UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

MASC Municipal Association of South Carolina℠

Advocacy is a team sport

Advocacy is a team sport for the Municipal Association. Part of the team involves a variety of municipal officials along with the Association's staff. Another part of this team is often partner organizations that share similar issues or have similar goals.

Depending on the issue, these partner organizations change frequently. Plus an organization considered to be a team member this week might be on the other side of an issue next week.

Regardless of this ever-changing line-up, the process of cultivating long-term relationships with these partner organizations and understanding how their issues fit in with the

Association's goals are very important pieces of the Association's advocacy strategy.

For example, during the 2015 session, the Municipal Association and the SC Press Association shared a common interest in passing legislation regarding a change in the Freedom of Information Act. The Association's staff worked side-by-side with the SC Press Association's staff to meet with legislators and draft legislation that would require an agenda for regular meetings. A state Supreme Court ruling had determined that an agenda for a regularly scheduled public body meeting wasn't required by

ADVOCACY

state law. Both the Municipal Association and the Press Association believed the law needed to be changed to make it clear that an agenda must be required.

The two organizations collaborated well in advance of the 2015 session to draft a bill that met the goals of both organizations.

"While the Press Association and the Municipal Association may have differing views on some issues, we will usually talk them though so each side understands the other's concerns," said Miriam Hair, executive director. "Often we can find middle ground on an issue before a bill is even introduced because of the long-standing relationship between the two organizations."

The two associations have worked closely together on both legislative issues and training for many years. This FOIA legislation is just the most recent example of how a long-standing relationship between the Municipal Association and the Press Association meant getting legislation passed that met the objectives of all involved.

"The ongoing process of building trust between organizations that often share interests or constituents is so important in today's political environment," said Bill Rogers, long-time executive director of the SC Press Association. "It's rare that one organization can build legislative support for a big issue without enlisting the support of other organizations that share its interests. An ongoing process of building these relationships that can be activated when needed should be an important part of any organization's advocacy strategy."

Rogers will join Ted Pitts, president of the SC Chamber of Commerce, and Bill Ross, executive director of SC Fix Our Roads, in a panel discussion at Hometown Legislative Action Day to discuss the issues their organizations will be following this session and the value of partnerships and coalitions in legislative advocacy efforts. The meeting will take place on February 3 at the Columbia Marriott.

View the entire schedule and more information through the Association's app. Download the app from attendify. com/app/7sxlso/.

The deadline for hotel reservations at the Association's discounted rate ($149 plus taxes) is Sunday, January 10. Monday, January 18 is the preregistration deadline for both the Hometown Legislative Action Day and the Municipal Elected Officials Institute (held on February 2).

For more information, visit www. masc.sc (keyword: HLAD).

Young to serve as president

A t its December meeting, the Association's board of directors made several changes to its composition.

Effective January 4, Mayor Bill Young of Walterboro will become president of the Association as Alys Lawson, former mayor of Conway, will no longer be in elective office.

Members selected Young as first vice president at the Association's Annual Meeting in July. He has served on the board since 2012.

Mayor Bill Young

New council = new mayor pro tem

When a new council is elected and sworn in, it is time to elect a new mayor pro tempore.

Immediately following any general (regularly scheduled) municipal election, state law requires that council elect from its membership a mayor pro tempore for a term not to exceed two years.

The mayor pro tempore exercises the mayor's authority in the case of an absence, disability or vacancy in office. The temporary service of the mayor pro tempore terminates upon the return of the mayor from absence or disability or the election of a successor when a vacancy in the office of the mayor occurs.

In the case of an extended vacancy, the mayor pro tempore may be entitled to receive the mayor's salary, according to the state attorney general. However, the mayor pro tempore does not assume the office of the mayor. The mayor's office remains vacant until filled by an election.

Councils that operate under a committee system often use the same cycle to elect or appoint councilmembers to standing committees. Such procedures are generally specified in the municipality's local rules of procedure.

Affiliates offer job-specific training

It is membership renewal time for the affiliate associations supported by the Municipal Association.

These affiliate associations provide networking and training to a variety of local government positions, including city attorneys, business licensing officials, human resources staff, court administrators, stormwater managers, municipal electric system employees, community developers, finance officers, clerks, treasurers, technology staff and utility billing officials.

In addition to traditional face-to-face training, each association offers access to a members-only listserve to share best practices and pose questions related to specific local government responsibilities.

In December, the Municipal Association sent renewal notices to existing affiliate members. The memberships run on a calendar-year basis. Anyone interested in joining or renewing their membership can do so online at www.masc.sc (keyword: affiliate associations). Additional information about each affiliate is available as well.

- Association of South Carolina Mayors
- Municipal Court Administration Association of SC
- Municipal Technology Association of SC
- SC Association of Municipal Power Systems
- SC Association of Stormwater Managers
- SC Community Development Association
- SC Municipal Attorneys Association
- SC Business Licensing Officials Association
- SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association
- SC Municipal Human Resources Association
- SC Utility Billing Association

"It's an honor to serve as president of the Municipal Association," said Young. "Mayor Lawson has provided strong leadership during her time on the Association's board, and we will certainly miss her voice. Her vision in creating an economic development grant program will provide our cities with additional resources to bring jobs and growth to their communities." The Association will announce details of the new program in the coming months.

In addition to Mayor Young's change on the board, Cayce Mayor Elise Partin will move up to first vice president and Florence Councilmember Octavia Williams-Blake will become second vice-president. Isle of Palms Mayor Dick Cronin will move from his board position to the third vice president office.

The board also selected Moncks Corner Mayor Michael Lockliear to fill Cronin's unexpired term representing the Berkeley-Colleton-Dorchester Council of Governments area.

NEWS BRIEFS

The American Society of Landscape Architects awarded **Greenville Mayor Knox White** with an honorary membership, one of the Society's honors given to non-landscape architects. The Society honored White for his passion for environmental stewardship and belief in healthy, safe communities.

