



# UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



## Officials should note changes to public prayer

In 2016, the General Assembly changed the SC Public Invocation Act to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2014 decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*. In that case, the Supreme Court made specific rulings on how public bodies should conduct prayers at their meetings. Additionally, the General Assembly changed who is allowed to deliver those prayers.

Through Act 198, the General Assembly codified the Supreme Court’s determination in the *Greece* decision that prayers at meetings of public bodies must not “seek to be exploited to proselytize or advance any one (religion), or to disparage any other faith or belief.”

The Act also prohibits coercing observers of meetings into participating in a prayer. Instead, the observers should be given the option to participate. Coercion can be as simple as saying to everyone in the room, “Please bow your head.” That request is coercive because it does not allow an observer the option not to bow his head. However, inviting observers to participate in the prayer if they choose by saying, “You are welcome to join me in prayer,” satisfies the Supreme Court’s ruling.

Finally, Act 198 eliminated the need to rotate the delivery of the invocation among the members of the public body, as

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previously required by state law. Instead, the body may appoint one of its members to deliver the invocation.

A chaplain appointed by the public body or from among religious leaders within the community may continue to deliver prayers. The appointment of a chaplain by the council has always been an option. That was not changed by the amendment to the law.

No matter who is chosen to deliver a prayer at a meeting, public officials must keep in mind the requirements in the Act.

An invocation of a public body is delivered for the benefit of the members of the body, not the public in attendance at the meeting. Therefore, anyone who delivers an invocation at a meeting of a

public body should direct the prayer to the body in order to mitigate the possibility of running afoul of the Supreme Court's ruling.

Additionally, public bodies should incorporate a prayer policy into their rules of procedures using the Act as a guide. If a council's rules of procedures already include a prayer policy, cities should review those procedures to make sure they comply with changes in the law.

None of the changes to the Public Invocation Act prevent people from praying to whomever they choose. The Supreme Court affirmed in its *Greece* decision that sectarian prayers are permissible, as long as they do not seek to promote or denigrate any one religion.

## Achievement Awards making headlines in 2017

**T**he Achievement Awards give cities and towns the chance to make headlines for the good work happening in their communities.

The awards program recognizes excellence in local government programs, shares ideas among city officials, and reminds residents and businesses of the value they derive from the city or town where they live.

Cities and towns can submit only one entry in one of the nine categories. The "fill-in-the-blank," online application

provides an easy-to-use format to highlight a project's key points.

The Association uses three judges to review each entry. The 2017 judges include two executive directors from municipal associations in other states as well as a retired local government professional with 30 years of South Carolina experience.

Municipalities with a population of 20,000 or less may participate in a population or subject category. Those with a population greater than 20,000 must compete in a subject category.

# Verified data help communicate information



November is a month full of beautiful fall leaves, turkey, football and, of course, the Municipal Association's annual database cleanup. Every year around this time, municipal clerks are asked to review, update and verify their city's information in the Association's database.

The database allows municipal elected officials and staff to receive important information from the Association. This includes news about training opportunities offered by affiliate associations and Risk Management Services, registration deadlines for the Annual Meeting, legal updates and background on legislation essential to local government.

The database also houses information to be used in the online and print versions of the 2017 *Municipal Officials and Legislative Directory*, which provides easy

access to key demographic information, contact information and names of elected officials and key municipal personnel.

Municipal clerks will receive an email and letter in early November reminding them to make updates by November 20 using the Municipal Information Dashboard, which is accessible from the Association's website. While the Dashboard can be accessed and updated throughout the year, it is important to update the information in November in preparation for the printed edition of the 2017 Directory.

*Clerks have exclusive access to the Dashboard. For cities without a clerk, or if someone else should be designated to update it, contact Ashleigh Hair at [ahair@masc.sc](mailto:ahair@masc.sc) or 803.933.1288. Access the Municipal Information Dashboard instructions at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MID instructions).*

For cities and towns entering by population category, only a written entry is required. For those entering a subject category, judges will evaluate a written entry and an oral presentation, scheduled for March 6 and 7.

## Population Categories

- 1-1,000 population
- 1,001-5,000 population
- 5,001-10,000 population
- 10,001-20,000 population

## Subject Categories

- Communications
- Economic Development – Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award
- Public Safety

- Public Service
- Public Works

Cities and towns must submit their entries electronically or hand deliver them by 5 p.m. on February 15. Entries sent through the U.S. Postal Service must be postmarked by February 15.

Award winners will be recognized at the Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast held on Hilton Head Island on Saturday, July 22.

*View previous winners and entries at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc). (keyword: achievement awards). For more information regarding the 2017 Achievement Awards, contact Meredith Houck at 803.933.1215 or [mhouck@masc.sc](mailto:mhouck@masc.sc).*

# NEWS BRIEFS

Members of the **Municipal Court Administration Association of SC** elected their 2017 board of directors. President Pam Larson, City of Greenville; Vice President Lachesha Dowdy, City of Clinton; Secretary/Treasurer Susan Broyles-Krohn, Town of Summerville; Member at Large Mary McWaine, City of Charleston; Member at Large Brittany Burns, City of Cayce; Member at Large Kirsten Pressley, City of Greer; Past President Deloris Frye, City of Bennettsville.

Members of the **South Carolina Association of Stormwater Managers** elected their 2017 board of directors. President Tim Sherbert, Spartanburg County; Vice President David Dickson, City of Rock Hill; Secretary/Treasurer Eric Larson, Beaufort County; Member at Large Fowler Del Porto, KCI Technologies; Immediate Past President Jon Batson, Anderson County.

Members of the **Municipal Technology Association of SC** elected their 2017 board of directors. President Jim Ridgill, City of Greer; Vice President Phil Hasty, City of Clinton; Secretary/Treasurer Ryan Byrd, City of Goose Creek; Member at Large Tracy McKee, City of Charleston; Member at Large Mark Cunningham, City of Anderson; Member at Large Jason Thomson, Town of Fort Mill; Past President Jarvis Driggers, Information Technology Director, City of Lancaster.

Rock Hill Chief Information Officer **Vince Simonowicz** was named CIO of the Year in the Government category by *Charlotte Business Journal*.



(left) Pokémon Go drew visitors to downtown Sumter/City of Sumter. (top right) The City of Greer's Building Official Ruthie Helms and Codes Enforcement Officer Tor Ellstrom provided safety tips and reflectors/City of Greer. (bottom right) Children and adults took part in the craze/City of Sumter.

# Cities harness Pokémon craze to promote downtowns

They seemed to be everywhere this summer: People wandering around parks, museums and downtowns holding up their cell phones as they walked. They were trying to capture the magical creatures known as Pokémon.

In Pokémon Go, a location-based augmented reality game, players use a mobile device's GPS to locate, capture, battle and train virtual creatures which appear on the screen as if you could touch them. But Pokémon Go players weren't only interested in catching Pidgey or Pikachu. Turns out, these players were stopping in downtown stores, dining in restaurants, enjoying neighborhood parks and learning more about the cities they were visiting.

And some cities were quick to tap into the game that took the world by storm this summer.

In Greer, foot traffic increased dramatically in the city park when the Pokémon Go craze hit in July. The city saw the phenomenon as a way to highlight Greer and support local businesses.

There were nearly two dozen Pokéstops within a quarter-mile radius of the park along with four "gyms," which

are locations where players can battle the Pokémon of rival teams or train their own Pokémon.

"It was a perfect draw not only to the park offerings but also to the businesses in Greer Station," said Steve Owens, communications manager for the city of Greer. "The game and the city's offerings meshed perfectly."

Greer moved its National Night Out celebration from neighborhoods to Greer City Park and made Pokémon Go a part of it. In addition to games, displays and refreshments, the city placed lures—game modules that attract Pokémon to a Pokéstop for 30 minutes—at Pokéstops in the park. While Pokémon players place most lures, businesses and cities also use them to attract players and potential customers to a location.

The city also used the free event to educate adults and children about the game's potential dangers and distributed free lighted safety reflectors to keep players safe in the dark.

"The turnout for National Night Out exceeded all expectations. We ran out of giveaway items and kept a steady

stream of traffic at booths and displays all evening, thanks, in part, to a \$15 investment in Pokémon Go," said Owens.

The amount represents how much the city spent on lures which were purchased through the game.

The Pokémon safety tips cost the city nothing except for minor copying costs, while branded lighted reflectors cost less than \$1 each and were given out to visitors as freebies.

The game also has helped introduce families to food, entertainment and recreation offerings in Greer Station, the central business district adjacent to the park.

Kyle Mensing, commercial development director of the Greer Development Corp., said after a little investigation, he learned how easy it was to access Pokémon Go. His office made a Google map listing of the Pokémon "gyms" and stops, while educating Greer business owners and event planners about the game.

Sumter is another city that went all-in on the Pokémon Go trend, sponsoring a downtown Lure-A-Thon to attract people to the large concentration of PokéStops in the business district.

“Downtown has undergone many revitalization projects within the last 10 years, and our goal is to bring people down here to enjoy the new terraces, green spaces, restaurants and retail stores. Hosting a Pokémon Go Lure-A-Thon seemed like a great way to achieve that goal,” said Chelsea Nations, Sumter’s community improvement specialist.

Before the Lure-A-Thon, the city contacted two local businesses about running Pokémon specials. One offered 99-cent ice cream sundaes and another sold \$1 hotdogs and half-priced beer.

“The restaurants were packed all day. We had about 2,000 people at the Lure-A-Thon, many who hadn’t been downtown in years. It was a great day for businesses. You can’t beat foot traffic like that,” Nations said.

She attributes the success to the game being easily accessible and the city’s decision to strike while the game was hot.

“We knew the craze wouldn’t last forever, so we planned the event in just a few weeks,” Nations said. “We didn’t spend any money on advertising. We hit social media and hit the streets passing out flyers. We wanted to attract a diverse crowd, so we tried to have something for everyone: face painting, a photo booth, a gaming merchandise table, Sprint phone charging station, Italian Ice, food specials and half-priced beer.”

Another Lure-a-Thon was planned in Sumter soon after the July event.

“The best lesson we learned was an awesome one—that people are hungry for these types of family-friendly events, and they will show up. It was a wonderful day. People were helping each other, laughing and discovering the beauty of downtown Sumter,” she said. “Watching 2,000 strangers come together to hunt and catch mythical creatures in an augmented-reality game is something I’ll never forget.”

And while the number of Pokémon hunters may have dropped a bit, cities should keep watching for the next big thing.

“The lesson to take away is that the augmented-reality trend will continue to grow, and there is an opportunity for municipalities to capitalize on it,” Mensing said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if the trend continues. It may not be Pokémon Go, but there will be another one to take its place.”



Leonard Zhukovsky / Shutterstock.com

## Complying with new traffic ticket processes

**S**tarting in January of 2017, municipal court officials will be required to do things a little differently. Specifically, Uniform Traffic Ticket submission procedures are getting a digital twist.

### Why the change?

In January of 2015, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration notified the South Carolina Department of Transportation and the SC Department of Motor Vehicles of a change in federal law (Section 32301 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act) that requires that South Carolina comply with federal regulation 49 CFR 384.401 by September 30, 2015. This regulation says traffic conviction data must be sent to the state in which a commercial driver’s license holder is licensed within 10 days of the conviction. A state is in compliance if it meets the 10-day requirement 90 percent of the time.

### Did South Carolina miss the deadline?

No. South Carolina received a grace period with a full implementation target date of January 1, 2018.

### What happens if South Carolina doesn’t comply?

South Carolina could lose \$24 million in federal road funding the first year, \$48 million the following year, and possibly impact its ability to issue and maintain commercial driver’s license credentials.

### What is the state and local piece of this?

Section 32301 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act prompted the state General Assembly to pass Act 185, which directs cities and towns to pick one of three ways to report tickets electronically.

The new state law goes into effect January 1, 2017 and says state and local law enforcement agencies must forward citations to the appropriate court and the DMV within three business days of the date an offender is ticketed. After the final trial court action, the appropriate court must forward disposition information electronically to the DMV within five business days of the trial date.

### How this will work?

After a law enforcement officer writes a citation, the officer will give the offender a printed copy by using an in-car data terminal, handheld device, or pen and pad, depending on the department’s normal method. The issuing agency will then upload the citation information via one of three methods: software provided by a vendor of choice, the DMV’s web-based portal, or the South Carolina Collision and Ticket Tracking System.

Once the citation is submitted, the information on the ticket will automatically populate into a driver’s record. The automation will help South Carolina meet standards set in the new federal regulation.



# Credit card policy can prevent abuse

For many cities and towns, credit cards offer a safe and easy way for employees to pay for everyday items, such as office supplies, gas for travel and even vehicles.

But there are risks, too.

"I would love to say, 'outlaw all credit cards,'" said Toni McKinley, a certified public accountant with the Greenville firm McKinley, Cooper & Co. "But in this day and age, you can't."

For municipalities, the benefits of credit cards are the same as they are for the rest of us, said Mark Hobbs, managing shareholder and president of The Hobbs Group in Columbia. With the careful handling of receipts, credit cards can provide better recordkeeping of what was spent, when and why.

They're also cheaper and faster to process than traditional checks.

For larger purchases, such as expensive equipment, a city could pay off the charge in one month in order to avoid interest charges, said Ally Rivers, a CPA and auditor at The Hobbs Group.

But it can be a little too easy to spend money, said Rivers and Hobbs.

"It's important to monitor not only what people are spending money on, but whether they are going over the budgeted amount," Rivers said. Overspending is just one of the hazards of paying with plastic.

"Some of the worst cases of fraud that I have run across in my 37 years in the auditing business have involved the improper use of credit cards," Hobbs said.

Many times, however, the absence of a policy leads to misuse of the cards. Without written rules, employees have been found to mix personal purchases with official ones. "I've seen people fired for use of credit cards for personal purposes," McKinley said.

Employees must to be trained on the proper credit card usage, and cities can even block certain vendors, such as liquor stores or dry cleaners, to prevent the cards from being used for things that are clearly not city business, said Larry Finney, a partner with the accounting firm Greene, Finney & Horton in Greenville.

## The keys to success

Cities and towns should have a written policy that clearly defines how and when

credit cards may be used and, more importantly, when they cannot be used.

This policy should be consistently followed, McKinley said.

"Management can work on the policy and can submit to the council for approval, but the council should approve it formally," she said. "They have the overall financial responsibility."

"Usually when we do an audit, residents will ask us whether we are monitoring the credit card usage. They want to make sure we've done that," McKinley said. "The general public feels like that's an area where people could take advantage."

## Usage tips:

- Prevent confusion. Each card should be issued with the name of the employee who will be using it. Don't provide unassigned cards that can be used by anyone.
- Limit an employee to one card.
- Reconcile statements every month to keep small purchases from going unnoticed.
- Ensure that the person reconciling the statements is not the same person in charge of using the cards or paying the bill.

# Online MEO and advanced classes offer flexibility

The SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government training was created and designed for all levels of experience in municipal office.

MEO Sessions A, B and Advanced Institute classes will be held on Tuesday, January 31, at the Columbia Marriott. Additionally, mayors and councilmembers may complete MEO Institute requirements through the on-demand option. Registration is available at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEO). All on-demand classes must be completed by Monday, January 16, for graduation at 2017 Hometown Legislative Action Day.

To graduate from the Institute, elected officials must complete seven required courses. Five of the courses are available on demand 24/7.

- MEO Session A
  - MEO Session B (Session A must be completed prior to B)
  - Basic Budgeting and Municipal Finance\*
  - Freedom of Information Act in SC\*
  - Forms of Municipal Government\*
  - Municipal Economic Development\*
  - Municipal Governance and Policy\*
- \*available on demand*

“The presentation of this course and the flawlessness of its execution were exemplary,” one on-demand user recently wrote in a course survey. “I will continue to use online courses as they are offered. Well done!”

Additionally, for Institute graduates looking to build enhanced policy and governing skills, the Association offers the Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute. For elected officials interested in attending the Advanced Institute on January 31, registration information will be included with the 2017 Hometown Legislative Action Day materials. Online registration will open in December.

Advanced Institute participants may choose between two day-long sessions. To graduate the Advanced Institute, participants must complete four of six courses offered. The courses offered in January are “Advanced Budgeting and Finance” and “Advanced Leadership and Governance.”

**Advanced Budgeting and Finance** will pick up where the MEO Institute’s “Basic Budgeting and Finance” course left off. Presenters will focus on topics such as budget management, governmental accounting, annual audit, debt management and more.

**Advanced Leadership and Governance** will take an in-depth look at the leadership role of municipal elected officials. Participants will learn how to develop a bold vision for their hometowns and how to develop sound public policy to carry out that vision.

A councilmember said of recent Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute training, “All presenters were good and helped to strengthen me as a councilmember. I’m more aware of what to ask for and why certain things are done.”

## Hometown Legislative Action Day and MEO important dates

### Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government and Advanced Institute

Tuesday, January 31  
Columbia Marriott

### Hometown Legislative Action Day

Wednesday, February 1  
Columbia Marriott

### Brochures mailed and available on website ([www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc))

Monday, November 21

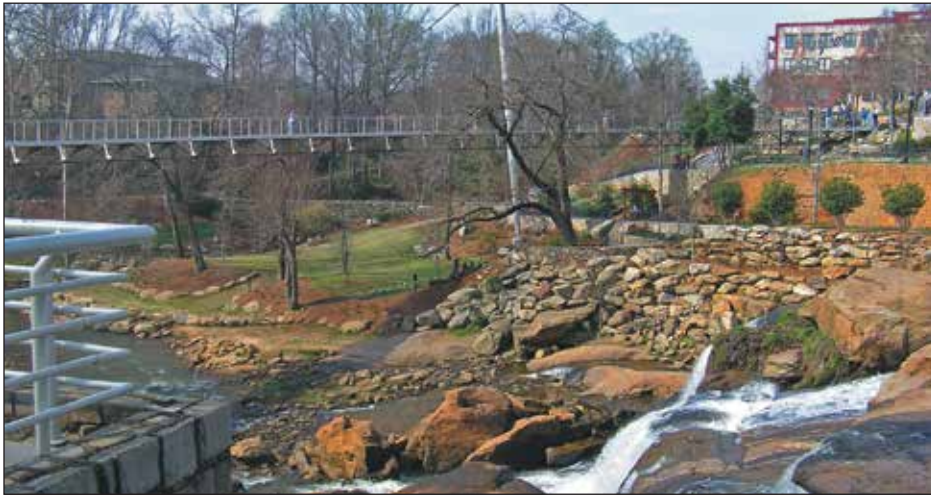
### Hotel reservations deadline

Thursday, January 5

Make hotel reservations at the Marriott Columbia by calling 1.800.593.6465 or 1.803.771.7000 and asking for the Municipal Association of SC HLAD rate of \$149 plus taxes.

### Registration deadline

Wednesday, January 18



Falls Park on the Reedy River in Greenville sets the city apart.



A yarn bombing decorates Columbia's Main Street.



## How to make a city lovable: show uniqueness

A perfectly good question for city officials to ask is this, according to one community engagement expert: Where's the fun?

"Nobody loves a city because you fix potholes for them," said Peter Kageyama, a self-proclaimed "city love guy," community development expert and author. "Nobody loves a city because you provide the basic elements of police, fire and paved roads. Of course you have to do that, but that is not why people love your cities."

People's most basic expectation is for a city to be functional and safe. But one trick to creating livable, loveable cities, where people of all generations and walks of life feel an emotional connection, is to define and foster a city's authenticity.

During his presentation at the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting in July, Kageyama highlighted yarn-bombing projects in cities as an example—knitting enthusiasts leave colorful woven creations on lamp posts and other public places.

In the City of Columbia, knitters gave the yarn-bomb treatment to trees, a parking meter and bike rack from September through October.

Artist Bohumila Augustinova led the project, which involved more than 20 knitters. She said One Columbia for Arts

and History, a nonprofit organization that promotes tourism in Columbia, worked with city officials to make sure the public art project complied with all ordinances.

Of the yarn bombing, Augustinova said: "I think the city already had a lot of sparkle, but it does (help). ... For how small a city it is, it's incredibly creative and supportive of the arts, so doing something like this just supports that and shows that, 'Yeah, we are a really creative city and we like cooperation.'"

Private donors and One Columbia, which receives hospitality-tax revenues, contributed money for the project.

"It's a neat way to add a lot of color to the street ... and to change up their landscape on their walk to work," said Lee Snelgrove, executive director of One Columbia.

Yarn is a fine medium for public art. But so is paint.

