



# UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

## Annual Meeting to Highlight Community-Building Police Work



**P**olice work in the 21st century is targeting community engagement and bridge-building as ways for police departments to address threats to community safety.

Numerous outreach programs emerging around the state are doing so in collaboration with the nonprofit organization Serve & Connect. The organization’s founder, Kassy Alia Ray, will discuss its work during several sessions on July 18 and 19 at the Municipal Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting.

The organization believes, Alia Ray said, that partnerships between police and the neighborhoods they service can help officers address the immediate conditions that can threaten community safety.

Efforts to engage a community can come through many channels. As an example, Alia Ray pointed to Greg’s Groceries, a collaboration with the Harvest Hope Food Bank, Columbia Police Department and Swansea Police Department that gives

those police departments boxes of shelf-stable food to keep in patrol cars to help officers address hunger in the field. The program also helped deliver food to displaced residents of the Allen Benedict Court apartments in Columbia after a deadly gas leak.

Serve & Connect is also involved with the Daddy & Me 5K sponsored by the Springdale Police Department. The origins of that program come from former Springdale Police Chief Kevin Cornett, who said that he has repeatedly seen negative interactions between police and young people lacking a parental figure. Cornett believes an active father figure can help stop bad influences. The Daddy & Me 5K celebrates the roles of fathers and includes “Daddy Olympics,” which includes stroller-unfolding competitions and diaper-changing competitions.

*Annual Meeting, page 2 >*

### In This Issue

**2019 Legislative Session Wraps Up**

Page 6

**Don’t Get Burned This Fourth of July**

Page 7

### Special Section: Parks and Recreation

**Making Special Events Go Off Without a Hitch**

Page 12

**A Day in the Life of a Parks and Recreation Director**

Page 14

# In this ISSUE

Economic Development Tools:  
Abandoned Buildings Credits .... 3

16 Graduate From BLOA  
Training Institute ..... 4

Regional Advocacy Meetings Start  
in August ..... 5

Municipal Elected Officials Institute  
of Government Monthly Quiz .... 5

2019 Legislative Session  
Wraps Up ..... 6

Association Highlight: Municipal  
Court Administration Association  
of SC..... 6

Don't Get Burned This  
Fourth of July ..... 7

## Special Section: Parks and Recreation

Managing Water Parks, Pools  
and Water Bodies ..... 8

Meeting Playground Safety  
Standards ..... 9

Horseshoes, Pickles and  
Flying Discs ..... 10

Making Special Events Go Off  
Without a Hitch ..... 12

A Day in the Life of a Parks and  
Recreation Director..... 14

President: **Councilmember  
Octavia Williams-Blake**  
Florence

Interim Executive Director: **Eric Budds**  
ebudds@masc.sc

Managing Editor: **Meredith Houck**  
mhouck@masc.sc

Editor: **Russell Cox**  
rcox@masc.sc

Editorial Assistant: **Ashleigh Hair**  
ahair@masc.sc

Contributing Writers:  
**Urica Floyd, Page Ivey and  
Megan Sexton**

*Annual Meeting, from page 1 >*

Serve & Connect not only supports communities, but officers as well. The organization assists the families of officers killed in the line of duty with fundraising drives. In the last three and half years, Serve & Connect has helped raise more than \$450,000 for families of officers killed in the line of duty.

Another Serve & Connect program partner, the North Columbia Youth Empowerment Initiative, is a collaboration with the Columbia Police Department and Columbia Parks and Recreation. The initiative makes use of a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve the lives of the targeted area's children, creating a model that can be used around the nation.

Altogether, Alia Ray said, Serve & Connect is driving a message that "together, we are better." "All of these events, what they're intended to do is foster greater connections and sense of community," she said.

Serve & Connect was founded in honor of Forest Acres Police Officer Gregory Alia, husband of Kassy Alia Ray, who was killed in the line of duty in 2015. The organization has a nine-member board, two full-time staffers and two part-time staffers. It focuses on South Carolina, but



*Kassy Alia Ray is the chief executive officer and founder of Serve & Connect. Photo: Serve & Connect.*

its work has caught national attention. It has been featured on the "Today Show" and in a TEDx Talk, and Alia Ray has presented at the FBI National Academy.

*Learn more about Serve & Connect at [www.serveandconnect.net](http://www.serveandconnect.net). Find the full Annual Meeting schedule and registration information at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Annual Meeting).*



*The Greg's Groceries program allows police officers to help address hunger issues they encounter when patrolling. Photo: Serve & Connect.*

# Economic Development Tools: Abandoned Buildings Credits

The following article is first in a series explaining how to use economic development tools.

The SC Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act, first effective on January 1, 2013, and later extended by the General Assembly through 2021, offers income or property tax credits as a way to promote the rehabilitation of eligible empty or underutilized buildings. The taxpayer who rehabilitates an eligible building may apply for one of the tax credits, and the credit may be passed through to tenants or subsequent purchasers of the property.

Combining the abandoned building credit with state and federal historic rehabilitation credits can dramatically increase the total tax credit available. A taxpayer could have a potential total credit equal to 55 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenses — 20 percent federal historic preservation, 10 percent state historic preservation and 25 percent abandoned building credit.

## Meeting eligibility requirements

At the time the taxpayer files the Notice of Intent to Rehabilitate, the property must be

- at least 66 percent vacant for the past five years, and the taxpayer who owned the building immediately before its abandonment is not eligible to claim a credit;
- non-income-generating throughout the abandonment; and
- something other than be a single-family residence.

Buildings placed into service after July 1, 2018, can be divided up by floor so that up to seven separate floors can be considered seven separate projects eligible for the credit. However, to be eligible for the credit, the floors must be redeveloped exclusively for residential use.

The tax credit requires that the developer spend a minimum amount of money rehabilitating the property, whether it be through the cost of acquiring the property, renovating or improving the site, or cleaning up environmental hazards. Demolition costs cannot be considered an eligible expense in cases where the building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The minimum investment in an eligible project is lower in small communities because of the greater difficulty of attracting investment in rural areas. The minimums are determined by the population of either the municipality or the unincorporated area of a county where the project is located:

- more than 25,000 people: \$250,000
- between 1,000 and 25,000 people: \$150,000
- less than 1,000 people: \$75,000

## Tax credit options and amounts

A taxpayer may choose one of two credits:

- Income tax credit: This credit can equal up to 25 percent of eligible



The Western Auto building (1940) and Rose-Talbert building (1914) in downtown Columbia stood vacant before they were renovated together in 2018. Photo: Rogers Lewis.

# NEWS BRIEFS

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks awarded Beverly Coleman, clerk/business license officer for the **City of Clemson**, with the Master Municipal Clerk designation and Amber Barnes, assistant town administrator/clerk for the **Town of Pendleton** with the Certified Municipal Clerk designation.

Jonathan Irick, executive director of **Main Street Laurens**, was recently honored as a 2019 Main Street America Revitalization Professional recipient at the Main Street Now Conference. MSARP is the highest credential offered through Main Street America and demonstrates “a mastery of subject matter essential to downtown and neighborhood district management” and illustrates “a serious commitment to creating vibrant, healthy Main Streets.”

rehabilitation expenses taken against state taxes and fees — income tax, the corporate license fee, taxes on associations or a combination of these — but the credit cannot exceed \$500,000 in any tax year. The taxpayer must submit the Notice of Intent to Rehabilitate to the SC Department of Revenue. If a project receives approval for an income tax credit, then the taxpayer receives the credit in equal installments over five years, beginning with the tax year the property enters service.

- Property tax credit: The property tax credit may equal up to 25 percent of the total rehabilitation expenses, but no more than 75 percent of the real property taxes due on the building. In this case, the Notice of Intent to

**Economic, page 4** >



Rehabilitate must be submitted to the relevant municipality or county. An approved project can receive a property tax credit for as many as eight years, beginning with the tax year the building enters service.

### The application process

The Notice of Intent to Rehabilitate must provide the site's location, the amount of acreage involved, the square footage of the existing buildings on the site and the estimated expenses for rehabilitation. The notice must also indicate which buildings the taxpayer intends to renovate and whether new construction is involved. In addition, when the notice is filed, the "local taxing entity ratio" must be set and remain fixed for the credit period. The local taxing entity ratio is the millage rate of each participating local taxing entity divided by the total combined millage rate of all participating taxing entities.

When seeking a property tax credit from a municipality or county, the governing body must determine and certify the



The new space for Hotel Trundle and the BOUDREAUX design firm made use of incentives including the Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act, the Bailey Bill, tax credits and façade easements. Photo: Rogers Lewis.

eligibility and proposed rehabilitation expenses by a resolution approved by a positive majority vote. This determination must include a finding that the credit will not violate any covenant, representation or warranty in an existing tax increment financing district.

The council must then hold a public hearing and approve the tax credit by adopting an ordinance. At least 45 days before holding the public hearing, the

governing body must give notice to all affected local taxing entities its intention to grant the property tax credit. This notice must include the estimated credit based on projected rehabilitation expenses. If the other local taxing entities do not file an objection, they are deemed to have consented to the credit.

Learn more at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: abandoned buildings).

## 16 Graduate From BLOA Training Institute

The spring meeting of the SC Business Licensing Officials Association Training Institute had 16 municipal and county officials graduate from the program.

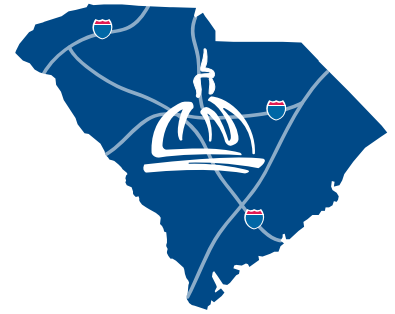
The institute is designed to improve the professional and administrative skills of business licensing officials. The three sessions officials need to complete the training institute include topics on general licensing, problem areas and personal development. The spring session topics included duties and authorizations of business licensing officials in South Carolina, an overview of municipal and county government as well as business license administration. The graduates will receive the Accreditation in Business Licensing designation, upon passing an exam.



The 16 graduates are Sherry Atkinson, billing clerk, Town of West Union; Noel Blackwell, town clerk, Town of Lyman; Tami Boyle, business license specialist, Town of Mount Pleasant; Caitlin Cothran, manager for collection programs, Municipal Association of SC; Rodnisha Howzell, accounting specialist, City of Greenwood; Jackie Kelley, clerk/treasurer, Town of West Union; James Ledlow, business licensing officer, City of Spartanburg; Mayor Linda Gail Oliver, Town of West Union; Karen Osborne, revenue coordinator, City of Greenville; Chaconas Parson, town clerk, Town of Andrews; Tim Roberts, business license inspector, City of Greer; Ashley Rochester, business license coordinator/inspections, City of Clinton; Kathy Teague, planning/zoning coordinator, City of Union; Karine Thomas, business licensing director, City of Hartsville; Carroll Williamson, planning and development director, City of Cayce; and Catrina Woodruff, accounting manager, City of Greer.



# Regional Advocacy Meetings Start in August



Advocacy might conclude with legislative action taken by the General Assembly impacting South Carolina's cities and towns, but it begins with leaders in each community expressing what challenges their local governments face and what would help.

For this purpose, the Municipal Association of South Carolina hosts 10 Regional Advocacy Meetings around the state from mid-August to September each year. These meetings give local leaders a chance to learn about what happened in the past legislative session and what issues are likely to emerge in the next session. The meetings also play a role in identifying key initiatives for the Association's legislative team for the upcoming year.

"It's critical for elected officials and city staff to use these meetings to get their local issues heard, but the exciting part for us is that they don't share just their challenges, they also get to share their ideas on what potential solutions might

be available through statewide legislation as well," said Tiger Wells, the Association's director of governmental affairs.

Since these regional advocacy meetings will take place in the middle of a two-year legislative session, there will be plenty to talk about. Each meeting begins at 11 a.m. and concludes by 1 p.m. with lunch included. The locations are organized to include one session in each council of governments region, but officials may attend any session even when it is not in their home region.

There is no charge for the meetings, but registration is required for an accurate head count for lunch and handouts.

- **August 13** – The Arts Center of Greenwood, City of Greenwood
- **August 14** – Myrtle Beach Train Depot, City of Myrtle Beach
- **August 15** – Goose Creek Fire Department, City of Goose Creek
- **August 20** – Beaufort City Hall Conference Center, City of Beaufort

- **August 21** – North Augusta Municipal Building, City of North Augusta
- **August 22** – Mauldin Cultural Center, City of Mauldin
- **August 27** – Bean Market Museum, City of Lake City
- **August 28** – Sumter City Centre, City of Sumter
- **August 29** – Rock Hill Operations Center, City of Rock Hill
- **September 4** – Lexington Municipal Complex, Town of Lexington

To register, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: RAM). For more information, contact Ashleigh Hair at [ahair@masc.sc](mailto:ahair@masc.sc) or 803.933.1288.



## Test yourself monthly quiz

**True or False:** Once the municipal budget has been adopted council is no longer responsible for oversight — that job falls to the mayor or city administrator/manager to handle.

### Answer: False

Once the budget is adopted, council is responsible for making sure that the budget is properly administered,

revenues and expenditures are properly documented, debt is responsibly issued and administered, and an external independent audit is conducted each year.

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government offers in-person and online courses. Basic

Budgeting and Municipal Finance is offered as an on-demand course online. The next in-person courses, *Forms of Municipal Government* as well as *Municipal Economic Development*, will take place September 17 at regional councils of governments locations. Learn more at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEOI).







# 2019 Legislative Session Wraps Up

The first year of South Carolina's 123rd General Assembly brought legislative action on many issues important to cities and towns, with some important bills being carried over to the second half of the two-year cycle in 2020.

The Municipal Association's Advocacy Initiatives saw early advancement beginning in January. The initiatives include

- providing flexibility to cities and towns in the ways they can use local hospitality and accommodations tax revenue to control flooding and drainage in tourism-focused areas. S217, a bill that allows cities to use local hospitality and accommodations taxes for flooding and drainage projects in tourism-related areas passed the Senate and sits in the House Ways and Means Committee;
- an effort to create a more predictable formula for the funding that municipalities receive from the Local Government Fund. H3137, a bill that adjusts the Local Government Fund up or down with the state budget,

passed the House and is on the Senate calendar; and

- \$3.2 million in recurring funds to the Criminal Justice Academy to reduce its funding dependence on fees and fines, develop mobile training opportunities and reduce wait times for new law enforcement officers.

Municipal elected officials worked to stop legislative efforts to restrict their ability to regulate harmful materials within their jurisdictions. At a time when cities and towns on the coast and elsewhere have been passing bans on single-use plastic bags, S394, a bill prohibiting any such bans, advanced to the full Senate for debate in April. Elected officials from cities and towns that have passed these bans came to Columbia to testify against S394.

H3274, meanwhile, would keep cities and towns from passing ordinances to regulate various tobacco and alternative nicotine products, like cigarettes or electronic cigarettes, or other vaping products. Specifically, municipalities

would not be able to regulate ingredients, flavors or licensing. That bill was amended in the subcommittee to clarify that the bill is not intended to interfere with local ordinances that prohibit smoking or vaping in public spaces, but efforts were rejected to amend the bill to expressly protect attempts to regulate local access through zoning ordinances.

Another bill that received pushback from cities and towns during the session, H4262, would have in its original form completely preempted local control of the ways in which companies deploy small cell facilities. An amendment returns much of the aesthetic control over the installation of these facilities to municipalities, but remains a likely unconstitutional encroachment by the state with regards to municipal rights of way.

*Look for a more detailed overview of the legislative session in the 2019 annual legislative report, which will be available at the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting in July and online.*

## Association Highlight:

### Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

Many municipal job positions have specific training and networking needs, and the Municipal Association of South Carolina's affiliate associations offer opportunities to meet those needs. The Municipal Court Administration Association of SC promotes the professional and sound administration of courts for cities and towns. It disseminates up-to-date information about the field and encourages court officials to make the best possible use

of new technologies. The MCAA listserves, a benefit of membership, offers access to court administrators, clerks of court, municipal judges, and other city or town employees involved in court administration for troubleshooting and best practices.

At its spring meeting, MCAA members and guests heard from Lt. John Dyas of the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force about the threat of

sovereign citizens. The April 2019 issue of *Uptown* took a closer look at this topic, focusing on both the definition of a sovereign citizen and a look at the tactics they use. Read the article online at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Uptown).

The MCCA Annual Meeting will take place August 28 – 30 at the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort.

*Learn more about MCAA and how to join at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MCAA).*



# Don't Get Burned This Fourth of July

## Watch Out for Liabilities With Fireworks Ordinances, Fireworks Displays

The Fourth of July is the most popular holiday of the year for fireworks, and it's also a time of questions about fireworks ordinances and risk management checks on city fireworks displays.

### Local fireworks ordinances

Cities and towns can take steps to regulate the use of fireworks within their boundaries, according to state law, but they cannot prohibit or criminalize the use of fireworks. Making sure that municipal ordinances do not conflict with state law is an important part of managing legal risks on fireworks.

Local governing bodies do have the power to create a Fireworks Prohibited Zone, according to SC Code Section 23-35-175. They can also regulate the time when fireworks may be discharged.

A 2011 South Carolina Attorney General opinion noted that local officials should be careful to make violations of local fireworks ordinances punishable only with civil penalties, much like the penalties found in smoking prohibitions.

### Managing city-sponsored displays

When cities and towns make firework displays a part of their Independence Day celebrations, they should make sure their fireworks display company has appropriate insurance. Virtually all insurance coverage for cities and towns specifically excludes coverage for fireworks displays, and municipalities generally cannot acquire separate coverage for fireworks displays since they are not in control of the fireworks display company.

Fireworks display companies should have coverage including

- workers' compensation;
- auto liability; and
- general liability coverage, with the coverage limits equal to or greater than the coverage limits carried by the municipality.

The municipality should also be named as an additional insured entity on the display company's auto liability and general liability certificates of insurance, as provided directly from the insurance

provider. The possibility exists that coverage could be cancelled between the time the insurance provider issues the certificate and the event, so it's a good idea to call the insurance provider or the insurance agent on the last business day before the event to confirm that the coverage is still active.

Just as Thanksgiving Day raises the threat of cooking fires, the Fourth of July brings fireworks hazards every year. The National Fire Protection Association notes that more than one quarter of all fireworks fires take place on Independence Day, while nearly half of all fires reported on Independence Day were the result of fireworks.

The NFPA also reports these damages and injuries from fireworks in an average year:

- 18,500 fires, including 1,300 structure fires and 300 vehicle fires;
- three deaths;
- 40 civilian injuries; and
- \$43 million in direct property damage.





# Managing Water Parks, Pools and Water Bodies

From Aiken to Clover, Woodruff and others, city-run splash pads have sprung up around the state in recent years. Full-fledged water parks have as well — in 2018, the City of Hartsville opened Neptune Island Waterpark, a facility that won the city a Municipal Association Achievement Award this year. In the City of Duncan, Shipwreck Cove Water Park marked its 10th season last year.

These parks, along with city-owned pools and recreational facilities on bodies of water, improve livability for residents and attract visitors. They also bring their own set of regulatory requirements and liability considerations, which tend to be severe when they do happen.

## Water parks, splash pads

Some liability concerns for water attractions that receive less attention are the need for regular inspection and supervision for stairs and platforms — elements that can increase the potential for trips, slips and falls. Wading pools as well as zero-entry or beach-entry pools serve small children and inexperienced swimmers and need special attention from lifeguards. Wave pools also make lifeguarding duty more challenging, given the constant movement of the water's surface. Operators should also pay attention to the maintenance of disinfecting mechanisms for recirculating water, since breakdowns of this equipment can open the possibility of recreational water illnesses.

## Swimming pools

Some key exposure issues for swimming pools, at a waterpark or otherwise, are improperly grounded electrical equipment as well as faded or otherwise illegible depth markings. A lack of proper fencing can also be an issue because of the legal doctrine of attractive nuisances. This holds



that property owners should take steps to discourage children from trespassing to access something that can be reasonably anticipated to attract them, such as a pool.

## Water bodies

For city parks established along lakes and rivers, signage is important, such as “swim at your own risk” warnings for areas without lifeguards. In some cases, the municipality may need to restrict, or prohibit altogether, activities such as swimming and fishing. Officials should also consider having adequate railings and keeping lifesaving equipment nearby for visitors to use.

## State regulations

Cities and towns with water attractions can find guidance from the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control's Regulation 61-51, which regulates public swimming pools as well as other built, public facilities — the individual attractions at a water park or a splash pad. The regulation governs construction and design requirements, equipment, operation and maintenance. It also includes a 16-part list of required items for a pool rules sign and sets out the regulations for signs indicating that no diving is allowed or that no lifeguard is on duty.



# Meeting Playground Safety Standards

In 1994, a fourth grader at Irmo Elementary School was injured after a slip and fall from a piece of playground equipment — equipment that had been modified in accordance with the safety recommendations of a playground equipment sales representative who did not have training or licensing as an engineer.

The case eventually resulted in a SC Supreme Court ruling, *Ellege v. Richland/Lexington School District Five*, which ruled that, even though there are no federally mandated standards for playground safety, “relevant evidence of industry standards” is admissible as evidence in negligence cases.

One such commonly accepted document of standards is the *Public Playground Safety Handbook* of the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, available at the commission’s website, [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

That handbook digs into the considerations of planning, building, inspecting and maintaining a playground. For example, as part of the site selection process, alongside concerns about excessive sun exposure as well as drainage, it recommends taking note of nearby hazards which children might run into or toward — “roads with traffic, lakes, ponds, streams, drop-offs/cliffs, etc.” It also calls for a separation of conflicting activities, such as making sure that a slide exits into an uncongested area.

The publication also provides a breakdown of equipment appropriate for each age group and calls for the separation of each into its own area. For example, toddler-appropriate equipment includes swings with full bucket seats while the oldest group, children ages 5 to 12, could make use of arch climbers, chain or cable walks or vertical sliding poles. The handbook also calls for playground planners to make sure that the areas intended for different age groups are visible from one another so that caregivers can keep an eye on their children of different ages at the same time.

Members of the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund have access to the *Parks and Recreation Liability Toolkit*, which covers playground safety, among other liability topics such as parks personnel, supervision, recreation programs and facilities rules. Its playground safety checklist breaks down some key measurement thresholds for playgrounds, including

- protective surfacing around playground equipment needs to extend at least 6 feet in all directions from the play equipment, and for swings, the surfacing should extend at least twice the height of the extending bar forward and back;
- all play structures taller than 30 inches should be spaced at least 9 feet apart; and



- spaces that can trap children, “such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs,” should either be smaller than 3.5 inches or else wider than 9 inches.

Another publication accepted as a document of industry standards is the *Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use* of the American Society for Testing and Materials. It is available for purchase through [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org) either as a PDF or printed book.

Learn more about the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: SCMIRF).



# Horseshoes, Pickles and Flying Discs

## Cities Get in the Game with Alternative Sports

**A**iming to meet the needs of residents who want to stay active and enjoy healthy competition, cities and towns are turning to nontraditional sports and activities in their parks.

Low-cost alterations, such as laying out disc golf courses in existing parks and green spaces or converting older tennis courts into pickleball courts, brings in locals as well as out-of-towners for afternoon fun, and even attracts regional tournaments.

Recreation directors say civic engagement is what makes their programs a success and the goal is to keep people active by offering as many different types of outlets as possible.

“Our return on investment is that we’re offering something residents can’t get without driving 20 to 30 minutes down the road,” said Scott Sawyer, director of Newberry’s Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, who helped create the 24-court horseshoe park that brings the professional Horseshoe Tour to Newberry.

### Close doesn’t count

Only ringers count at the SummerFun Horseshoe Tournament held each April in Newberry, one of four stops on the Horseshoe Tour, where pitchers vie for cash prizes. They come for Newberry’s 24 courts with pits of Kentucky blue clay.

“Ours are a little different than most people have ever seen if they are used to the backyard horseshoes,” Sawyer said. “It’s the best horseshoe clay you can get. The horseshoes hit the clay and they stick.”

The National Horseshoe Pitchers Association has been coming to Newberry for eight years. This year, the city decided to hold its Pork in the Park barbecue competition at the same time the horseshoe pitchers were in town.

“We’ve gotten where we have enough staff to be able to handle two different



Newberry serves as one of four stops for the SummerFun Horseshoe Tournament each year.

Photos: City of Newberry.

events at two different locations on the same weekend,” Sawyer said, adding that the pitchers enjoy the camaraderie and having something else to do during their weekend competitions.

This year, about 60 pitchers from a dozen states made the trek to Newberry, bringing family and friends and offering local residents an interesting weekend of spectating.

“Horseshoes is not necessarily the easiest sport to watch from a spectator standpoint,” Sawyer said. “But it really is something to see.”

One year, he said, a competitor made 30 out of 30 ringers — a perfect game.

### Where are the pickles?

One of the more interesting current trends in recreation is a game called pickleball. The origins of the funny name for the game, which is a combination of tennis, badminton and table tennis, are a bit murky. The USA Pickleball Association believes the truth probably lies in one or both stories told by the founders — three families on Bainbridge

Island, Wash., who in 1965 were trying to help their kids find something to do with whatever equipment they could cobble together.

One story has it that the game’s collection of contributing sports resembled the mishmash of what crew teams call the “pickle boat” — the crew made up of leftovers from all the other boats. The other says the name came from the pup of one of the founding families — a Cocker Spaniel named “Pickles.”

Either way, the USA Pickleball Association indicates it is one of the fastest-growing sports around, particularly among aging tennis players who find themselves unable to cover the larger court because of injuries or lack of mobility.

“It’s less demanding on your body,” said Paola Maoli, director of Camden’s tennis center and downtown Pickleball Plaza. “The ball is lighter, the paddle is smaller. People play every day.”

Camden’s Pickleball Plaza was created as the new tennis center was built and existing tennis courts were converted to



pickleball courts. The city now offers 16 tennis courts and a dozen pickleball courts.

“The population in Camden made it happen,” said Maoli, adding that Camden doesn’t officially sponsor a pickleball league, but does offer players rental equipment. “Just about every morning, I have four or five pickleball courts playing.”

Down the road in Aiken, “the sport with a funny name” is a little better established, said Jessica Campbell, the city’s parks director.

Again, it was residents who pushed for the addition of the sport.

“We had some new members in the community who moved to Aiken and were ambassadors on a national level for the USA Pickleball Association,” Campbell said. “They came and asked us how they could get pickleball going, and it took some education on their end to teach us about the sport. We hosted a free clinic on a Saturday in 2010 and had an amazing turnout. We haven’t slowed down since.”

Aiken now has eight outdoor and nine indoor courts dedicated to pickleball.

“What we’re seeing as the benefit is a lot of tennis players who have aged out of tennis, maybe they’re not as quick on the court or can’t run the distance or have some joint issues, they are able to pick up the sport of pickleball fairly easy,” Campbell said. “It seems to be an easier activity



The 12 courts of Camden’s Pickleball Plaza are converted tennis courts. Photo: City of Camden.

for someone who doesn’t have as much mobility. I think that’s why is popular with the senior community.”

### Playing nine or 18 baskets

In terms of carving out play space, the sport of disc golf is one of the easier additions cities and towns can make.

The most recent entrant into the field is the Town of Williston, which cut the ribbon on its course in April 2019.

The course was installed in an existing park and paid for with funds from a 1% countywide tax approved by voters and with grants from a nonprofit organization that paid for the baskets — or targets — that golfers aim for with their flying discs, similar to Frisbees.

For Williston, like other cities and towns, the key to the course’s success is community involvement.

“We have a man in town who volunteered his services when he heard we were building a disc golf course,” Town Administrator Kenneth Cook said. “He laid it out for us with some friends of his who play disc golf.”

The park where the course is located — the aptly named Town Park — also has tennis courts, a baseball field, picnic shelter, pond and playground equipment.

“The course is challenging enough for the more advanced players and enjoyable for those who are just beginning,” Cook said.



Pickleball uses courts set up with the same dimensions as a badminton court, with a 36-inch net. Photo: City of Camden.



# Making Special Events Go Off Without a Hitch



From festivals to farmers markets, special events often form a huge part of the public perception of cities and towns. There are as many ways to plan out and manage these productions as there are variations of events themselves, but in most cases, city-sponsored events have the advantage of city resources. Below are a handful of examples from around the state.

## Trailblazer Park, Travelers Rest

Boasting a view of the Blue Ridge Mountains and a connection to the Swamp Rabbit Trail, Trailblazer Park hosts a Music in the Park series and Movies in the Park series, as well as the Fall Bluegrass & Harvest Market. Events make use of the onsite amphitheater and permanent restrooms. Beth Sicignano of Tr Creatives works with the city to make these events possible.

For concerts, Sicignano said that they stick to fairly local bands and

tribute bands, with a vendor hired for sound design and lighting. The movies work in a similar way — the movie screening is licensed, and then a hired company handles the set up and break down of the significantly heavy screen. It also makes the call as to whether or not the screen can withstand wind gusts on a given night.

“We made a decision early on that we didn’t have the staff [to manage the event]. I can’t drag one of those [screens] around,” she said.

City-hosted events in Travelers Rest, as in other places, are integrated into existing city services. Police help with security, public works helps with after-event trash removal. Local restaurants serve as food vendors while the Travelers Rest Artist Alliance handles beverage sales.

Sicignano also handles tracking down event sponsors, which she describes as a great way to build connections between local businesses and event goers.

“Usually in January, I have my sponsorship packet all ready to go,” she said. “We have different levels of sponsorships, and we make them pretty affordable.”

## Icehouse Amphitheater, Lexington

Walker Brewer got his start in event production, he said, when he was a kid, “asking the sound guy at an event what all the buttons on the board did.” That interest would lead to audio engineering for concerts and ultimately a career in production management. Then, in 2016, the Town of Lexington fulfilled its vision of opening a 900-seat amphitheater venue in its downtown area, and it hired Brewer as its downtown venue promoter.

The Icehouse Amphitheater books and promotes its own events — things like concerts and movies — but it also rents out the space for private promoters to handle events. Adding together both categories, Brewer said, the venue is averaging a little more than 50 events per year.



Trailblazer Park is home to concerts, movies, festivals and the Travelers Rest Farmers Market. Photo: City of Travelers Rest.



*Icehouse Amphitheater takes its name from an ice plant that operated at its site from 1928 – 2012.  
Photo: Town of Lexington.*

He said that event management at the venue has enjoyed the benefits of buy-in from across the Town of Lexington’s leadership, working with the Police Department for security as well as Parks and Sanitation for cleanup.

The Icehouse does some ticketed events, with a private company hired for ticket collection and backstage security. Brewer said the venue has recorded two sold-out shows with Edwin McCain, a sold-out show with Sister Hazel, and two sold-out shows with Resurrection, a Journey tribute band.

For cities and towns interested in creating a dedicated event venue space, he advised that they make sure their manager is ready.

“Make sure you have someone who is willing to take on the challenge, who is willing to work with it and make it happen. It doesn’t necessarily have to be someone who knows the industry, but it has to be someone who wants to work,” he said.

### Downtown Orangeburg

Soon, the Downtown Orangeburg Farmers Market will have a purpose-built

pavilion as its permanent location. But for the first five years of its existence, the Farmers Market has been a street event, like other events staged by the Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association that require careful planning and coordination. DORA averages nine to 10 events every year requiring street

closures, according Candice Roberson, its executive director. These include street dances, car shows, the Food Truck & Craft Beer Festival, and “A Taste of the Market,” a four-course farm-to-table dinner.

Describing the process of street closures, Roberson said it begins with permitting. She then coordinates with city administration and department heads, providing a map showing planned barricade locations and discussing where and when the road closures will take place.

“Usually, two days before an event, we’re walking the road with the key players, not just the department heads, but the actual supervisors that are going to be out there putting out the barricades,” she said.

The process also considers affected business owners. DORA notifies businesses of street events at least 30 days in advance of the dates and times. A street dance that begins at 6 p.m. actually begins with a road closure starting at 3 p.m. to allow for the setup of things like food trucks or light-stringing. DORA also announces street closures on social media, typically with a map showing where the event is happening and where visitors can find parking.



*2019 marks the third year of the Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization’s Taste of the Market event.  
Photo: City of Orangeburg.*





# A Day in the Life of a

## *Parks and Recreation Director*



Parks and Recreation

When municipal leaders talk about amenities and quality of life in their cities and towns, the discussion often turns to parks, recreation and green spaces.

Keeping those features clean and well-kept while keeping programs running smoothly is the job of the parks and recreation department. These departments take pride in the beautification of community spaces and the recreation opportunities they offer.

Gregg Powell, the parks and recreation director in Easley, has made the department his life's work — literally. He was born and raised in the city, played three sports at Easley High School and played American Legion baseball on the Easley fields. He started working in the parks department as a summer playground director while he was in college, and for the most part has been with Easley's Parks and Recreation Department since. He was named director in 1989.

During his time, the department's staff of five full-time workers has grown to 20 full-time and 50 part-time employees. While Powell said his job responsibilities have changed quite a bit, the mission of the parks and recreation department stays the same — to provide sports and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, and keeping the city's parks and green spaces clean and welcoming.

"In 1996, we bought the land to build our own recreation complex," Powell said. "It's the best thing the City of Easley has ever done for our city. It's a tremendous



City of Easley Parks and Recreation Director Gregg Powell. Photo: City of Easley.

complex. This is one of the first places the mayor will bring a family to see what the City of Easley offers."

Easley's parks have about 100 events a year, including about 80 sports tournaments. The city's parks have hosted the youth Big League World Series, college tournaments and recreational baseball leagues.

Along with running sports operations, parks and recreation departments often keep up the grounds at parks and green

spaces, making sure they are safe and accessible for locals and visitors. Easley maintains its part of the Doodle Trail, which it shares with the City of Pickens.

The trail is named for an old railroad route that ran through textile mills. The cities bought the rail line rights of way to create an 8-mile trail for walkers, runners and cyclists.

"The main object was to get people moving and exercising and to bring people to downtown," Powell said. "We take care



of 4 miles of the trail, and Pickens meets us halfway. Last year we opened the Doodle Park with a playground and a picnic shelter. We even have two refurbished train cars we've converted into our bathrooms."

The City of Walterboro's parks department has five full-time maintenance workers, a park superintendent and Ryan McLeod as parks director. They oversee five parks with playground equipment, landscaping and managed turf. One of the parks has a small pond and a paved trail. The department also oversees a tennis center and is responsible for the 600-acre Walterboro Wildlife Sanctuary and its 4 miles of walking trails. The sanctuary offers boardwalks, bridges, and bike and walking trails that provide an up-close view of the Lowcountry wildlife and vegetation.

"We attempt to blow the walking paths and boardwalks roughly three times a week. This allows us to regularly assess the conditions. With the recent flooding over the past couple of years, we have seen some small areas of erosion and are generally able to correct the issue before it becomes more serious," McLeod said. "We pay close attention to tree health of those lining the walking path. We try to identify

fall risk and remove them if deemed necessary."

The Walterboro Wildlife Discovery Center will open later this summer, offering visitors an interpretive exhibition hall illustrating the essential role swamps play in the Lowcountry.

McLeod is new to the job in Walterboro, having previously worked as an assistant superintendent at a golf club. He starts his day early around 6:30 a.m., touching base with the crew in the maintenance shop before starting on work in his office, including his role as administrator of the Tree Protection Committee. The City of Walterboro requires a permit to remove trees from private property once the trees have grown to a certain diameter. "For me personally, being away from the 'dirty' work has been a challenge," he said. "In my previous line of work, I was always there with the crew and working on the front line. My responsibilities are different now. I am adjusting and trying to manage my time to ensure I can be out there with the crew when possible. I now always have a change of 'work clothes' for when the opportunity to get dirty arises."

Russell Haltiwanger, the director of parks and recreation in Fountain Inn, played professional baseball before he started with the department part-time while he finished his college degree. A pitcher at Newberry College, he played five years in the minor leagues after being drafted by the Cincinnati Reds after his junior year of college. He has worked several jobs in the parks and recreation department since then and became director in 2016.

The department has four full-time employees and a few part-time workers. It runs a senior adult program in the gym each weekday, serving 300 to 400 seniors each week with exercise classes, a weight room and other rooms for recreational activities such as crafts and games. The department also maintains 50 acres of parks, three portions of the Swamp Rabbit Trail and two baseball fields for 450 little league players. Big changes are coming to Fountain Inn with the addition of a newly renovated Woodside Park next year.

The department has four full-time employees and a few part-time workers. It runs a senior adult program in the gym each weekday, serving 300 to 400 seniors each week with exercise classes, a weight room and other rooms for recreational activities such as crafts and games. The department also maintains 50 acres of parks, three portions of the Swamp Rabbit Trail and two baseball fields for 450 little league players. Big changes are coming to Fountain Inn with the addition of a newly renovated Woodside Park next year.



City of Walterboro Parks Director Ryan McLeod.  
Photo: City of Walterboro.

The new park will feature three baseball/softball fields in a cloverleaf pattern with a central press box, top-of-the-line playground equipment, a multipurpose field and a Miracle League field for players with special needs.

Running parks and recreation departments doesn't come without challenges — particularly finding the right staff and volunteers to keep up with the programs.

"The number-one problem most recreation departments have is parental problems and coaches who want to win at all costs," Powell said. "We want the kids to have a positive experience through the recreation department. Our athletic department does a good job screening and training and getting the best people to coach. We want it to be a place where the kids will continue to grow and they'll come back someday and be a coach themselves."

McLeod said maintaining a workforce will always be a challenge for parks departments.

"It is my responsibility to retain quality workers when other companies, like local landscapers, offer more money," he said. "Allowing the crew to take ownership, provide insight and feel comfortable enough to discuss how they may do something differently is key to building a trusting and longstanding crew."



City of Fountain Inn Parks and Recreation Director Russell Haltiwanger. Photo: City of Fountain Inn.



1411 Gervais Street | PO Box 12109  
 Columbia, South Carolina 29211  
 Tel: 803.799.9574 | Fax: 803.933.1299  
 www.masc.sc

PRESORTED  
 STANDARD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Greenville, S.C.  
 PERMIT NO. 305

# Calendar

For a complete listing of the Association's training opportunities, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) to view the calendar.

## JUNE

**4 SC Business Licensing Officials Association ABL Exam.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**6 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Second Quarter Meeting.** Seawell's, Columbia. Topics include stormwater best practices and updates on the Construction General Permit and MS4 Permit.

**12 Risk Management Services Orientation.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia. Topics include an overview of underwriting, claims, the SC Municipal Insurance Trust and the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund; loss control resources, assessments and

tools; and a demonstration of the law enforcement training simulator.

**16 – 19 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Annual Meeting.** Marriott at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach. Topics include generational diversity and retention strategies, infrastructure essentials, Southeast Natural Gas fundamentals, site considerations and permitting requirements, distributed energy resources, cable testing, websites, animal mitigation and asset protection within a substation, and kiosk solutions.

## JULY

**11 SCMIT and SCMIRF Defensive Driving Training.** West Columbia City Hall.

**18 – 21 Municipal Association of SC Annual Meeting.** Hyatt Regency Greenville.

## AUGUST

**6 SC Business Licensing Officials Association ABL Exam.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**13 Regional Advocacy Meeting.** The Arts Center of Greenwood. Upper Savannah Council of Governments area.

**14 Regional Advocacy Meeting.** Myrtle Beach Train Depot. Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments area.

**15 Regional Advocacy Meeting.** Goose Creek Fire Department. Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments area.

**20 Regional Advocacy Meeting.** Beaufort City Hall Conference Center. Lowcountry Council of Governments area.

**21 Regional Advocacy Meeting.** North Augusta Municipal Building. Lower Savannah Council of Governments area.