goal of BOASC is to raise awareness of building officials' roles in public safety. The Association supports its members by offering educational and networking opportunities through its annual meeting and listserv.

Staff Contact: Scott Slatton, sslatton@masc.sc, 803.933.1203.

Begin preparing now for next year's budget

Although the new fiscal year might be months away, it's never too early to start preparing the budget calendar.

Budget timetables should be established, noting when various tasks are to be completed and by whom. Tasks include:

- Forecasting revenues to be received as well as expenditures made.
- Identifying any new programs or projects that would require funding from the new budget.
- Identifying any new liabilities that might affect personnel costs, such as increases in insurance or retirement contributions.
- Setting dates for department managers or supervisors to submit funding requests for the upcoming year. These should include funding for proposed manpower levels in each respective

department as well as any requests for purchasing capital items.

- Establishing workshop dates when council can review the overall budget work plan and discuss any special projects requiring funding as well as any challenges when expenditure requests exceed revenue projections.
- Setting the public hearing date for the budget. Remember that a detailed notice must be placed in the local newspaper at least 15 days before the budget hearing. That hearing can be held on a separate date or the same dates as the first or second readings of the budget. A hearing is required



before the final passage of the budget by the council.

- Setting dates for first and second readings on the budget so that the final reading is completed before the beginning of the city's fiscal year.

The budget process is rarely a simple task and can often be a grueling process for councilmembers and employees alike. However, taking time to establish a reasonable budget calendar can help officials and staff reduce the anxiety. The new budget may still be a challenging one, but it will not be because of failure to plan ahead.

Public officials must disclose income sources

Starting next month, public officials will be required to disclose information about their income.

Officials must file their Statement of Economic Interests online covering the previous calendar year (January – December) by noon on March 30. Newly elected officials must also electronically file their SEI before being sworn in.

The General Assembly made changes to the ethics laws during the 2016 legislative session. As a result, officials filing on or after January 1, 2017 must include the source and type of income the filer received. Income collected by the filer's immediate family during the past year must also be disclosed. Immediate family refers to the filer's spouse, any children in the household, and anyone claimed as a dependent on the filer's taxes for the previous year.

When determining whether something received in the last year qualifies as income,

the filer should ask the following question: "Is it a thing of value reported or disclosed on an Internal Revenue Service form as income received?" If so, then the source and type of income should be disclosed on the SEI.

This new requirement does not require a public official to provide the amount or value of income received in the previous year, only the type (i.e. wages, tips, stock, etc.) and where it came from.

Some sources are exempt from this new disclosure requirement. They include: deferred compensation as well as retirement, annuity, pension, IRA, disability income, and income received from a court order.

Officials may also exclude any savings, checking or brokerage accounts, as long they have not received special interest rates or other special terms as a result of their status as a public official, member or employee, as defined in Section 8-13-100(25)-(27) of the SC Code of Laws.

The Statement of Economic Interests must be filed electronically. The necessary forms are available from the South Carolina Ethics Commission.

Who is a 'public official?'

Among those affected include: anyone appointed to fill the unexpired term of a state or local elected official; candidates for state and local public office; the chief administrative official of each political subdivision, including water and sewer districts; city administrators, managers, supervisors or chief administrative official, by whatever title; chief finance and chief purchasing official of each agency, institution, or facility of state government, and of each county, municipality, or other political subdivision.

For a flowchart of how the new requirement works, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: SEI).

Report revenue data by mid-January

A city or town risks losing 10 percent of its Local Government Fund money if it misses a key reporting deadline. To be in compliance, complete the annual Local Government Finance Report and file the report with the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office by January 15, 2017.