The National League of Cities presented **Lexington Mayor Pro Tem Hazel Livingston** with its Women in Municipal Government Leadership Award. The award recognizes female municipal officials for their unique and outstanding leadership in local government.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center designated the **City of Columbia** as a Walk Friendly Community for its commitment to improving and sustaining walkability and pedestrian safety through comprehensive programs, plans and policies. Columbia is the only South Carolina city with the WFC designation.

Members of the **SC Municipal Human Resources Association** recently selected their 2015-16 board of directors. President Donna Kazia, Appalachian Council of Governments; First Vice President Alicia Davis, City of Aiken; Second Vice President Robin Entrekin, City of Clinton; and Member at Large Dora Perry, City of Tega Cay.

On-demand scooters take off
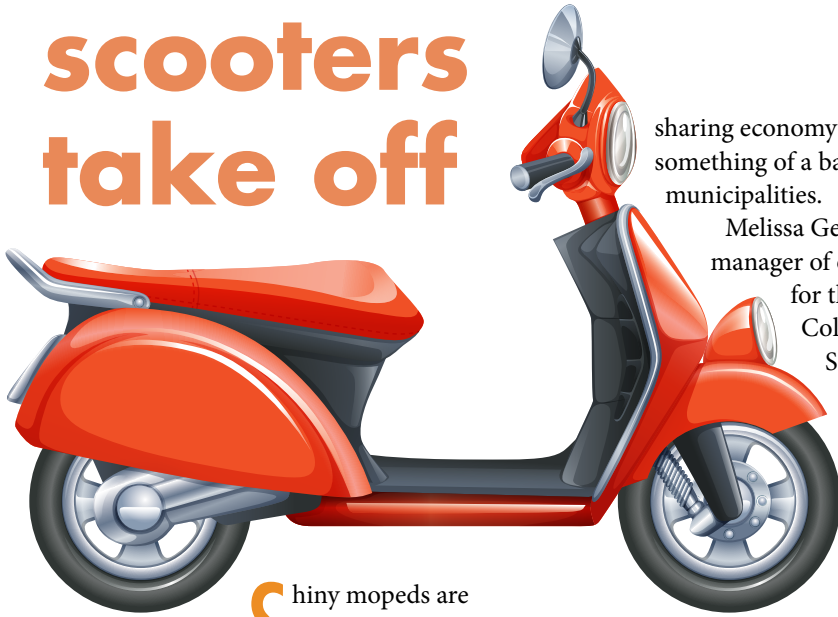
S hiny mopeds are becoming a common sight motoring along the streets of Columbia and clustered in parking lots of local businesses, the University of South Carolina and off-campus housing developments.

They belong to Scootaway, an on-demand moped rental business that launched in Columbia in May 2015. The company started with 38 scooters. Since then, it has added several hundred more.

It's akin to the ride-sharing service Uber, with Scootaway riders downloading an app on their smartphones, approving a user agreement and paying $2.99 per half-hour to ride the scooter. There are more than 50 pick-up and drop-off locations around Columbia, and the scooter riders are provided with helmets, insurance and gas.

Offering a convenient mode of transportation in a growing city and easy parking near a sometimes congested urban campus, the company has said it is also looking to expand to more cities around the state and nation.

It's just one example of the sharing economy, also known as the peer-to-peer economy, that allows people with goods, services or skills to connect with people in need of that service without going through a traditional business to handle the transaction. Other examples are eBay, Zipcar, Vacation Rental By Owner and Airbnb.

While these business offer opportunities for residents and visitors, the sharing economy presents something of a balancing act for municipalities.

Melissa Gentry, assistant manager of operations for the City of Columbia, said Scootaway and the emergence of food trucks offer two examples of the city working to balance and serve various constituencies.

"We want to offer our citizens all those neat opportunities. We have to get out of the traditional mold and recognize there are new approaches and opportunities, but we also need to support our traditional businesses," she said. "We need to balance the innovative approaches with the brick-and-mortar businesses and make sure you offer opportunities to all."

For example, with food trucks the challenge comes in because it's a different way to utilize space, she said. "You need to look at these and look at traditional restaurants and make sure opportunities exist for both."

The emergence of the sharing economy offers all sorts of positive applications but offers some first-time issues for cities, towns and states to address.

For example, scooter rentals offer benefits to cities such as reducing the large four-wheel vehicles on streets and in parking areas, while giving individuals the opportunity for transportation to-and-from work and school. The rental companies also offer cities and towns revenue streams through business licenses, taxes and fees.

Still, the first concern for municipalities is public safety, meaning any business that operates must be safe for both the users and the people providing the service. Mopeds are largely unregulated types of activities at the state level, and there is not much cities and towns can do to regulate them. That presents some issues for the General Assembly, which is working to determine if—and how strictly—scooters should be regulated.

As sharing economy businesses sprout up, cities must determine how to handle and enforce regulations for issues including, zoning, building permits and parking.

And while businesses like Scootaway and Uber are breaking in and thriving in larger cities or ones with substantial college student or tourist populations, the sharing economy will expand into smaller cities and towns.

About Scootaway
www.scootaway.com

What: An on-demand moped rental business

How it works: A user downloads an app onto a smartphone through the Apple Store or Google Play. The user registers through the app, locates a scooter on a map, sees how many are available at that location and reserves a scooter. Using a smartphone, the rider unlocks the scooter, gets the helmet out from the compartment under the seat and starts the scooter. Scooters are returned to one of the Scootaway parking areas and locked.

Cost: $2.99 for 30 minutes

Also: Insurance, helmet and gas are provided with each scooter. All scooters are equipped with GPS so they can be tracked, located and turned off remotely.

What is the sharing economy?

The new buzzword these days is the sharing economy. But what is it? It is an economic arrangement where owners rent goods they are not using or provide services to a stranger. The sharing economy is also referred to as the collaborative consumption or peer economy.

The business model is based on using technology, most often a smartphone app, to arrange for the rental or service. Today anyone with a smartphone can hire a driver, borrow a car or bicycle, rent a Kitchen-Aid mixer, reserve a room in someone's private home for vacation or hire a handyman. Cash is rarely exchanged. Rather the purchase takes place through a payment portal like PayPal or direct credit card billing through the app.

In the old days, a potential consumer connected with sellers and service providers using a posting on a local bulletin board, listing in the Yellow Pages, or an ad in a newspaper or magazine. Now the sharing economy gives consumers the ability to search and pay for goods and services using technology like a smartphone app.

The "sharing economy" apps include Uber, Airbnb, Rideshare, Lyft, DogVacay, Snapgoods and TaskRabbit with many more being created every week.

Association pursues business-friendly portal

After Representative Rick Quinn introduced a bill last February to cap business license taxes, Association staff, he and representatives from the business community participated in a series of meetings.

During the meetings, the staff provided information about the business license tax including an explanation about rate classes and the rationale for using gross income as the basis of the amount owed. Representative Quinn and the other stakeholders had an opportunity to express their concerns and frustrations with business licensing. The group then turned its attention to finding solutions agreeable to all those represented.

For businesses, time is money. A common theme heard among the stakeholders was businesses wanted an easier, more streamlined way to pay for their business license.

Out of these conversations, the Municipal Association staff brought to its board of directors the idea of making an investment on behalf of the cities and towns to build an online portal to offer businesses a more efficient and cohesive way to pay for their license renewal. The board agreed to the proposal at its October board meeting.

"Business owners are only getting younger. That population has grown up 'connected' and expect to be able to pay online. It is the day and age where we all expect to be able to pay our bills online," explained Miriam Hair, executive director of the Municipal Association.

Similar to the Association's successful collections programs that collect business license taxes from insurance brokers, insurance companies and telecommunications companies on behalf of South Carolina cities, the new portal would collect business license taxes owed by businesses for renewing their license. The Association would distribute the tax to the individual cities. For the portal to work, cities and towns will need to have a common due date, class schedule and definition of gross income.

While the Association will pay for the portal development and related work, ongoing costs will be covered through a convenience fee.

The Association will act only as the conduit for paying the tax. Business licensing officials will still have to approve the license. A task force of business licensing officials has been meeting to help develop the standardized practices.

In addition to working with the task force, Association staff has met with managers and administrators, mayors, the Business Licensing Officials Association and other municipal stakeholders to explain the portal and gather input.

"Creating the portal right now is the right thing to do," said Mayor Bill Young, president of the Municipal Association, "It adds value to cities and towns and shows that we are committed to providing business-friendly services."

Cities embrace business-friendly practices

Cities and towns across South Carolina constantly seek new ways to improve their communities to attract and retain businesses. Many have streamlined their business licensing and permitting processes through one-stop shops to ensure businesses can get up and running as quickly as possible.

Although the City of Mauldin had elements of a one-stop shop previously in place at city hall, those elements did not make doing business in Mauldin very easy, observed the city's Director of Business and Development Services Kim Hamel.

Hamel and other members of the city staff took a bird's eye view of the city's business licensing and permitting processes under its one-stop shop, and they didn't like what they saw. Businesspeople still had to visit multiple city departments, submit numerous applications and forms, and meet with city staff too many times to get their businesses off the ground.

Borrowing ideas used in other jurisdictions, city staff found the city council eager to improve the city's business licensing and permitting system. The council fully supported changing Mauldin's one-stop shop and the results have paid off.

"As I do ribbon cuttings for the many new businesses opening in our city, I always ask if they experienced any problems in getting their location open and all have been extremely positive about the new one-stop process we have implemented," said Mauldin Mayor Dennis Raines. "Our staff is dedicated to being professional, courteous and always have a 'how can we help you' attitude."

Businesses now work through the city's Business and Development Services Office to submit plans and applications instead of visiting multiple departments. Representatives from various city departments now meet together with the business instead of holding multiple individual meetings. In addition, staff consolidated multiple forms and applications into fewer, easier-to-use documents.

Around the state, cities have streamlined their licensing and permitting processes by agreeing to accept the standardized business license application introduced by the SC Business Licensing Officials Association and the Municipal Association in 2013.

The SCBLOA and the Municipal Association are working together to develop additional business-friendly practices and processes that cities and towns can adopt. One of the new initiatives is a centralized portal for businesses to pay their business license taxes. See related article on page 5.

"City Quick Connect" podcast debuts

The Municipal Association is offering a new way to get timely information about state and federal legislation, court cases, trends and other news. In January, the Association will begin producing a podcast, "City Quick Connect."

"We know people like to get information in a variety of formats," said Reba Campbell, deputy executive director.

"Elected officials and city staff are busy people and need information they can digest quickly. The podcast is an easy way to listen on the go using a smartphone, tablet or computer."

Initially, the podcast will report on legislative news during the session. The approximately five-minute weekly podcast will feature interviews with legislative staff about hearings where they testified, legislators on pending bills or experts discussing issues important to cities and towns.

Local officials can easily download the podcasts using links from the e-newsletter *Uptown Update* and *From the Dome to Your Home*, the *City Connect* blog and the Association's website.

Initial repairs to Columbia Canal

State legislators consider fiscal impact of flood

Dams, debris and collaboration were the top three topics at a November House Ways and Means committee meeting where state and local officials discussed the aftermath of the October flood. The committee held a series of hearings to better understand the fiscal impact recovery efforts will have on the 2016-2017 state budget.

A common theme of the city officials who testified at the hearing was the successful collaborative efforts among multiple jurisdictions.

Deron McCormick, Sumter's city manager, responded to Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter's question asking if he thought coordination among government entities in an emergency should be legislated. McCormick responded that on–the-ground coordination worked well during the flood emergency, and it would be important to maintain the flexibility currently in place for government entities to help each other. McCormick had high praise for the coordination among the city, county and state Department of Transportation in the rescue and recovery efforts.

McCormick pointed out there was substantial infrastructure damage in Sumter's parks with debris settling on park benches and dugouts. He noted that,

unfortunately, FEMA doesn't reimburse for what he called "quality of life" landscaping in parks.

Arcadia Lakes Mayor Mark Huguley testified about how the flood damage has the potential to completely change the identity of his small town. He explained how his "Town of Seven Lakes" is now a town of four lakes, and these lakes were the reason many people bought homes there.

Huguley noted there are 16 lakefront homeowners in the town who still do not have direct access out of their neighborhood because of washed-out roads. He noted, among other issues, there is a state road that runs over a private dam which DOT cannot repair until the dam is repaired.

Columbia City Manager Teresa Wilson also testified about the collaborative efforts that took place in the Midlands area during and after the flood. She said city and county officials have remained in daily contact since the flood.

Wilson described Columbia's destruction in terms of numbers. She noted two feet of rain fell in less than 48 hours, which amounted to 11 trillion gallons of water. Typically, Columbia receives less than four feet of rain each year.

A 60-foot section of the Columbia Canal, which supplies raw water to the

city's downtown water treatment plant, washed away. This breach caused the city to issue 10-day boil water advisory which affected 375,000 customers. Wilson said this was the first system-wide boil water advisory in anyone's memory.

Wilson reported that 3800 tons of debris had been removed throughout the city, an amount that did not include waterway debris. In terms of repairs, Wilson said the city identified $1.5 million in road repairs but noted all the damage was not known yet. Plus there is a $40 million price tag to repair the canal to its previous condition and another $50 million for mitigation to prevent future failures.

After hearing similar testimony from county officials, committee members received revenue projections for the upcoming fiscal year from the state Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. Frank Rainwater, the state's chief economist, reported a $343 million increase in recurring revenue for FY 16, a $380 million increase for FY 17, plus a $131.4 million surplus from FY 15.

What these increases will mean for flood recovery and the needs of state agencies will certainly be a hot topic during the early days of the 2016 legislative session.

Submitting a winning 2016 Achievement Awards *entry*
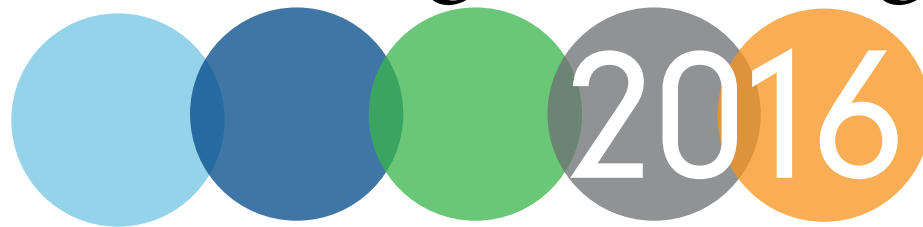
While there's no magic behind the Municipal Achievement Awards entry process, there are specific qualities the judges look for in a winning entry. The 2016 judges include two executive directors from municipal leagues in other states as well as a retired local government professional with 30 years of South Carolina experience. Here are the top three suggestions from previous Achievement Awards judges.

1. **Select the best category for the project.**
   Municipalities can enter only one category. Those entering one of the subject categories must make an oral presentation to the judges and submit a written application. The judges choose the winners for the population categories based solely on the written application.

   When deciding between a population category and a subject category, consider how to best tell the story of the project. Oral presentations can have visuals, posters, models and charts to help explain a difficult process or concept. Also, elected officials, municipal staff, community partners and residents can participate in the presentation to offer their perspectives. Municipalities with a population less than 20,001 can compete in a population category or a subject category. Municipalities with a population more than 20,000 must compete in a subject category.

2. **Answer the award application questions completely.**
   The application questions directly correlate to the judging criteria. The "fill-in-the-blank" form provides an easy-to-use format to highlight a project's key points. Each answer is limited to 100 words.

   Thorough answers are essential for cities and towns entering the population categories because the entries are judged solely on the submitted application. The judges do not have the opportunity to ask questions about the project as they do with entries in the subject categories.

3. **Submit a complete entry package.**
   Each category has an average of four entries for the judges to review. A complete entry package gives the judges the opportunity to compare all of the entries equally.

   - *Completed application form signed by the mayor.* The mayor's signature indicates the municipality agrees to send the mayor or a councilmember to the Association's Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast should the town win.
   - *Completed responses to the 11 program description questions.* Omitting a question will disqualify the project.
   - *Supporting materials (no more than four pages).* Supporting materials can be newspaper clippings, letters from constituents or other items that help you present the program.
   - *Three digital photographs.* The three digital photographs (no smaller than 3" x 5" and 300 dpi) depicting the project are used during the judging process as well as in the awards video and publications. Collages or compilations of photos will not be accepted.

The submission deadline is February 10 for online and hand-delivered submissions. Mailed entries must be postmarked by February 10. The main contact person for each entry will receive an email confirmation by February 17 from the Association confirming it has received the entry.

Online applications are available at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards).

For more information regarding the 2016 Achievement Awards, contact Meredith Houck at 803.933.1215 or mhouck@masc.sc.

Valuable training *offered* *for* elected officials

To effectively govern their city or town, municipal elected officials must understand and navigate through a sometimes complex maze of laws and regulations. For many, especially newly elected officials, the inner workings of municipal government often may seem like a strange new world.

Newberry Mayor Foster Senn signed up for the Municipal Elected Officials Institute right after he was elected to council in 2006. Senn says all of the training works toward good, effective, open government.

"Through this training right after I was elected, I learned not only what to do, but also what not to do, missteps that I needed to avoid," Senn said. "Government and proper government procedures are complicated – more complicated than I expected."

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government offers specialized training for elected officials to increase their basic understanding of key areas of municipal policy, administration and operations.

Test your municipal knowledge about three topics covered in the Institute.

Could you benefit from attending Institute courses? Answers appear at the end of this article on page 10.

1. **Without approval by referendum, municipal general obligation debt is capped at what percentage of the assessed value of taxable property in the municipality?**
   a.) 20 percent
   b.) 8 percent
   c.) 10 percent

2. **Council may only amend an ordinance through the following action(s):**
   a.) a motion and majority vote of council
   b.) a resolution of council
   c.) an ordinance approved by majority vote of council at least two separate council meetings held at least six days between each reading

3. **Using the 75 percent petition method, a municipality may annex property if 75 percent of the property owners owning 75 percent of the assessed**
   value in the area to be annexed sign an annexation petition and council …
   a.) prepares an annexation feasibility study, conducts a public hearing and adopts an ordinance to annex the area
   b.) adopts an ordinance to annex the area
   c.) conducts a public hearing and adopts an ordinance to annex the area

The Institute offers both in-person and online courses. To become an Institute graduate, officials must complete seven required courses. Sessions A and B are full-day sessions held each February prior to the Association's Hometown Legislative Action Day. Officials must take Session A before Session B. Registration is open until January 18 for the 2016 Session A and Session B on February 2.

The five other required courses are offered in March, April and September each year at the regional councils of governments' locations. Officials may also take these required courses online at any time.

To learn more about the Municipal Elected Officials Institute or to register

for the February 2 courses, visit www.
masc.sc (keyword: MEO).

Graduates have an additional
opportunity to continue their training
through the Advanced Municipal
Elected Officials Institute. The
Association offers advanced courses
in February (the day prior to the
Hometown Legislative Action Day)
and in October.

To learn more about the Advanced
Institute or to register for the Febru-
ary 2 course, visit www.masc.sc
(keyword: Advanced Institute).

*Answers: 1) b: 8 percent; 2) c:
ordinance 3) a: study, public hearing
and ordinance.*

SRF offers historically low rates

The Office of Local Government, a
part of the SC Rural Infrastructure
Authority, announced the availability
of a 1.80 percent standard interest rate for
FY 2016 from the State Revolving Fund.

The SRF program can provide 100
percent financing of eligible project costs
for terms of up to 30 years. This low-in-
terest financing is available for wastewater
treatment and collection, drinking water
supply and distribution, water quality, and
stormwater facilities.

To be eligible for a loan, projects must
be on the SC Department of Health and
Environmental Control's priority list. To
add a project to the list, begin by submit-
ting a project questionnaire to DHEC at
www.scdec.gov.srf.

For FY 2016, SRF has more than $250
million available for wastewater projects
and $45 million for drinking water
projects. Readiness to proceed and water
quality issues are the primary factors in
determining funding priorities. Histori-
cally, SRF loans have ranged from under
$500,000 to $35 million.

In 2014, the City of Florence
tapped into the SRF to bring the Town
of Timmonsville's utility systems
into compliance with environmental

North Augusta, SC

requirements. Concerned for the
quality of life and services in a nearby
town, Florence officials agreed to help
Timmonsville come into compliance,
achieve financial stability and restore the
public trust in the systems.

The Municipal Association recog-
nized Florence's efforts with a 2015
Municipal Achievement Award. For more

information about the project, visit www.
masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards).

In the Lower Savannah region, the
City of North Augusta used an SRF loan
to construct a new, 30-million gallon raw
water storage tank and raw water transfer
pump station. Because of the loan, North
Augusta officials brought the system
into compliance with state disinfection
requirements and improved the system's
reliability in the event of contamination
of the Savannah River, the system's raw
water source.

The SC Department of Health and Envi-
ronmental Control handles the technical
side of the SRF, while the Office of Local
Government manages the financial aspects.

*For more information, visit www.ria.sc.gov
(keyword: SRF) or email info@ria.sc.gov.*

Timmonsville, SC

Greenville offers a citizen's police academy to familiarize residents with police officers and the work they do to keep communities safe.
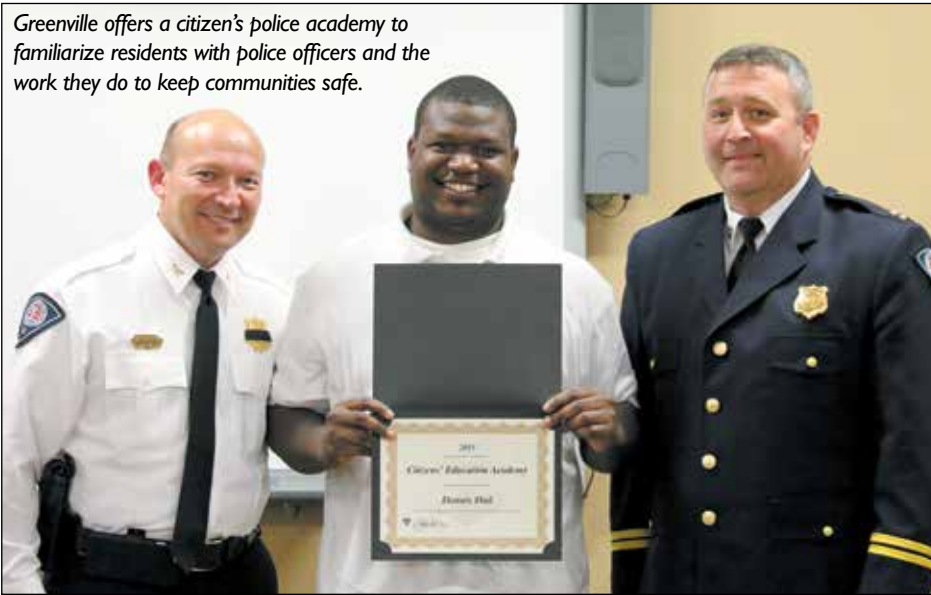
Community policing builds public trust

The concept of community policing emerged from the civil unrest in the 1960s as a means for law enforcement to respond to the needs of increasingly diverse American communities. However, community policing did not gain widespread acceptance until the 80s.

Modern-day, community policing focuses on developing local partnerships and relationships to increase trust and cooperation through prevention, problem solving and community engagement, in addition to traditional law enforcement duties. To be effective, community policing cannot be assigned to just one special unit or group of officers. It must be a mindset for the entire department. It calls for partnerships to be cultivated in good times rather than just during a crisis.

There are several ingredients to a successful community policing program, according to Aiken Chief Charles Barranco.

First, is proactive relationships, Barranco said. It's vital that law enforcement takes every opportunity, such as foot patrols and bicycle patrols, to engage with their community outside of conducting official policing duties.

Second, it's important to decentralize. In a lot of communities, "headquarters" may be closely associated with bookings, fingerprinting and mugshots, Barranco said.

"These are all a part of the process that, all too often, conjures memories or thoughts of negative experiences," Barranco said. "It is good to have satellite offices for public safety when possible. This helps remove relationship barriers and allows officers to be viewed more as a part of the community."

Another factor is officer selection. Barranco said assessing an officer's personality and natural tendencies to engage is very important when making decisions on employment, promotion and specialized assignments such as investigators or school resources officers.

Departments also need to have a service-oriented philosophy which encourages all staff to look at ways to make communities safer through partnerships that provide services to the community. These relationships can result in lower crime rates, increased engagement and productive relationships.

"This is opposed to the traditional 'arrest your way out of crime' approach," Barranco said.

Partnerships with neighborhood organizations—as well as other civic, faith-based and service provider organizations—are key in making community policing successful, Barranco said. The Aiken Public Safety Department works with organizations such as Christ Central, The United Way of Aiken County and Goodwill Job Connection, among others.

Barranco said the department creates opportunities for engagement between the department and community that are mobile and diverse. Some of their recurring events include Mobile Movie Nights, Sno-Cone Days, Chat with Chief, Coffee with a Cop, Poetry in the Park, Bikes and Books, Citizens Academy and the Community Café series.

"This encourages stakeholders to be comfortable in having discussions with law enforcement," he said. "We also enjoy and promote meeting people where they are, in their neighborhoods."

Community policing requires a firm foundation within the entire organization for it to be successful, echoed Police Chief Eric Williams of the Town of Kingstree. Everyone in the department must understand the expectations and buy into the process, he said.

Police also must have a thorough knowledge of their community and its problems and issues. The core issues of community policing are timely intervention, early detection and stressing prevention.

"A proactive approach is essential to maintain and grow your efforts," Williams said.

Partnerships should stem from entities within the law enforcement agencies and organizations that represent individuals, groups, businesses and neighborhoods, he said. Law enforcement can reach out to the community through schools, extracurricular activities, public forums, facility security assessments, or even door-to-door "knock and talks," he said.

Successful community policing involves trust, and that requires a mostly free flow of information from the department to the community, according to City of Greenville Police Chief Ken Miller. Police can reach out to communities through social media and technology, but they also require some face-to-face time.

Coffee with a Cop, Aiken, SC

Greenville's Community Response Team officers are assigned jurisdictions in the city. This Neighborhood Policing Zone Initiative establishes geographic zones of responsibility for lieutenants. This creates enhanced personal relationships and a designated point of contact within the department for neighborhoods citywide. It also results in accountability for problem solving, crime reduction strategies and communication with the department, Miller said.

Like many cities, Greenville offers a citizen's police academy to familiarize residents with police officers and the work they do to keep communities safe. The city is also developing a high school academy.

In addition, Greenville officers frequently meet with business associations to discuss crime or public safety issues. Plus they participate in numerous outreach efforts, such as toy drives for disadvantaged youths and coat drives for the homeless, Miller said.

"Policing still centers on order maintenance and crime prevention," Miller said. "But the safest communities are those where police aren't just enforcing the law. The community is taking an active role in its own well-being."

The Town of Pendleton currently is in the process of reinstituting its police department after town officials disbanded the old force in 2004 due to rising costs. The new department provides the town with a unique opportunity to start on the right footing without having to overcome institutional resistance to community policing, said Pendleton's Police Chief Doyle Burdette.

Burdette said one of the first programs the department plans on implementing is a Citizens Assistance Program designed to help seniors who live alone to be able to stay in their homes longer. The department will partner with the U.S. Postal Service, Meals on Wheels and other organizations which serve seniors, and officers can check on the senior's well-being through visits or phone calls on a daily basis.

Burdette said his department also will use the Scanning, Analysis, Response

The Aiken Public Safety Department creates opportunities for engagement between the department and community that are mobile and diverse.

and Assessment model of community policing to devise other ways to serve the community. The idea is to scan the community and identify problems, analyze the problem and identify the causes, respond to the problem by collaborating on a solution involving the community, and then assess the plan after it is implemented and make any necessary adjustments.

Burdette laid out a hypothetical situation about a neighborhood that has a drug problem. The department identifies the problem is occurring predominantly between 7 p.m. and midnight, and it involves primarily young men between the ages of 16 – 22 on an area of the street where there are no street lights.

By working with the Public Works Department, the city can have the lighting fixed on that street. The residents in the community can call the police when they see suspicious activity and then have a patrol car ride down the street in order to hamper the drug dealers' ability to conduct business. The department could also work with community service groups, schools, and churches to offer activities such as evening basketball which would offer the people involved with the criminal activity something else to do with their time.

"Once we devise a good plan with the buy-in of the community, we implement the plan and make changes as necessary," Burdette said."

There are challenges to the concept of community policing, among them connecting to disengaged communities. "We're only as safe as the community will help us to be," said Greenville's Chief Miller. "Advances in law enforcement such as crime mapping technology are great, but they are limited in how much they help if nobody's engaged."

Some communities have a general mistrust of police officers and are unwilling to share information about neighborhood crimes with them. The information is essential both to police enforcement and prevention efforts.

"On both sides of the table–community and law enforcement–there is often misunderstanding and a lack of trust that is unfounded," said Aiken's Chief Barranco. "The challenge then is for both sides to hear what the other has to say and begin to correct the misinformation with action–not more talk."

Kingstree's Chief Williams said officers realize that simply by doing their job, they may not always be pleasing some people in the community. People may not always agree, but they should try to maintain respect toward each other.

"The key is presenting consistency and transparency so when these challenges arise you have already built a foundation where you can hopefully get to the mentioned alternative. The public safety arena cannot and should not expect to be most effective alone. It will take the combined effort of all parties to be most effective," Williams said.

Police officer Greg Alia's memorial at Forest Acres City Hall during historic flooding.

Accumulating social capital for a rainy day

For the city of Forest Acres, the month of October brought a lifetime worth of heartbreak.

Police officer Greg Alia was shot and killed while on duty, leaving behind a wife and young son. His funeral, attended by hundreds from the city of 10,500, was held Saturday, October 3.

A day later, torrential rain drenched South Carolina with some of the state's worst flooding in Forest Acres. Even the city's police department, where Officer Alia's car sat as a memorial covered in flowers and notes of condolences, was evacuated because of rising water.

But on October 29, the city turned its Rooftop Rhythms music series at Richland Mall, where Alia was killed, into a tribute to the slain officer and to a suffering community.

"Our officers went there not to be recognized but to support the Alias. But all through the night, people came up to us, shook our hands and said thank you. It meant a lot to all of us." Police Chief Gene Sealy said. "What helped us was the love of the people here. They kept showing up with food, flowers and cards."

According to City Administrator Mark Williams, that's reflective of the special relationship between the residents and city employees.

"It's the sense of community that exists here. People are spiritually invested in the city, and we try to put a personal touch on our interaction with folks," Williams said. "It may sound like a cliché, but there is a sense that Forest Acres is a big family."

The relationship between the city employees and residents didn't happen overnight, but it's something that municipalities across South Carolina are working to create. Social capital—the sense of goodwill and earned trust between a city and its residents—has never been more important.

Sumter Police Chief Russell Roark points to Ferguson, Missouri as an example of what happens when a law enforcement agency loses its connection with a community.

"Every law enforcement agency will be faced with a critical situation. It can be a positive or negative reaction. That's why it's important to have in your wheelhouse some positive community building," Roark said. "Police officers will make mistakes. That's a fact. You hope it doesn't tear your community apart."

In Sumter, the police department has made a conscious effort at communication and rebranding using social media to educate residents and distribute information. The department challenges shift officers to build goodwill with residents in all parts of the city.

Officers have worked with adopt-a-school programs, youth baseball, safety education efforts and have built strong relationships in neighborhoods and apartment complexes. The city has seen its crime numbers drop about 24 percent during the past two years.

"I can't say enough how important it is to build goodwill," he said. "Our strategies are working and our relationships are improving. If your employees or your customers know you care about

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them, they are more apt to look at your approach in a positive way."

The City of Aiken's Public Safety Department has a community policing policy that is an organization-wide service philosophy that humanizes law enforcement, according to Chief Charles Barranco.

Aiken officers are encouraged to get out of their cars and interact with the public. They have established partnerships with community groups and organizations to give back to the community, provide information, and build trust.

"We need the community to be willing to come to law enforcement as a partner," said Aiken Public Safety Community Services Coordinator Cynthia Woodberry. "We like to provide neighborhoods with resources and tools for them to function well. If they can't function together, they can't function with us."

City of Greenville Police Department Chief Ken Miller has found that uniforms and patrol cars often can be a barrier in the way that officers interact with the public. That's why his department recently re-implemented bicycle patrols and allowed officers on walking beats to wear a more comfortable uniform like the officers on bikes.

Departments need to determine the best ways to reach out to their unique communities.

In Edisto Beach, a town of 411 year-round residents that swells to 25,000 in the summer, Police Chief George Brothers holds events like quarterly coffee with the chief. He buys residents and tourists a cup of coffee, listens to their concerns and answers questions. He, too, believes in the importance of education and relationship-building.

For example, Edisto Beach is one of the state's few spots that allows alcohol on the beach—but no glass containers are permitted. Sometimes visitors will have a bottle of beer on the beach.

"Can I write them a ticket? Sure. But can I solve the problem without doing that? Yes. I can educate them and they won't do it again," Brothers said. "They see us as helping instead of out to get them. And if an officer does something that I'm not happy about, people understand that I will take care of it."

In Clemson, the police department works to balance the needs of the city's 14,000 year-round residents who are joined by 7,000 university students living in the city during the school year.

"We want college students to enjoy college life yet maintain the peace and sanctity of our year-round residents.

Noise is always the biggest factor," said Police Chief Jimmy Dixon.

He said the department started a successful party registry program four years ago, where people hosting a party register on a web page and provide contact information for two sober monitors. If complaints come in from neighbors, the monitors are called. Officers ride by 20-30 minutes later. If there are no problems, they don't go inside the party. The police department's physical response has dropped by 60 percent over four years.

With its large student population, the department reaches more people through its Facebook page than its website, said Dixon.

Clemson officers connect with college students by partnering with the Parks and Recreation Department and hosting a movie night with police. They also set up equipment at college apartments for officers and students to watch "Monday Night Football" together.

Dixon, too, believes education and getting buy-in from the community is among the most important parts of police work.

"It's only a matter of time before bad things happen. We don't want it to happen. We are a safe community, but we're not immune to it," he said. "You want support so when the hard times hit, people know you'll do everything humanly possible to solve it."

Dual role causes problem

In many small South Carolina towns, it's fairly common for a municipal court clerk to also serve as records clerk for the police department. Yet this dual role is improper and can lead to legal problems, according to one legal opinion.

The opinion by Danny Crowe, attorney with Crowe LaFave, LLC, and municipal attorney for the City of Cayce, Town of Lyman and the Town of Saluda, finds that formal relationships between officials in the municipal court and law enforcement "are strongly disfavored in our state as creating an appearance to the public of possible bias or partiality by the court in favor of law enforcement."

Crowe reviewed opinions by the State Supreme Court's Advisory Committee

on Standards of Judicial Conduct and opinions by the S.C. Attorney General's Office. One of those opinions, Advisory Committee Opinion 08-2002, determined "a municipal police chief should not supervise the municipal court." This is based on Canon 2 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which requires a judge to remain impartial and avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

"The concern … is the public would perceive an improper influence on judicial decisions when law enforcement has both a formal supervisory role in administration of the municipal court and is the prosecuting agency in the municipal court," Crowe writes.

Another opinion, Advisory Committee Opinion 19-2001 also cites the code of conduct when determining that a clerk of the municipal court should not also serve as a records clerk for the police department.

Opinions by the state attorney general's office back that up. A December 1996 opinion found "it would not be appropriate for an individual to work simultaneously for the Police Department and the Municipal Court," as the two should be "separate and distinct." Other similar opinions determined that the clerk of court serves as an arm of the municipal court and "must maintain the appearance of neutrality" and avoid any potential conflicts of interest.

Lessons to be learned

F erguson. Baltimore. Minneapolis. These cities and more became front page news after violent protests erupted, sparked by incidences involving local law enforcement. South Carolina had its own share of headlines, but none of these incidents led to violence—a credit to South Carolinians.

While the high-profile cases occurred in other states, their influence and ensuing scrutiny of law enforcement were felt by communities across the country.

Nationwide, there has been an uptick in law enforcement liability claims, much of it centered on high speed pursuits, use of force, and searches-seizures-arrests.

There are numerous lessons learned from events like those that occurred in Ferguson, said Todd Williams, public safety loss control consultant for the Municipal Association. Elected officials and their police chiefs can learn from these incidents—both at home and far away. It is an opportunity for the department to review its policies and training to prevent similar occurrences.

Policies and procedures

First, departments need to make sure officers are following established policies and procedures and that they are up-to-date on best practices in South Carolina and the nation. They need to stay up to date on state law changes and court rulings, according to Williams.

The Public Agency Training Council has identified 12 high-risk areas on which police departments should develop policies and procedures. (See chart below.)

To assist its members, the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, the Municipal Association's property and liability program, partnered with PATC and developed comprehensive, up-to-date law enforcement policies and procedures for the high-risk areas and others. "Having proper policies in place and following them can greatly reduce a department's liability," said Williams.

Training

The partnership between SCMIRF and PATC has also led to increased training opportunities for law enforcement personnel. Member law enforcement agencies have access to free online training. The online training provided by PATC is an additional, optional training tool to review constitutional law and policies such as use of force, deadly force and pursuit driving, according to Williams. The site also provides updates on U.S. Supreme Court cases that affect law enforcement.

Social capital

The police department in Ferguson also had a disconnect from the community, Williams said. Departments need to work on positive community outreach to help build "social capital," he noted.

"If a department is intertwined with the community, if they have transparency and open communication, they're not going to have that disconnect," Williams said. See related article on page 13.

Recruitment and retention

The work to build social capital in communities has its challenges -- among them, recruiting, hiring and retaining service-oriented officers, especially in departments faced with large staffing shortages or budget cuts. It can be difficult to find people with the necessary problem solving, multitasking and interpersonal skills who also have a service orientation and integrity.

Aiken has a field training officer program, based off a San Jose, Calif. model, that trains new officers to function as a solo beat officer and evaluates personality traits to determine what specialized assignments would best suit each officer, explained Aiken's Police Chief Barranco said.

Recruiting good people is key -- and then setting expectations and creating opportunities for them is important, said Chief Ken Miller of Greenville.

It's also important for agencies to have a good recruitment strategy, one that finds candidates that are ethnically representative of the community they serve. It is important for police departments to mirror the community they serve as much as possible, Williams concluded.

Twelve high-risk areas

1. Use of force/response to resistance,
2. Pursuit/emergency operation of vehicles,
3. Search and seizure/arrest,
4. Property and evidence,
5. Care, custody, restraint and transportation of prisoners,
6. Domestic violence and agency employee involved domestic violence,
7. Off-duty conduct of officers/off-duty paid details,
8. Sexual harassment/sexual misconduct by officers,
9. Selection, hiring and retention,
10. Complaints and internal affairs investigations,
11. Special operations: SWAT, narcotics, high risk warrants service,
12. Dealing with mentally ill, emotionally disturbed persons and persons with diminished capacity.

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Calendar

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

FEBRUARY

2 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Session A, Session B and Advanced Institute. Columbia Marriott. Advanced courses offered: "Public Safety Policy and Administration" and "Advanced Municipal Economic Development."

3 Hometown Legislative Action Day. Columbia Marriott. See related article on page 1.

MARCH

2-4 SC Utility Billing Association Annual Meeting. Wild Dunes Resort, Isle of Palms. Topics include team dynamics, verbal judo for de-escalating situations, cash handling and cybersecurity.

9-11 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute – Session 1A. Hyatt Place Columbia Downtown. Topics include forms of government, records management, procurement, meeting administration and the role of the municipal clerk.

17 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government. Council of Governments' offices. Course offered: "Basic Budgeting and Municipal Finance."

17 SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association Spring Academy. Columbia Conference Center.

24 Municipal Technology Association of SC Spring Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. Topics include disaster recovery and assessment, Microsoft Office 365 and Windows 10, and a professional development session on bridging the age gap among employees.

APRIL

8 Municipal Court Administration of SC Spring Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.

20 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Training Institute and Advanced Academy. Columbia Conference Center.

27 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Linemen Training. Repeated on April 28.

28 Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.

MAY

5 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government. Council of Governments' offices. Courses offered: "Municipal Governance and Policy" and "Freedom of Information Act in SC."

11-13 SC Community Development Association Annual Meeting. Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach.