UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

2016 Annual Meeting

Parker to offer perspective on presidential election

Kathleen Parker

The Delegates' Luncheon during the Annual Meeting in July will feature Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Kathleen Parker. She will share her insights, perceptions and stories from following the 2016 presidential election.

With roots in South Carolina, Parker is a nationally renowned columnist whose work appears regularly in more than 400 newspapers, including several in South Carolina. Describing herself as "slightly to the right of center," she addresses politics, culture and contemporary issues.

Parker won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for "her perceptive, often witty columns on an array of political and moral issues, gracefully sharing the experiences and values that lead her to unpredictable conclusions."

A columnist since 1987, Parker has worked for five newspapers from Florida to California and has written for magazines as diverse as *The Weekly Standard*, *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *Town & Country*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Fortune Small Business*. Parker joined the Washington Post Writers Group in 2006, following 11 years with Tribune Media Services.

"We are in for a real treat to hear from a national commentator, such as Kathleen Parker, just days before the Republican convention," said Walterboro Mayor Bill Young, president of the Municipal Association. "With her South Carolina connections, she will offer a unique perspective on this unprecedented election season."

The Delegates' Luncheon is a ticketed event open to meeting registrants and guests; however, space is limited. Tickets are available to purchase using the Association's online meeting registration system. Based on availability, tickets will be sold at the meeting.

The deadline to register for the Annual Meeting and to make hotel reservations is June 12. Anyone who misses the deadline must register at the meeting in Charleston. The Association's registration desk will be open at Charleston Place Hotel beginning Wednesday, July 13, from 4 – 6 p.m.

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

In This Issue

Business licensing training program has 18 new graduates

Eighteen business licensing officials graduated from the SC Business Licensing Officials Association Training Program in April. The three-year program is designed to improve the professional and administrative skills of participating licensing officials through a series of educational sessions. Completion of the program is a prerequisite for attaining the Accreditation in Business Licensing designation.

The training program and accreditations give elected officials and the public reasonable assurance that licensing officials have been well-trained to implement their local business license ordinances in accordance with widely accepted best practices in a fair, consistent and impartial manner.

BLOA, an affiliate of the Municipal Association of South Carolina, helps members address the problems associated with administering and enforcing the local business and professional license tax.

2016 graduates (listed in alphabetical order): James Absher, City of Lancaster; April Akins, Town of Hilton Head Island; Faith Blumenstock, Town of Hampton; Patricia Brown, City of Marion; Patrick Brown, Town of Edisto Beach; Jane Ciucevich, City of Greer; Darlene Curry, City of Laurens; Norman Durham, Town of Pendleton; Robin Flood, Town of James Island; Jestin Gilliard, City of Georgetown; Diana Kidd, City of Mauldin; Nicole Kindzia, Town of Surfside Beach; Tina Kirby, City of Seneca; Cynthia McMillan, City of Orangeburg; Victoria Messina, Beaufort County; John Rabon, Town of Springdale; Faith Scruggs, City of Simpsonville; and Ethel Wynn, Town of Patrick

The challenge of recruiting public safety officers

One of the biggest challenges facing municipalities across the country is recruiting and retaining quality public safety personnel. Applicant pools for public safety positions are declining, hindered by low wages, a tarnished public image and limited opportunities for advancement.

Municipal officials need to consider more broad-based recruiting efforts, reaching out to students, former military personnel and the community at large, according to Jack Ryan with the Public Agency Training Council. Ryan will speak on the issue of recruiting and hiring public safety employees at the Association's Annual Meeting in July.

Community-based recruiting is important, Ryan said.

"One of the complaints people make is that the police are like an invading army—they don't represent the community," he said.

Police departments need to work hard to overcome negative perceptions held by some members of the public. City officials can help overcome this with effective outreach and communications and by displaying openness and accountability, Ryan said. Agencies also need to build up social capital in their communities.

"The way a particular agency treats people in the community every day—if they take time to talk to people and treat them with empathy—it pays dividends in a lot of different ways," Ryan said.

Reaching out to young people in schools is another good way to recruit, Ryan said. Many communities have Explorer programs, which give students a chance to explore a career in law enforcement by working with local law enforcement agencies. These programs are successful not only in creating a potential pool of applicants, but also in building relationships with the community and giving young people an awareness of the criminal justice system.

When hiring officers, agencies should look for people who have a level of stability—both in a history of employment and psychological stability, someone level-headed who makes good decisions, Ryan continued. A college education is good, but background history is the best indicator of a new hire's potential. Individuals should mesh with their particular communities. Former military personnel make a good fit for law enforcement, but they should be trained to understand the differences in municipal policing and military operations, he said.

Adequate compensation is a problem, particularly in retaining officers.

"If we don't pay them well enough, it causes problems," Ryan said. "We have officers who work second jobs to make ends meet, and then they're coming to work tired. Or they jump ship for another job that may pay just a dollar an hour more."

The possibility for advancement is another way to help retain officers. If officers have the ability to move forward in their career, whether it's joining an investigative team or a K-9 unit, it serves as enticement to keep them in their department, Ryan said.

"Officers need to be part of the community and treated with a level of respect. They need to have training and advancement opportunities," he continued. "Good leadership in an agency also goes a long way in developing good morale."

Police departments are not the only agencies struggling with a decrease in applicant pools. Fire departments are facing a shortage of volunteer firefighters, according to the South Carolina State Firefighters Association.

Training requirements have become more stringent, with volunteers required to commit to more than 250 hours of training to be certified. Other factors involved in the drop of volunteers include the increased call volume and the growing variety of calls departments received. They include hazardous material incidents, confined space and high-angle rescues, chemical and biological events, and active shooter situations.

Some fire departments are responding by making their stations more comfortable and attractive to volunteers, and by reaching out to students in high schools and technical centers.

Fire departments rely on their volunteers, and they serve as a talent pool for full-time hires.

"These volunteers are dedicated and have committed to training, without getting paid," Ryan said, adding that volunteering serves as a great way for a person to get experience and for the city to get to know them.

Opioid abuse epidemic challenges both small towns and large cities

Opioid and heroin abuse have reached epidemic levels across the country, and no city is immune. Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with more than 47,000 lethal drug overdoses in 2014, according to the National League of Cities.

In the 1990s, there was a push to better address pain management, and the concept of "pain as the fifth vital sign" was introduced. Physicians began prescribing high numbers of pain killers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 259 million prescriptions were written in 2012 for opioids. This is enough to equip every American adult with his own bottle of pills.

Opioids—the class of drugs that includes heroin and prescription drugs like morphine, codeine, oxycodone and hydrocodone—are highly addictive. They work by binding receptors in the nervous system and minimizing the body's perception of pain. They also influence other functions, such as the regulation of breathing, blood pressure and mood. Experts say that people who develop an addiction to prescription opioids often move on to heroin due to its lower cost and higher potency.

It is not just a big-city problem; opioid and heroin addiction touches every community. There are 20-year-old, upper-middle class kids shooting heroin who became addicted after legitimately being prescribed opioids for sports injuries, said Richard Cole, owner of Insights Educational & Treatment Services, Inc.,

an outpatient treatment center that provides a variety of behavioral health services including Drug Free Workplace programs. Plus, 70 percent of all addicted people are gainfully employed.

"It's in your workplace; it's your co-workers," Cole said. "Municipalities need to be positioned to identify impaired professionals, test them and get them the help they need."

Local elected officials, as community leaders, can be among the strongest voices to increase awareness and prevention education of this problem, reduce the stigma associated with addiction, advocate for public health solutions in cooperation with surrounding cities and counties, and mobilize resources for increasing the number of treatment opportunities for

those suffering from addiction, according to Jim Brooks, City Solutions director for the National League of Cities.

Brooks said that police chiefs and the U.S. Department of Justice officials agree that we cannot arrest our way out of the epidemic of opioid drug overdoses and deaths.

"This is a public health problem—fighting the disease of addiction. Putting people in jail will not cure the addiction. Police are seeking to 'divert' drug users away from the criminal justice system and into the public health system," Brooks said.

Brooks said cities should work with local pharmacies to support drug "take-back" programs for safe drug disposal. He also recommended that all emergency responders (police, fire/EMS) be issued and trained to use Naloxone, a lifesaving drug which can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Efforts are underway to get all police officers in the Columbia area outfitted with Naloxone kits, according to Columbia Police Narcotics Agent Anthony Branham. That includes officers with the Columbia police department, Richland County Sheriff's Department and public safety officers at the University of South Carolina.

Some officers already have received training and have been issued kits. The kit is user-friendly. Once the cap of the injection is removed, a recorded voice gives step-by-step instructions on how to administer the drug, Branham said.

The cost of the program is one drawback. While a private donor is funding the initial kits, Branham said, he would like to see money set aside in the city's budget to sustain the program. He also hopes the city will receive federal grants to help combat the opioid and heroin epidemic.

Over the past three years, there has been a 2000 percent increase in the number of seizures and arrests for heroin in Columbia, Branham said.

The full extent of the problem across the state may not ever be clear, according to Sara Goldsby with the SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services. In some cases, families don't want a loved one's death to be recorded as an overdose due to the stigma. Other times, coroners don't have the money, staff, technology or equipment to run toxicology reports to determine cause of death, Goldsby said.

Municipalities need to pave the way for dialogue, including town hall meetings, to reduce the stigma of addiction, she said. This can be a step forward in helping people move toward treatment and recovery.

"Addiction is a medical disorder that affects the biology of the brain," Goldsby explained. "It shouldn't be regarded as a moral failing or criminal activity."

In addition to affecting individuals and communities, opioid abuse and addiction is a human resources and risk

management issue for cities, according to Venyke Harley, loss control manager for the Municipal Association.

Municipal employees on opioids are prone to injury, have slower reaction times, and have impaired judgment and depth perception. They can pose a risk to the public simply by the nature of their work—whether it is operating heavy equipment or providing clean water.