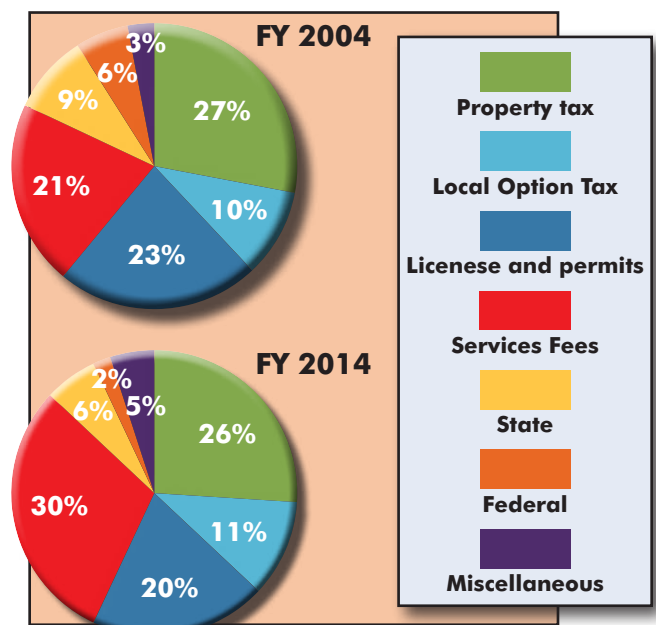
The revenue and expense data that cities and towns provide is used by the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office to estimate the fiscal impact of legislative bills. Legislators need accurate data to make sound decisions on bills that affect cities and towns.

The data used for a city's audit, which is due to the state

Treasurer's Office the thirteenth month after the end of the city's fiscal year, is the same data that can be used to fill out the Local Government Finance Report. To make filing the report an easier task, municipalities may wish to include completing the report in the scope of services of its annual audit.

Cities and towns stand to benefit from accurately reporting all revenues and expenses, because without it, bills that become law may have unexpected effects on cities.

Local officials can complete the form online at <http://rfa.sc.gov/econ/localgovt>.



The election is over. Now what?

It may have seemed like the presidential election was the only one taking place last month, but South Carolina voters also elected and re-elected hundreds of council members and mayors. That means the municipal clerk must now check off a list of duties.

- The municipal election commission or county election commission, depending on which body oversees the returns, must send the city clerk written certification of the election results. Then, the clerk should file the results and certifications permanently.
- Other election records, such as statements of candidacy, newspaper notices and petitions for nomination of council members and mayor, should be kept by the city for two years.
- Municipal clerks should ensure each newly elected councilmember takes the two oaths of office required by the South Carolina Constitution and the Code of Laws. Councilmembers and mayors should recite the oath of office found in Article VI, Section 5 of the state Constitution in addition to the oath of office found in Section 5-15-150 of the state Code of Laws. Notaries public and judges are authorized to administer the oath.
- Neither Code Section 5-15-150 nor the state constitution specifies any



particular method for taking the oath, such as placing a hand over a religious text or raising one hand.

- To preempt legal challenges to a body's actions based on whether the body's members had been officially sworn in, be sure to perform the swearing in and to keep documentation associated with it. Administering the oath publicly would provide additional memorialization of the act in the council minutes.
- After the newly elected officials are sworn in to office, the clerk should ensure that they sign both oaths, which should be filed and retained for two years, according to the SC General Records Retention Schedules for Municipal Records. However, the Association recommends retaining oaths for at least for the length of each official's current term.

Good practices but not required:

- Some clerks ask the council to review and enter the results of the election into the minutes. It's not a mandated post-election step, but doing so serves as an additional way to ensure the dissemination and recording of the election results.
- The clerk should look for other ways to ease the transition of new municipal elected officials from private resident to public servant.

This includes orientation. The clerk should give new members the council's rules of procedure, meeting schedule, meeting minutes and procedures for placing an item on the agenda.

- If municipal elected officials receive city health or retirement benefits and compensation, the appropriate staff member, such as the human resources director, should meet with newly elected officials to review the materials.
- Newly elected officials should be reminded to electronically file their Statement of Economic Interests before they are sworn in. (See article on p. 10.)
- Because clerks serve as a central point of contact, they should learn how the new councilmembers or mayor prefer to communicate.



Cities protect vulnerable residents, regulate 'sober homes'

The rise in opioid abuse and the effects it has had on South Carolina residents over the last several years is well known. Municipal public safety officials across the state encounter the problems associated with addiction every day. However, progress is being made in helping people fight their addiction and return to a normal life.