Kageyama mentioned another city on the west coast that commissioned an artist to put a paint-by-number design on an overlooked wall. "It's not necessarily high art, but it's highly interactive," said Kageyama, adding that the participatory nature of a creative project invites people to come together. It also inspires a "we painted that" response when residents drive or walk past the final product.

Other South Carolina cities, too, have ways to show visitors and residents what distinguishes them. While some efforts are relatively low cost, others call for greater measures.

### Lower-cost ideas

While construction was underway on the Hampton Inn and Suites and the Mantissa Executive Suites and Spa, the City of Hartsville built a "construction wall," and invited residents and Coker College students to adorn it with paint and comments. And in Anderson, the city is marked by 6-foot-long fiberglass fish, donated painted pianos, and a century-old generator, which celebrates Anderson's distinction as South Carolina's first electric city.

### Greater measures

Kageyama pointed to Falls Park on the Reedy River in downtown Greenville to show how removing a bridge more than 10 years ago generated a new source of social capital. In 2002, the Camperdown Bridge was taken down and plans began to develop 20 acres of gardens and install a curved suspension bridge. Falls Park is now a venue for outdoor yoga, weddings and other social activities.



# MCTI grads dig deep into clerk duties

In September, five officials graduated from the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, a three-year program that provides municipal clerks and treasurers with the skills critical to their profession.

During MCTI, clerks learn about the importance of keeping accurate minutes to preserve the history of council actions. Spivey noted that when she started the job in Landrum, she had no institutional memory about the city, and found reading years of accurate minutes helped her get up to speed.

“Reading years of minutes is a great way to better understand the history of the town as well as the background in some of the decisions that were made well before my time as city clerk,” said Spivey.

“It was also fun to see how over the last 75 years how little has changed in regard to the residents’ requests and complaints.”

To receive their certificates, the graduates attended more than 120 class hours on topics such as financial management, overview of government, public administration and conducting meetings.

During the September session, Holcombe received a scholarship to attend the Institute. The scholarship is underwritten by the Municipal Association and is available only to South Carolina Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association members. They may receive scholarships for up to six sessions.

MCTI graduates who are interested in pursuing the Certified Municipal Clerk designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks may apply their 120 hours of classroom time in MCTI toward the education requirements of the Certified Municipal Clerk program by completing a capstone project.

The capstone project is a method of applying knowledge that a graduate

gained through the MCTI program. It allows the clerk or treasurer to select a project that addresses a need and then complete that project.

The MCTI participant must select a project, get approval from a certification committee that oversees the capstone process, complete the project and then present it to the committee.

Recent MCTI graduates who successfully completed capstone projects include: Teresa Benjamin, clerk/treasurer with the City of Lake City; Deborah Hargis, municipal clerk with the Town of Edisto Beach; Angie Overton, clerk treasurer with the Town of Williston; Paula Payton, municipal clerk with the Town of West Pelzer; Shelly Spivey, city clerk with the City of Landrum; and Ethel Wynn former clerk/treasurer with the Town of Patrick.

Overton’s capstone project was about succession planning in the areas of payroll and accounts payable, and involved making step-by-step instructions, complete with screenshots. The project brought Overton an unexpected gain—a broader networking group.

“I had to reach out to many people to see what their procedures on certain things are, and this expanded my network

tremendously,” she said. Overton said the most challenging part of the project was finding the time in her normally busy schedule.

“I wouldn’t call the process difficult. It was more tedious and time-consuming but worth it in the end,” she said.

Hargis also pointed to the time crunch.

“We all wear so many hats, from human resources director to risk management to social media coordinator,” she said. “It is a real struggle to find time during the day for one more project.”

Devoting a small portion of her day exclusively to her capstone project proved to be the key. “Daily focus also kept the project in the forefront and didn’t let it get buried under day-to-day functions of the job.”

Hargis’ project explained the benefits of electronically archiving documents.

“In the short term, records are easily searched and available to employees, and some are available to the public,” she said. “In the long term, the amount of paper used will be significantly reduced and hopefully will encourage town council and employees to go paperless as much as possible.”

## Five graduate from MCTI



Fall graduates are Shelly Spivey, municipal clerk, City of Landrum; Patti Chasteen, clerk/treasurer, Town of Due West; Heather Holcombe, municipal clerk, Town of Pelzer; Gwen Kinard, clerk/treasurer, City of Laurens; and Hannah Parler, municipal clerk, City of Bishopville.



# Finding and keeping good hires among top HR challenges

Personnel directors aren't usually in the spotlight. "But as soon as they mess up, that's when you know who they are," said Steffanie Dorn, finance director for the City of Greenwood, who also oversees and assists with personnel management.

She's right, given that good human resources work usually goes unsung. Yet cities and towns depend on the HR staff, both to maintain a well-staffed city and to keep officials on the right side of laws, regulations and policies.

The job can be very different, too, depending on the size of the town or city.

Kenny Cook, town administrator of Williston, has experienced a range of those differences after retiring as the HR director for the City of Aiken in 2010.

For instance, he said, in Williston, which has a staff of about two dozen, there usually isn't an information technology department or engineering staff. Those services must be contracted to outside firms, he said.

"What would be challenges for us are eliminated simply out of necessity, because we can't afford the fancy IT department that large cities can," said the

Williston town administrator. In contrast, in Aiken, Cook recalled, "It was a real challenge to be able to recruit those folks and retain them."

## Training

In the town of Williamston, Assistant Clerk Beth Elgin said a persistent problem simply is "not enough money to pay enough people, so that you have the ability to have four people go to Columbia for training."

With a smaller town like Williamston, it's hard for four employees to be absent

in order to receive training, given that a department may only have six employees.

In some cases, the lessons that employees are intended to glean from training are slow to take hold. For instance, Dorn said that while it's great for employees to be promoted, it is important that they grasp the details of their new management status so as to avoid accidental violations of the U.S. Department of Labor laws and regulations.

For instance, if city employees take extended medical leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, their supervisor should not be contacting them with work-related requests.

"They have the expected right to be at home and not be bothered with work," said Dorn. "As long as everybody is happy, it's all good. But as soon as we make them mad, they're going to remember the things we weren't supposed to do."

Some management inconsistencies could be addressed with a city staff policy, while other oversights are simply the product of a familiar new normal—that city employees are performing more tasks with less time and resources.

### Hiring on a budget

Compensation limitations, in general, create hurdles to hiring. Cook said there's frequently no one in the community who has the experience for the position the city is trying to fill. It's also difficult to offer a salary that would satisfy someone who must relocate from outside the town or someone who is willing to commute to Williston.

Cities and towns also compete for applicants with the SC Highway Patrol, county sheriff's departments, and neighboring cities and towns for quality applicants.

For others, the increasing cost of the hiring process itself, such as physicals, drug tests and criminal background checks, is a growing consideration.

Depending on where a city or town is located, hiring challenges can be even tougher. Donna Kazia, interim personnel director for the City of Anderson, said finding enough money to attract IT staff is also difficult. Being situated in the

Upstate, which has grown in prosperity compared to some other parts of the state, also factors into the challenge, she said.

"It puts the pressure on Anderson," said Kazia who serves as president of the SC Municipal Human Resources Association. "If you've got competition for good people among a hospital system, other local businesses and national business, you've got to be somewhat competitive in order to attract and keep people. ... But if you're in an area that is depressed, you (the city) may be the only game in town."

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*"It was a real challenge to be able to recruit those folks and retain them."*

Kenny Cook  
town administrator, Williston

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There just isn't enough money in city budgets to address HR challenges, according to several officials from various cities and towns.

### Keeping employees

There's turnover, too.

For law enforcement hires, Cook said once an officer receives training, goes through the Criminal Justice Academy and works for a short time, "It's easy for them to be swallowed up by a larger jurisdiction."

These are trying times in law enforcement, said City of Travelers Rest Administrator Dianna Turner, adding that there are fewer qualified candidates willing to accept relatively low pay to work in what can be an intense environment.

In order to stay competitive with surrounding municipalities, the city recently instituted a take-home car policy, which allows all law enforcement to drive their patrol cars to and from their homes.

"It was being offered in most surrounding municipalities and was

putting us at a disadvantage with recruitment and retention," Turner said.

Anderson city officials have also discussed a take-home car policy. It's a complicated question when an officer lives 30 miles away.

"Where do you draw the line?" Kazia said. "As mayor or council, do I want to see the City of Greenville car down in Laurens? The residents aren't benefitting by having that car in the driveway. The Laurens residents are, but my residents are not."

Cook of Williston said it's especially challenging to recruit minority police officers.

"They're so highly sought after," he said.

### The human side of 'human resources'

While the hiring process can be complicated and expensive, the other end of a professional lifespan—an employee's retirement—also calls for special care. Sorting through which employees fall under which tier in the retirement system and the implications of new rules are also among the challenges human resources staff overcome.

Technology, too, increasingly brings complexity to managing people. Smartphones are giving rise to a new concern, specifically, the legality of after-hours work communication with employees who are eligible for overtime.

"Everybody wants to keep up with what's going on, but if you're not exempt from overtime, then we shouldn't be allowing employees to have any type of communication after hours," said Dorn. "It's such a commonplace thing now that it's hard to control."

Some HR problems are not entirely unique to local governments. Over her years of experience, Kazia said she's observed a key management flaw—workplace tensions go unaddressed because a supervisor never formally documented an employee's infractions.

*For information about the SC Municipal Human Resources Association, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MHRA).*



# Cities use GIS to manage crises, plan future

In the frenzied hours and days after a shooter opened fire and took the lives of nine people at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, law enforcement gathered at the Municipal Emergency Operations Center. The FBI, Charleston Police Department, state Highway Patrol and State Law Enforcement Division were all on the scene. To coordinate and provide situational awareness for all of the responders, city officials used their geographic information system.

GIS is a technology that allows users to analyze and interpret geospatial data to understand patterns and trends. It can also provide real-time tracking of information for a multitude of uses in municipal government. During the response to the June 2015 shootings, a large map updated all the law enforcement agencies at once on security details, such as where officers were staged, where patrol cars

were located and which roads were closed, said Tracy McKee, GIS director for the City of Charleston.

“For most Municipal Emergency Operations Center activations, GIS is used,” McKee said. “We use it to make sure everyone has a visual and knows what’s going on.”

GIS was also used after the October 2015 floods, providing a common operating picture for first responders, she said. It was used to keep track of road closures, revealing that at one point there were 50 or 60, McKee said. The GIS division also communicated with hospital employees who were changing shifts during the worst of the storm in order to help them avoid road closures and flooded sections of the city and get safely home from work.

Those maps, put out primarily for hospital employees during the floods, have now evolved into live maps for the

public. They are maintained on the city’s website where they provide real-time information on road closures due to events like construction and utility work, McKee said.

## Tracking damage

After the floods, GIS also played a role in damage assessment, she said. Teams went out to talk to residents and enter data into tablets on the scene. That information came into Municipal Emergency Operations Center in real time.

GIS also is involved in the city’s strategy to combat rising sea levels. It can be used to show historical flood patterns that help city officials develop plans for situations such as road closures and evacuations, and to identify city properties that may be impacted.

The City of Myrtle Beach uses GIS as part of its response to weather events,

according to Lisa Holzberger, GIS coordinator for the City of Myrtle Beach and past president of the Municipal Technology Association of SC.

Holzberger's department offers an Emergency Operations Center damage reporting app. The mobile and web-based application allows emergency responders and key personnel to assess damage following a hurricane or other natural disasters. A tablet or cell phone can be used to mark damage such as downed trees, power lines, fires or flooding. Data and photos can be uploaded from the device and are immediately accessible on the web mapping application at the EOC. The city's risk manager can also download a data table which can be sent to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Holzberger said.

The Town of Hilton Head Island also uses mapping for storm preparation and response, according to Jacob Deuel, GIS administrator. The town has a storm surge map that is kept up to date and is provided to the public and to the Emergency Management Division for planning purposes. It shows storm surge levels and elevations across the island.

"We can do scenarios. If a storm surge is 'X,' these structures could be under water," Deuel said.

GIS also works closely with storm recovery efforts by mapping out flood areas as reported by Fire and Rescue, he said.

In the City of Gaffney, GIS Analyst Scott Bollhoefer maintains a full set of FEMA flood plain data, which he uses to create maps to aid city officials in tasks ranging from emergency planning and zoning to code enforcement and

road maintenance. He also maintains an extensive set of stormwater GIS data, which spatially locates and provides specifications for key structures such as water flow inlets and outlets, catch basins, pipes, manholes and detention ponds.

"Recent summer rainstorms have stressed the city's stormwater infrastructure, and I've had the opportunity to analyze our GIS data to help our public works crews locate old or damaged structures that are in need of maintenance or replacement," Bollhoefer said. "This will help in preventing localized flooding and in promoting proper discharge of rain water."

### **Leaves, brush and snow**

Gaffney uses GIS for a number of other purposes, including mapping routes and schedules for leaf and brush pickup, inclement weather planning and snow removal. In recent years, Bollhoefer also has used "Collector," a mobile app offered by GIS vendor Esri, to survey and catalogue city streetlights. This app allows him to identify streetlights that are dim or burned out and then share outage information and repair needs with the local utility company.

GIS is growing rapidly, Holzberger said. Esri has a cloud-based solution, ArcGIS Online, that provides countless mapping applications for all city departments, she said.

"Many of our employees are now better able to understand the value of GIS and how it can be leveraged to make them even more efficient in their jobs," Holzberger said. "We will also be exploring 3-D mapping soon. This will be useful for development and design, and it will offer a different kind of visual perspective to

enable key decision makers to be better equipped with decision-making tools and analyses."

The city's fire department has also expressed interest in using GIS applications in its day-to-day operations, Holzberger said. Possible uses include a mapping application that could be viewed on a board at each fire station to provide a visual representation of all fire-related calls, which station and unit has responded, and when a situation is under control.

### **The next generation of GIS experts**

Holzberger sees vast learning and growth opportunities in the GIS field. She has spearheaded a successful effort to implement GIS in local public schools. Esri offers a free ArcGIS Online account to any K-12 school in the U.S. Currently, there are 19 schools within Horry and Georgetown counties that use ArcGIS Online, she said. Five of those schools were provided with Esri's ArcMap software through a grant from the Grand Strand Technology Council as part of a pilot program for its Tech After School initiative. The schools will be using the software to create maps and web and mobile applications.

Ten years ago, GIS was mainly used to make maps, Deuel said. Today, paper maps are becoming obsolete as people use mobile devices to work remotely in the field. GIS is now a factor in planning for nearly every department in municipal government.

"As technology has developed, GIS has become a major decision-making tool," he said.



*During weather emergencies, officials use GIS to map damage, track responses and allocate resources. (Columbia flooding in 2015).*



## Some work calls for special credentials

Candidates for certain municipal positions in fields such as wastewater, stormwater and geographic information systems are either required or encouraged to have advanced training and certifications. City officials say it's sometimes difficult to find and retain qualified candidates for these specialized positions.

Wastewater is a highly technical field that requires employees to have a variety of skill sets and education levels, according to Matt Brady, communications manager for the Charleston Water System. For instance, the system may need an engineer with a Professional Engineer

license, but might also offer a job to an Engineer in Training who needs a certain number of years before he can sit for his PE exam, Brady said.

Finding qualified personnel can be difficult and often requires a search outside of the region for key positions. However, Brady said the human resources team does a good job of recruiting and placing job announcements in strategic and widely accessible places.

"They're also plugged in to state and national professional organizations where sought-after candidates often go to look for career moves," Brady said.

"We also increase compensation when associates gain certain credentials that directly benefit them in their jobs."

Charleston Water has a U.S. Department of Labor certified apprenticeship program where the agency can take a relatively green associate and train him to the necessary level of professional knowledge. Some jobs require more extensive experience, education or certification, Brady said.

Technical colleges offer certain trainings and certifications. The Water Environment Association of SC also frequently offers training that can lead to certification. Charleston Water pays



for that type of training and compensates employees accordingly once they get it, Brady said.

For associates seeking a two- or four-year college degree, Charleston Water offers an incentive package. For example, if an employee wants to go to the College of Charleston to finish up a biology degree, Charleston Water pays for tuition, books and administrative fees. It also offers a series of classes through its leadership academy. The instructors for these classes are experts in their field and contract instructors through the local technical college, Brady said.

The City of Rock Hill has not had any engineering vacancies in stormwater in more than four years. The majority of the staff has been in place for eight years or more, so the city has not been recruiting for positions lately, according to David Dickson, city engineer for Rock Hill's public works department.

"Talking to the consulting world in this area, it appears there is a shortage of (stormwater) engineering recruits, especially the seasoned recruits wanting to make a move," Dickson said.

"The consultants I have talked to are looking for the seasoned recruits who can jump right in and contribute, but they just are not out there right now. Even though there appears to be a small pool of engineering recruits, it appears being close to Charlotte is a benefit to the city, as they sometimes do inquire about moving from the private to public sector."

When Rock Hill does fill stormwater engineering positions, the city relies on the SC Association of Stormwater Managers; the Clemson T3S Certified Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Inspector Program; Certified Stormwater Plan Reviewer courses; American Public Works Association; and other conferences for training as well as in-house training, Dickson added.

Stormwater engineers aren't the only specialized staff hires that are hard to come by.

It also can be difficult to find qualified GIS technicians and analysts, according to Lisa Holzberger, GIS coordinator for the City of Myrtle Beach. While the field still is not well known, it is gaining more attention.

"My hope is that our industry will begin to see more individuals interested in pursuing a career in GIS, especially with the launch of courses in the public schools," Holzberger said.

A new GIS course is now being offered at Horry-Georgetown Technical College within its Computer Technology-Emphasis Programming curriculum. Holzberger hopes the word will spread about the industry and the promising career it can offer.

The City of Myrtle Beach recently hired a part-time GIS technician to assist with various projects. Holzberger provided enough training to get him up to speed on daily GIS functions, such as editing and creating data and becoming familiar with the technology in use.

"Because of his strong analytical skills and a background in programming, he has been instrumental in applying the GIS technology to create mobile and web-based applications for use in various city departments," she said.

There are also Geographic Information Systems Professional certifications available, as well as college-level programs in GIS. On-the-job training and experience also are invaluable for those becoming proficient in GIS, Holzberger said.

Many people in the GIS industry working for governments train and specialize in specific uses, such as utilities, tax parcels, addressing or planning. Others have more generalized GIS training and must be able to quickly learn the details of various disciplines and how GIS can be applied to them, said Scott Bollhoefer, GIS analyst for the City of Gaffney.

"For these reasons, I believe that it can sometimes be challenging for government organizations to find GIS experts who are already fully trained in all of the disciplines required," he said.



## Don't forget to complete the 2017 Compensation Survey

At the start of each year, the Municipal Association asks human resources staff and city clerks to update their city's information for the Association's online compensation survey. The survey is an annual report of wages and salaries of South Carolina municipal employees and elected officials.

It's a well-known fact that to attract and retain valuable employees, cities and towns must offer competitive wages and salaries. Depending on location, a municipality may be drawing from the same applicant pool as state agencies, counties, hospitals and private corporations. The online tool allows officials to ensure their city's compensation scale is competitive with other municipalities with comparable populations and budgets.

Participating in the survey is optional; however, the Association encourages all municipalities to complete the online survey every year. Widespread participation makes the information more useful. The 2017 survey will be available for data entry from January 9 until February 24.



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# Calendar

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

## NOVEMBER

**10 Risk Management Services Annual Members Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center.

**17 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Fourth Quarter Meeting.** Columbia Conference Center. Topics include stormwater ponds research and best management practices.

## DECEMBER

**2 SC Municipal Attorneys Association Annual Meeting.** Embassy Suites Columbia-Greystone. Topics include the Freedom of Information Act, redistricting, zoning and sexually oriented businesses, substance abuse and mental health.

## JANUARY

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

## FEBRUARY

**1 Hometown Legislative Action Day.** Marriott Columbia, 1200 Hampton St. (see p. 7)

## MARCH

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

**23 Municipal Technology Association of SC Spring Meeting.** Columbia

Conference Center. Topics include risk management/cyber liability insurance; utility technology, GIS and in-car technology for police vehicles.

## APRIL

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

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

**26 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Lineman Training** (repeated on April 27) SCE&G Pine Island, 150 Pine Island Rd, Columbia, SC 29212.

**27 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Lineman Training** (repeated on April 26) SCE&G Pine Island, 150 Pine Island Rd, Columbia, SC 29212.