Supervisors need to be trained to identify signs and symptoms of opioid addiction, Cole said. Those can include changes or inconsistencies in work performance, frequent tardiness or attendance problems, making simple errors repeatedly or needing to be retrained multiple times on tasks because they can't remember how to do them, impaired coordination or judgment or slurred speech, changes in mood or alertness, or change in appearance to a white or ashen color.

Municipal officials also need to update their drug testing panels to include opioids, Harley said. In the past, workplace drug testing primarily focused on identifying alcohol and marijuana use. Officials need to be prepared to identify opioid addiction in employees and have a plan to get them help, she said.

The Association will offer a breakout session at the Annual Meeting about the role of municipal leaders during a public health crisis. The session will cover both the Zika virus and opioid abuse. See related article on page 10.

The Accelerate Anderson Downtown Business Challenge awards winning recipients $12,000 in incentive reimbursements that can be spent on lease or rent payments, upfit, design and signage.

IMAGINE THIS!

Sparking creative ideas for downtown growth

The state's economy is bouncing back, and cities are getting creative in how they are attracting and supporting local businesses. No longer can they rely on the old adage of "if we build it, they will come."

Anderson, Hartsville and Greenwood have taken imaginative approaches to reach the same goal of getting entrepreneurs interested in bringing unique businesses downtown. Leaders in all three of these cities agree that the city's role in economic development is defining and creating a business friendly environment that will be a catalyst for economic growth both downtown and citywide.

Both Hartsville and Anderson have launched programs that give local entrepreneurs the opportunity to receive incentive reimbursements to help them get a business up and running.

"We want to make it easy for businesses to want to locate in downtown," said Hartsville's Main Street Executive Director Suzy Moyd.

Hartsville launched its StartUp Hartsville program that features a "Shark Tank-type" competition to help entrepreneurs open a downtown business. Last May, the program kicked off by awarding $12,000 in rental assistance to two businesses that were planning to open downtown. The program also provides

> ## "We want to make it easy for businesses to want to locate in downtown."
>
> **Suzy Moyd**
> *executive director for Main Street Hartsville*

legal, marketing and accounting support to the winning businesses.

The owners presented their business plans to a panel of business leaders and economic development professionals. The judges made their selections based on the business' economic viability, business plan and the ability to open quickly. An entrepreneur opening a boutique featuring handmade accessories and another who was opening a furniture boutique and wine/bourbon bar were the first contest winners.

Leaders in Anderson took a similar approach, launching the Accelerate Anderson Downtown Business Challenge in 2015.

"The contest helps local entrepreneurs bring their business downtown," said Assistant City Manager David McCuen. The Challenge awards winning recipients $12,000 in incentive reimbursements that can be spent on lease or rent payments, upfit, design and signage.

Using creative signage in vacant storefront windows, the city promoted the contest with banners that said "Win This Space" and "Picture This …

Keesha Moore with Red Fox To Go Box, a StartUp Hartsville finalist. Picture courtesy of Heather Page of VIP Magazine.

Winning $12,000 to help get your business going." In its first year, the Challenge awarded incentives to two businesses—a chocolate shop and a theater. The chocolate shop relocated downtown from another part of town, and the theater opened in the Anderson County Arts Center.

The success of Greenwood's creative approach stems in large part from the 2003 Greenwood City Center Master Plan which focused on developing the Emerald Triangle. The Emerald Triangle is a 9-acre arts district that has established a "sense of place" for downtown, according to City Manager Charlie Barrineau.

Using the 2003 master plan as its guide, the city and its partners focused largely on building the "destination" and letting the businesses follow, according to Barrineau. The Uptown Greenwood Development Corporation began marketing efforts three years ago with targeted ads in regional quality-of-life magazines and through social media. The city has also widely used a number of videos for social media targeted to selling the Uptown as a destination where new businesses can grow.

Learn more about these creative approaches during a session at the Annual Meeting on Thursday, July 14.

Exchange zones offer level of protection

Internet sites like Craigslist and Facebook have opened up the world of commerce, with person-to-person sales of everything from concert tickets and clothing to automobiles and electronics.

But agreeing to meet strangers—often with cash in hand—can leave buyers and sellers a bit nervous. A few high-profile cases involving robberies and assaults have highlighted the importance of taking precautions and meeting in a public place when completing a sale.

Enter Internet exchange zones.

More and more municipalities around the country and in South Carolina are offering well-lit parking lots as a place to finalize sales made through online marketplaces and social media sites.

While city officials are careful to not get involved in the exchanges, they believe people will be more likely to play by the rules if the exchanges are conducted on municipal property with lights and police officers nearby.

Followers of the Lexington Police Department's Facebook page asked about the possibility of setting up a video-monitored area to increase the safety of buyers and sellers. Lexington officials responded and designated a spot in the municipal complex's parking lot where there is a video camera recording the area 24 hours a day.

"The Internet Purchase Exchange Location is a good example of our department engaging with and taking suggestions from our social media followers," Lexington Police Chief Terrence Green said. "And with many in the community engaging in Internet sales, it only makes sense to create a safe location for exchanges like these to take place."

The City of Hanahan is setting up an Internet purchase zone at the City Hall complex, where the police headquarters and main fire station also are housed. Already, city officials have installed video cameras, upgraded lighting and added signs marking the area.

"In a very small percentage of Internet-based transactions, there has proven to be a criminal element that exposes the public to risk," Hanahan City Manager Johnny Cribb said. "We have created a safe purchase zone because the reality is that many people are choosing this route to purchase and sell items, and we want to be responsive and do whatever we can to protect the safety of our citizens."

In West Columbia, the idea for an exchange zone came during a daylong city council goal-setting session. A councilmember suggested the zone as a way to serve the community.

"We have an open and spacious city hall parking lot with a video camera," explained West Columbia City Administrator Brian Carter. "We can let people know there is a well-lit place where they can make exchanges."

Because the concept of exchange zones is relatively new, information about liability and protection for cities is scarce.

West Columbia reviewed resolutions and policies from cities around the country, and, as a member of the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, reached out to the Municipal Association's Risk Management Services staff for guidance.

In doing his research, Carter discovered some cities have chosen to call these areas "exchange zones" rather than "safe exchange zones" because they did not want to give the appearance of guaranteeing something.

"We can't guarantee 'safety' so West Columbia chose the term 'exchange zone,'" Carter said. "That was deliberate."

Other best practices for creating Internet exchange zones include prohibiting transactions involving guns, knives or other weapons, and posting information about the exchange zones on the city's website along safety tips about online purchases.

Association to offer economic development grants

Officials in cities and towns across the state work every day to encourage economic activity in their communities. However, limited resources often prevent them from reaching their economic development goals.

Recognizing this challenge, the Municipal Association's board of directors has created the Hometown Economic Development Grant program. The grants will fund economic development activities that have a positive impact on creating jobs and improving the quality of life in cities and towns.

Beginning this fall, cities and towns can apply for grants up to $25,000 to fund economic development projects that will produce measurable results, can be maintained over time by the city or town and can be replicated in other municipalities.

Examples of eligible activities for grant funding include professional services related to producing master plans or conducting analysis for marketing, branding or promoting cities and towns and their local businesses; infrastructure development; and the creation of programs or assets for public use in conjunction with private or nonprofit organizations.

Cities that receive a Hometown Economic Development Grant must provide matching funds. Matching amounts, determined by a city's population, will range from 5 percent to 15 percent of the grant award. Cities can use in-kind contributions or other grant funds as their match.

An awards committee comprised of current and former local government professionals will evaluate grant applications and make awards annually. The board has earmarked $200,000 for 2016 grant awards.

The awards committee will evaluate applications based on the anticipated impact on the city or town, expected return on investment, financial need, the city's track record for accomplishing similar projects, the project's level of innovation, plans to sustain the project, and the ability for other cities to replicate the project with similar, measurable results.

Cities that receive a grant must submit reports about the progress and successes of each grant-funded project and provide financial details of how the grant funds were used. The Association's field services managers will visit every award recipient to review their projects.

The Association will provide additional details about the Hometown Economic Development Grant program at the 2016 Municipal Association Annual Meeting in Charleston.

GASB impacts liability bottom line—again

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 75 will affect some local government's financial statements similar to how GASB 68 changed disclosure requirements for retirement (or pension) benefits.

Statement 75 requires cities that provide other post-employment benefits, such as retiree health care, to begin reporting the net OPEB liability on their financial statements.

Even though employees do not receive the benefits earned until they retire, the employer has a current obligation to provide those benefits at that future time. The employer is responsible for the net obligation (the overall obligation minus the assets accumulated in an OPEB plan) and must report that obligation as a liability on its financial statements. This liability is called the net OPEB liability.

Although cities will not have to implement the new standard until their fiscal year beginning after June 15, 2017, officials should begin preparing now for another major increase in liabilities on their financial statements, advised Heather Ricard, director of Risk Management Services.

In addition to reporting the new OPEB liability, cities will have to provide additional footnote disclosures and supplementary information, such as interest rate assumptions, explanations of how and why the OPEB liability changed from year to year, and summary OPEB liability information.

GASB anticipates releasing a final implementation guide in November 2017. Statement 75 replaces previous GASB Statement 45 requirements.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board establishes accounting and financial reporting standards for state and local governments that follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. For more information, visit www.gasb.org.

ZIKAVIRUS

Cities on frontline of Zika defense

With the recent emergence and rapid spread of the Zika virus abroad, government leaders at all levels have been working to understand the disease and how to prevent, detect and respond to it. Although no cases of local mosquito-borne transmission of the Zika virus have been confirmed in the United States, there have been hundreds of travel-associated cases reported, including in South Carolina.

Before 2015, Zika virus outbreaks occurred in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. In May 2015, Zika virus infections were reported in Brazil, and currently outbreaks are occurring in many countries in South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Cases also have been reported in U.S. territories.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Zika will continue to spread and it will be difficult to determine how and where the virus will appear over time.

As of April 29, there was one confirmed travel-associated case of Zika virus in the state with more anticipated in the coming months.

Local government officials have a key role to play in preventing and responding to the threat of Zika through mosquito abatement and public education.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control recently convened a forum of state and local officials to discuss the Zika virus and resources available to local governments in recognition of their role as the front-line defense against the spread of any mosquito-borne viruses.

It is important for local officials to have mosquito control plans in place. In areas where funding is a concern, the key is to focus on public education and eliminating water-filled containers where mosquitoes breed. "Mosquito control plans can involve many municipal departments, including public works, code enforcement and communications, so it's important that all local officials and staff members understand their respective roles," advised Dr. Chris Evans, entomologist at DHEC.

For cities and towns that do not have their own mosquito control plans, a good option would be to partner with other entities that have this capability. Neighboring cities or the county government may be willing to enter into an intergovernmental agreement to provide for mosquito treatment, such as larviciding and adulticiding. Contracting with commercial vendors is another option.

Code enforcement can play an important role in abatement efforts. Cities and towns should develop and enforce local ordinances aimed at cleaning up properties that harbor mosquito breeding areas.

"Anything that can hold even an ounce of water and is allowed to stand four to seven days is a potential mosquito-breeding area," Evans said. "Although Zika virus is transmitted by mosquitoes that breed in water-filled containers, local governments should also manage standing water in roadside ditches and other areas by clearing blockages, using fill dirt to promote the flow of water or using methods to treat mosquito larvae. Also, unkempt properties are prime mosquito-breeding areas that local officials can address through code-enforcement ordinances."

Educating the public about the dangers of mosquito-borne illness should be an integral part of any mosquito abatement plan. Local officials should utilize all available communication tools, including social media, to inform the public about the virus and how to stop its spread.

Multiple resources are available to help officials develop and implement local mosquito control plans. SCDHEC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Clemson University's Department of Pesticide Regulation, the SC Mosquito Control Association and the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health all offer valuable information.

More information and links to resources are available at www.masc.sc (keyword: mosquito).

The Association will offer a breakout session at the July Annual Meeting about the role of municipal leaders during a public health crisis. The session will cover both the Zika virus and opioid abuse. See related article on page 4.

Recycling trends: roll carts in glass out

Cities around the state have made changes to their recycling programs as part of an effort to keep up with the changes in technology and economics of recycling.

"Local governments have made adjustments to their programs as recycling has grown and evolved during the past 25 years," said Richard Chesley, recycling program manager for the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Some cities have added residential electronics recycling collection in response to legislation banning specific electronics from landfill disposal, while others are working to begin food waste recovery initiatives, he said.

"Also, local governments are beginning to refine their outreach message to better communicate with residents the fact that, while recycling is not a free service, it is still an essential part of solid waste management that offers numerous economic and environmental benefits," he said.

In another trend, the volatile recycling marketplace has caused some Upstate cities to stop accepting glass as a recyclable.

In late 2015, Mauldin's primary vendor for processing recyclables closed, forcing city officials to look for another avenue to discard recyclable material. The previous vendor paid the city $10 per ton of recyclable material. New vendors now charge $15 a ton to process the same material, including glass. By eliminating glass, the city will be charged just $5 per ton for nonglass recyclable material.

Mauldin officials contacted another company and evaluated options to try to find a solution to these changes, but alternate solutions would raise the cost to residents to more than $40 a ton of recyclable materials if glass were included.

"The market for recyclable materials will fluctuate, and we will remain vigilant for the best option to manage recyclable materials for our citizens," Mauldin City Administrator Trey Eubanks said.

According to Mauldin officials, the change reflects a trend in the recycling market nationwide. As the value of recycled glass declines and the efforts to separate and clean the material increase, it has become a burden on most companies to process glass. Glass also breaks easily, infiltrating nonglass recyclables and making some cardboard or plastic renewables less valuable in the process.

Ultimately, the cost to process glass has outpaced its value in the marketplace at this time, making it difficult for municipalities to find companies willing to process the material at a rate that keeps the burden low for taxpayers.

The City of Columbia continues to accept glass in its recycling carts even though it now loses money on the glass it collects, Columbia's Recycling Coordinator Samantha Yager said. But the city has seen an overall savings after its delivered 34,152 roll carts to Columbia homes in July 2015, she said.

Cities across the country are moving away from recycling bins to roll carts.

Last summer, Columbia changed the way it picks up recycling, moving from 18-gallon bins to 95-gallon roll carts. Almost one year in, the city has realized a savings of $250,000, said Yager.

By using larger carts, the city was able to cut back from weekly to twice a month pickups. The city also began using an automated fleet, where all the recyclables go in one truck, instead of having workers sort the pieces before being placed in the recycling trucks. That change allowed Columbia to cut the number of routes, from nine a day to four, reducing its fuel costs and its workforce by five positions.

One of the biggest gains for the city was the drop in workers' compensation claims and lost time for injuries. The city had seen a lot of rotator cuff and back injuries when workers had to lift the heavy recycling bins.
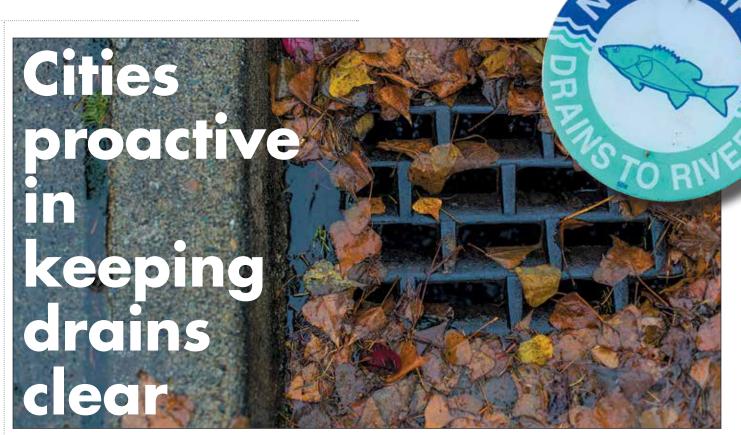
"The carts presented a savings that helped win over our council. Like everyone, they are looking at the bottom line," she said. "To be able to say that we will see a $250,000 savings was huge for us."

The move to roll carts has increased the amount of recycling by Columbia residents—from 344 tons of recyclables collected each month in bins to 502 tons a month collected in the roll carts during the first six months of the program.

Columbia has also experienced a reduction in the amount of garbage it collects, down from 1,800 tons a month to 1,700 tons. "Any way to produce less garbage and keep it out of the landfill is positive," Yager said.

Plus, Columbia residents love the cart system.

"I've heard everything from 'The carts are better than sliced bread,' to one lady who called and said, 'I've never recycled before but these carts make me want to recycle,'" Yager concluded.

Public Works

Cities proactive in keeping drains clear

As rain pours onto city streets, parking lots and sidewalks, the water washes over the ground, taking anything in its path on a ride to a storm drain. Along with pesticides and pet waste, the stormwater also picks up yard clippings, branches and leaves left along the curb.

The result: Pollutants washing down city drains into waterways, clogged drains backing up and causing damaging flooding, and leaves left to rot in a storm drain releasing nutrients that cause algae blooms and fish kills.

Cities around the state are working to combat the problem by being proactive.

For many, one of the first steps involves educating and engaging residents, some of whom may have never given a thought to what is pouring down storm drains every time it rains.

City officials can encourage simple actions, such as suggesting that residents compost yard waste and leave grass clippings on their lawns as a natural fertilizer, or asking them to consider bagging yard waste to keep it from washing into a storm drain.

In Rock Hill, residents can order a YardCart from the city. Similar to a garbage roll cart, the brown carts are intended for grass clippings and other loose yard debris. Automated trucks empty the YardCarts at the curb each week along with garbage and recycling materials.

The City of Anderson recently installed storm drain markers on city-maintained catch basins. The markers read "Dump No Waste – Drains to Creek" along with a number to report illegal dumping or needed maintenance, said Adam Cromer, the city's stormwater manager.

Anderson also has created an adopt-a-storm drain program. The program's first phase has been informing residents about the program by placing educational materials in utility bills and spreading the word on the local television channel and through social media and garbage cart notices, Cromer said.

"We plan to engage community groups and neighborhood associations in the coming year for volunteers to monitor and remove accumulated debris from storm drains along city streets," Cromer said. "We will provide volunteers with instructions on how to care for the storm drains in their neighborhoods.

"Our hope is that residents will take ownership of their neighborhoods by preventing garbage, leaves and debris from entering our local waterways through the storm drainage system," continued Cromer. "We also plan to map adopted storm drains and track the maintenance performed by volunteers."

Along with volunteers, the city sends crews on a regular basis to inspect and clean out city maintained stormwater drains plus it provides pollution prevention training to all city employees who have the potential to impact stormwater quality in their jobs.

The Town of Mount Pleasant also has an education program to teach residents and landscapers about proper debris management and uses social media, direct mail and the town's website to spread the word.

Several cities, including Anderson and Mount Pleasant, recently began a partnership with Clemson University's Carolina Clear program, which provides a local, regional and statewide comprehensive approach to inform and educate communities about water quality, water quantity and the cumulative effects of stormwater. Carolina Clear addresses the special significance of South Carolina's water resources and the role they play in

Forty volunteers collected roadside litter and removed 538 pounds of debris from freshwater and marsh areas around Memorial Waterfront park at the base of the Ravenel Bridge.

Photo/Robbie Silver Photography

the state's economy, environmental health and overall quality of life.

While educating the public about the importance of keeping storm drains clear is a top priority, it is not the only strategy cities are employing.

"The most important practice is preventive maintenance of the stormwater collection system," said Michael Hemingway, utilities director for the City of Florence. "Once the rains begin to fall, it is way too late to fix a problem or even stem the tide of a developing issue."

"Specifically, having a schedule for preventive maintenance and adhering to it is critical," he continued. "Scheduled ditch maintenance and clearing, routine street sweeping, and regular monitoring of hot spots or trouble locations are typical ways to stay on top of maintenance.

"Also, knowing what we have is critical," Hemingway explained. It is important to have the areas the city is responsible for (as opposed to the county or SC Department of Transportation) mapped properly and have staff trained and knowledgeable of the areas.

In Anderson, Cromer suggests cities inventory the storm drainage system infrastructure and develop an inspection and maintenance program. He also recommends cities make note of the areas prone to flooding during heavy rains, so they can be on a more rigorous maintenance schedule.

Florence's stormwater maintenance work group performs routine maintenance and cleaning of storm drains, ditches and outfalls. That work is done by street sweeping, weed eating and clearing ditches, manually removing debris and sediment from gutters and storm drain grates, and physically removing plant material from outfalls and ditch and driveway tiles,

Hemingway said. Florence also employs an illicit discharge inspector to investigate complaints of yard waste dumping.

The Town of Mount Pleasant also has several programs that keep the storm drains clean and help keep pollutants out of nearby marshes and waterways.

"We ask our residents to be a part of the solution to pollution and to reduce flooding by keeping drains, gutters and ditches along their property clean and clear," said Hillary Repik, Mount Pleasant's stormwater manager.

A local ordinance requires residents to put yard waste such as grass clippings and leaves in brown paper bags at the curb, helping to keep those items out of the drain following a rainfall. The debris is collected each week by the town's sanitation department and sent to the landfill for composting. By using paper bags, plastic is kept out of the compost pile, explained Repik.

Other ways Mount Pleasant keeps its storm drains free flowing?

Town crews check and clean grates in flood prone areas during rain events. A hydro-excavator truck uses high power water jets and a vacuum system to remove debris that gets into inlets and pipes. Water quality separator vaults collect debris that gets into the systems—and those are cleaned at least twice a year— and a drainage canal maintenance crew clears debris from the main ditch systems.

Town officials plan to increase inspections next year and add a second drain cleaning crew and truck the following year. The town's extensive program for keeping storm drains clear resulted in workers removing 835 tons of material just last year, Repik said.

Mount Pleasant, like many other cities, also sweeps the streets in its primary road

system. Street and highway sweeping is becoming increasingly recognized as an important step to remove stormwater runoff pollution and is considered a best management practice under the EPA Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act.

Florence's Stormwater Operations Division sweeps major arteries and heavily traveled roads, while secondary and residential streets are swept on an as-needed basis. Sweeping the streets reduces the sand and pollutants that enter the draining system causing blocked pipes and poor water quality in nearby waterways.

"It's important to keep storm drains clear and clean for multiple reasons," said Hemingway. "First, they cannot operate and perform as designed if they are clogged, broken or caved in. This could lead to flooding, which could cause property damage or vehicle accidents."

"Second, the presence of clean storm drains and gutters gives a good message to the public," Hemingway explained. "If there is sediment, debris, trash, yard waste, etc. collecting in our stormwater conveyances, it gives the impression that Florence is messy, dirty and unprepared for rain events."

"While we want our stormwater collection system to be ready for storm events, we also want a clean city," Hemingway concluded. "Perception is reality, especially in the eyes of residents, visitors, prospective businesses and those looking to relocate."

City of Florence, SC

Public Works

It's a dog's *(and cat's)* life

West Columbia developed the No Kill Animal Control Program in 2012 to humanely handle nonidentified dogs and cats apprehended by Animal Control through a Trap/Neuter/Release protocol and an adoptive initiative.

Marli Drum, Columbia's superintendent of animal services, remembers the awful days when she would arrive at work and there would be 100 animals waiting to be euthanized that day at the city shelter.

Now Drum, who has been working in animal services for more than 20 years, says there are now some days when no animals are killed at the Columbia shelter.

Through spay and neuter programs and work with animal rescue groups and other nonprofits, no-kill shelters are getting closer to reality in many cities around the state. The goal in Columbia and many other cities is never having to euthanize an adoptable pet. Some shelters have met that goal; others are working to get there.

"About 10 years ago we saw the need for an aggressive spay and neuter program. The idea is you want to prevent them from coming to the shelter in the first place," Drum said. "You've got to stop letting them breed."

In Columbia, Drum's department works with the Animal Mission, a nonprofit that spends about $125,000 each year for vouchers to provide free spay and neuter services.

"It grew and grew and grew," she said.

To date, almost $1.3 million has been raised for surgeries through the Columbia shelter. This is the seventh consecutive year the intake at the Columbia shelter has been reduced. In 2008-09, the shelter took in about 14,000 animals. This year, the number has dropped to about 8,200. What used to be called the dog pound is now a state-of-the-art animal shelter with

a veterinarian on staff and active community partners.

"We have a great community here that wants to see the no-kill movement come to Columbia," she said.

The key is twofold—reducing the number of animals that arrive at the shelter and making sure the ones that are adoptable have a good start in new homes through an easy adoption process, spay and neutering services and microchipping.

In West Columbia, the animal control department decided about two years ago to take on the city's long-time issue with feral cats. Instead of trapping the cats and euthanizing them, the department teamed with nonprofits Pawmetto Lifeline and the Safe Cats Coalition for a Trap, Neuter and Return program. The cats are trapped, brought to a veterinarian where they are

spayed or neutered, then returned to the location where they were found.

"When you euthanize them, other cats move in to the area. It doesn't solve the problem," said Sarah Smith, West Columbia's animal control officer. "There is a vacuum effect. When cats are removed others move in. Obviously there is a resource they have found in a backyard or a park. The humane and correct way is to spay and neuter."

Since the program started, more than 1,000 wild cats have been spayed and neutered, ear-tipped and returned to the area. During March, for example, the Safe Cats Coalition trapped and neutered 35 wild cats in West Columbia. Left unattended, these cats could have produced as many as 100 kittens in one year.

"I highly recommend the TNR program. It's a great solution," she said. Smith notes

the cost is high at first. However, in the long run, TNR is expected to cut down on the number of wild cats in the community.

Columbia's Drum recommends cities that lack funding yet want to move to a no-kill shelter start small. "Start with baby steps. Start with one litter of kittens. Make sure you get them spayed and neutered. Start with a little fundraiser. People will step up."

She also suggested smaller cities contact the bigger facilities for advice. "We'll walk them through and be mentors. Large facilities are here to help smaller ones when they need it," she said.

Drum says there are still too many animals euthanized at the Columbia shelter, with about 50 percent of those brought to the shelter being adopted. "Ideally, we want 70 percent live release, with the ultimate goal 90 percent. We want to no longer have to euthanize an adoptable pet."

Don't let slips and falls trip you up

While the South Carolina Tort Claims Act provides some protection against "slip and fall" or "trip and fall" claims, municipalities should not automatically accept or deny liability for claims. These incidents require a thorough investigation by a claims adjuster to determine the responsible party and the claim's validity.

The main concern with these cases is that once a liability payment is issued for a claim or lawsuit due to a slip or trip in a specific area, it could set a precedent for future claims and lawsuits.

During the investigation, the adjuster will verify who owns the property where the incident occurred and who is responsible for its design, maintenance and repairs. What seems like a straightforward task may be complicated.

Over time, there may have been agreements or easements with municipal or state governmental entities that have changed ownership and maintenance responsibilities. These documents are not always readily available.

When investigating the claim's validity, the adjuster will ask how the individual

filed the original complaint, if the initial notice was made via letter through legal representation as a first notice, if the claimant provided initial notification, or if the report was made directly to an employee or to the police department

for record only. The adjuster will also ask about independent witnesses to the incident.

If the type of injuries being claimed or the accompanying medical bills for treatment are questionable, the adjuster will broaden the investigation.

"It is important for municipal officials to report claims immediately to their insurance provider and to understand the claims and investigative processes," explained Cindy Martellini, claims manager for the Association's Risk Management Services. "Not providing requested information promptly will delay the investigation. This often leads to the claimant filing a lawsuit against the city which can be very costly."

During the litigation discovery process, the defendants will require the same information the adjuster requested during the initial evaluation of the claim. The legal defense fees for completing the discovery process and taking depositions may cost more than what the case could have been settled for prior to litigation.

Calendar

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

JUNE

7 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Accrediation in Business Licensing Exam. 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

9 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Second Quarter Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. Topics include the basics of data collection and case studies about data collection software from three stormwater managers.

19-22 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting. Sonesta Resort, Hilton Head Island. Topics include: cybersecurity, electric load forecasting, and data protection and disaster recovery.

JULY

14-17 Municipal Association of SC Annual Meeting. Charleston Place Hotel. See related article on page 1.

20-22 Main Street South Carolina. Economic Development on Main Street. Hartsville.

AUGUST

2 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Accrediation in Business Licensing Exam. 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

23 Setoff Debt Collection Program – Mandatory Training Session for New Participants. 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

25 Setoff Debt Collection Program – Mandatory Training Session for Current Participants' New Employees. 1411 Gervais St., Columbia.

31-September 2 Municipal Court Administration Association Annual Meeting. Francis Marion Hotel, Charleston.

SEPTEMBER

8 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarter Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.

14-16 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute: Year 1, Session B. Hyatt Place Columbia/Downtown. Topics include forms of government, meeting administration and the municipal clerk, financial management and business licensing administration.

15 SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government. Council of Governments' offices. Courses offered: "Municipal Economic Development" and "Forms of Municipal Government." The courses are also offered on demand from the Association's website at www.masc.sc (keyword: MEO).

21-23 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting. Hyatt Regency Greenville.

30 Managers/Administrators Fall Forum. Columbia Conference Center.