Sober living houses, or sober homes and recovery support residences, are group homes where former addicts receive support from peers in a stable, substance-free environment to help them move back into mainstream society. Operated by nonprofit and for-profit organizations, sober homes are established to help mitigate the effects of addiction in our state.

Residents of cities and towns all across South Carolina take steps toward independence in these special residences. The houses are not required to be licensed by the state, though some operate under contract with the SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services. However, issues that arise with a sober home typically fall within the purview of municipal officials. It is important that local officials understand what they can and cannot do to regulate the residences.

"The role that municipalities play in supporting the integration of recovery support residences in the community

is crucial, whether it is establishing and maintaining communication, educating residence operators about relevant codes and regulations, or assisting in efforts to reduce the stigma and fear associated with having a recovery support residence in a local community," said Julie Cole of DAODAS.

"Open communication and equitable application of existing regulations seem to play a large part in the successful integration of these residences."

Drug or alcohol addiction is considered an impairment under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and people with addiction are protected by it and other federal laws, including the Fair Housing Amendments Act. Together these federal laws prohibit discrimination against people with addiction, including efforts to prohibit sober homes from locating within a city.

Federal case law on the regulation of sober homes has been inconsistent. In some cases, federal courts have ruled that sober homes must adhere to established zoning regulations. However, other courts have ruled those zoning ordinances must include accommodations for people with disabilities.

The protections for people with disabilities make sober homes different from other group homes, a distinction that can cause confusion.

For instance, some courts have ruled a town's zoning ordinance may limit the number of unrelated individuals who can live in a single family residence—a restriction that also extends to sober homes. In other cases, however, courts have ruled such limitations are illegal if they make no exceptions for people with disabilities. Similarly, courts have ruled inconsistently on distance requirements and change in occupancy restrictions. Therefore, attempts to restrict where sober homes may locate in a city should be carefully considered and done in consultation with legal experts.

Neighbors concerned about activity in sober homes often contact local officials with questions. Issues related to parking, increased activity on the street and, in some cases, petty crime are sometimes associated with recovery support residences. So, it's important that municipal officials reach out to residence operators and establish a relationship with them. Communication among the city, the sober home operators and neighbors is a key component to ensuring issues are addressed quickly.

People with addiction face many obstacles to getting clean and re-entering society. Sober homes play a role in helping residents resume a productive life. Cities and towns facilitate that process by helping to ensure the residences operate within state law and local ordinances.



Cities help supply indoor comfort and safety

Helping residents stay warm during the winter, cool during the summer and safe from air hazards is not usually on a town employee's list of duties.

But less fortunate residents often need help. So cities and towns step up to assist them, in some cases helping charitable residents provide assistance to those who are struggling.

In the last several months, the City of Clinton has partnered with United Ministries to give residents the ability to donate money to the less fortunate through their utility bill.

So far, nearly 40 utility customers are contributing a total of \$145 per month as part of the Clinton Community Cares program, said Joey Meadors, director of administrative services for the City of Clinton. The United Ministries then distributes the money to residents in need, using a careful process of selecting recipients. Someone who has received the assistance more than once, for instance, might be assigned a financial literacy class.

"That's why we went to them," said Meadors of the city's decision to involve

United Ministries. "We didn't want to be picking which of our customers that we help."

He said Clinton, like other South Carolina communities, is still trying to recover from the mill closures.

"We've got a lot of people that need help," said Meadors. "There's always a need here."

A simpler fix can be found in Batesburg-Leesville, where the town and police department have a cooling fan program, in which officials distribute fans to those in need.

Besides comfort against the summertime heat, the town also promotes indoor safety to those in need.

Batesburg-Leesville has been donating smoke alarms since at least 2013 when the town received a grant from FM Global, a commercial industrial insurance provider. Batesburg-Leesville has also kept the program going through a donation from Columbia Farms/House of Raeford and Wal-Mart.

Jay Hendrix, Batesburg-Leesville fire chief, said the town is currently

partnering with the American Red Cross, which is providing thousands of smoke alarms across the state. The department's fundraising efforts have also helped.

In 2015, the town teamed up with the Jeffrey Lee Williams Foundation and Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation to install carbon monoxide detectors to protect residents from the lethal, odorless gas. And in the spring of that year, town officials conducted a door-to-door smoke and carbon monoxide alarm blitz, which resulted in the installation of 133 carbon monoxide alarms and more than 300 smoke alarms.

"We have discussed but have not set a date for another blitz," said Hendrix, adding that officials have spoken with Wal-Mart about acquiring more detectors.

"As for target zones, we identified two low-income areas for the 2015 blitz and have targeted other low-income areas," said Hendrix. "However, the program is open to everyone, and if they call or stop by the station, we will go out and install them free of charge."



Police Lt. Dana Griffin takes part in Shop with a Cop. Credit/ City of North Myrtle Beach

Town hall, law enforcement nurture bonds at holidays

The holiday season is a good time to help the less fortunate. But for local government leaders, it's also an opportunity to raise some social capital with residents by nurturing relationships.

That takes place regularly in the City of North Myrtle Beach. Each year in December, the city's public safety department holds its Shop with a Cop program for underprivileged children.

"The children enjoy a free lunch at a nice restaurant with public safety officers and volunteers, and each child is also given a \$100 Wal-Mart gift card to purchase gifts and some essential items, such as winter coats," said Patrick Dowling, the city's public information officer. Public safety personnel and volunteers accompany the children on their shopping trip.

Guidance counselors at North Myrtle Beach-area primary, elementary and intermediate schools select children for the program. The city's goal is to involve 100 or more children from low-income families each year.

Dowling said the program allows children in need to share in some holiday joy and also helps the city establish healthy relationships between kids and their families and the city's public safety personnel. Cities and towns across the country have tried to instill trust and create positive associations early on between residents and authorities, in the hopes of preventing confrontations years later.

"As the kids grow up, they and their parents and siblings come to see public safety personnel as being helpful, friendly and a positive community resource," said Dowling. "Truth be told, our public safety personnel probably have as much fun as the kids."

A large part of the funding for the Shop with a Cop program comes from the city's annual Shop with a Cop Golf Tournament, which is held on golf courses at Barefoot Resort & Golf in North Myrtle Beach. The tournament sells out annually.

In the Town of Seabrook Island, some extra good will is scheduled on the December calendar.

The Town of Seabrook Island opens up town hall in early December for a Christmas drop-in. It's a catered event for all residents, drawing about 200 each year, and an opportunity to collect toys for less fortunate children. It's also a chance for the residents to socialize and get to know the town's three full-time employees, its mayor and town council, said Faye Allbritton, clerk/treasurer of Seabrook Island.

In the nearly 2,200-population Town of Ware Shoals, a game of basketball brings out residents' generosity.

For at least the last nine years, police and fire officials take on the Ware Shoals High School basketball team for an annual event that encourages attendees to bring toys or donations for low-income members of the community. The game is traditionally held just before Thanksgiving, said Town Administrator Heather Fields. And there's another tradition, though perhaps not planned—a victory by the students' team.

"Our players are older," she said with a laugh.



Sgt. Chad Richardson with the Greer Police Department and Greer CPW employees Mike Parris and Lynn Utz assist with the takeback event.

Cities protect residents in need

Cities and towns fill in the gaps for vulnerable residents when family, friends and community groups are not enough.

Of those vulnerable residents, seniors face acute hardships.

One in 11 South Carolina seniors is at risk for hunger. Of nearly 1 million state residents over the age of 60, at least 42 percent have at least one disability, which increases the chances they will live below the poverty line, according to the SC Office on Aging.

Police and fire officials in the Town of Ware Shoals perform in-person checks on about 15 elderly residents during the holidays or when there is inclement weather. Town Administrator Heather Fields said if winter conditions are especially harsh, officials from the fire department deliver some residents' medications to them.

In the Town of McCormick, officials are planning to hold a health day for seniors in 2017.

The idea is to involve a local clinic, the town police and fire department, the county sheriff's office, and the McCormick County Senior Center, said Sandra McKinney, town clerk.

McCormick Mayor Roy Smith put the town's McCormick Elderly Assistance Program in place. The town's police department conducts elder checks on residents who request it. Once a resident has signed up for the service, the department will make contact either in person or by phone.

"By making these checks, it is our hope that it gives the elderly the assurance that they are vital to our community, as well as making them feel safe," said McKinney.

The town has about 182 households with an elderly resident. While the program has just started, McKinney said she hopes more of McCormick's elderly residents will sign up.

In Batesburg-Leesville, city officials conduct welfare checks on elderly and low-income residents during both the summer and winter months.

'No wonder I was feeling so bad'

Sometimes a town event can have lifesaving implications.

The Town of Neeses' health fair is where one woman found out she had diabetes.

"That prompted her to go to the doctor and get checked," said Town Clerk Sonja Gleaton. "She said, 'Well, no wonder I was feeling so bad.'"

Since 2007, the town has held the Neeses Community Health Fair at town hall, drawing the Regional Medical Center, dentists, hospice agencies, victim advocates, sexual assault educators, anti-cancer activists, and providers with walkers, canes and motorized chairs for rent and purchase.

The sheriff's office has attended Neeses' health fair in order to fingerprint children and give the fingerprints to parents, while the Neeses Fire Department has taught fire safety and distributed fire safety goodie bags and bright red firemen's hats.

Residents of Neeses, which has a population of nearly 400, turn out for the fair and are joined by others who travel from Denmark and nearby communities of Pine Hill, Livingston, Sawyerdale and others.

"We are a small community," said Gleaton, who also serves as chairman of the health fair. "And for some people, this is the only time of the year they come and get their free blood pressure checks and screenings."

Volunteers are the backbone of the event.

"I love these people here," said Gleaton, adding that one year's health fair has barely concluded before supporters are eager to plan the next one. "We get along like family here."

Medicine takebacks

While Neeses' health fair distributes health services and information, others collect unwanted pharmaceuticals, to the relief of their residents.

Forgotten and misplaced pills are one of the factors driving the prescription drug abuse and opioid crisis in South Carolina and the nation.

In October, the Greer Commission of Public Works and the Greer Police Department hosted a prescription drug take-back day to prevent pill abuse and theft by helping residents who needed to get rid of potentially dangerous expired, unused and unwanted medications. Residents were asked to bring their medicine—no questions asked—to CPW headquarters.

"On one hand, you get unwanted prescription drugs off the streets and prevent drug abuse," said Alison Rauch, public information officer for the Greer Commission of Public Works.

"And from the CPW's side, it keeps the pills out of our wastewater system and saves future drinking water, the streams and wildlife."

The October event resulted in the collection of 190 pounds of unwanted drugs, she said, which were immediately picked up by Greenville County officials and taken to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office in Columbia, where the pills were incinerated.



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Calendar

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

JANUARY

31 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Sessions A and B and Advanced Institute. Marriott Columbia, 1200 Hampton St. Advanced sessions include “Advanced Budgeting and Finance” and “Advanced Leadership and Governance.”

FEBRUARY

1 Hometown Legislative Action Day. Marriott Columbia. (See p. 1 for more about next year’s advocacy initiatives.)

MARCH

5-7 SC Utility Billing Association Annual Meeting. Sonesta Resort, Hilton Head Island.

23 Municipal Technology Association of SC Spring Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. Topics include risk management/ cyber liability insurance; utility technology, GIS and in-car technology for police vehicles.

APRIL

19 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Academy. Columbia Conference Center.

20 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.

26 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Linemen Training (repeated on April 27) SCE&G Pine Island Rd., Columbia, SC.

27 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Linemen Training (repeated on April 26) SCE&G Pine Island Rd., Columbia, SC.

MAY

7-10 Building Officials Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting. Ocean Drive Beach and Golf Resort, 98 North Ocean Boulevard, North Myrtle Beach, SC.

JUNE

11-13 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting.