UPT WN

SPREADING THE WORD
CITIES COMMUNICATE SERVICES, FINANCES, PLANNING *page 10*

Short-term Rentals Remain a Concern at the State House *page 4*

Take Advantage of Professional Development Opportunities in 2024 *page 6*

How Ordinance Codification Works *page 7*

in this issue

Beginning OF YEAR

Budget Checklist

The start of a new calendar year is a time for councils to take steps that will improve the budgeting process. Here are some things to consider as the new year begins:

Budget calendar

Prepare a budget calendar, and have council adopt it by a motion and vote. This helps everyone understand the agreed-upon dates, duties and council responsibilities in preparing the municipality's annual budget. January serves as a good time for setting a calendar, because councils can do it while also setting their annual regular meeting calendars for SC Freedom of Information Act compliance.

Mid-year budget review

For those whose fiscal year begins July 1, January is a great time to take a look at the budget to see how expenditures are lining up with it. This helps staff to bring needed adjustments to council for consideration.

Because councils adopt the budget by ordinance, the only way to amend it is also by ordinance. It's also a good idea to host a public hearing when amending the budget.

Begin the new budget process

The annual budget process can begin with a look at the current budget as it stands at mid-year, along with a request for the new budget's proposed expenditures from department heads and other key leaders, with deadlines for submission. Leaders can then begin the process of projecting revenues, and refining them during the spring as current-year revenues are collected and available information becomes more accurate.

The Handbook for Municipal Officials in South Carolina *has more information on preparing, adopting and executing a budget. Find it at www.masc.sc (keyword: municipal officials handbook).*

Ullrich to Discuss Economic Outlook at Hometown Legislative Action Day

Understanding the role of economic forecasts in a city's budgeting process will be a topic at Hometown Legislative Action Day in Columbia on February 6. The session will feature Laura Dawson Ullrich, senior regional economist at the Charlotte branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.

She has previously served as an associate dean for undergraduate programs and a professor of economics at Winthrop University. Ullrich's research interests include higher education, school finance reform, local and state level tax and expenditure analyses, and the economic impact of local development.

Ullrich said she would address key factors for cities and towns like economic growth, gross domestic product and inflation — all of which she said have impacts on property tax revenues, local employment rates and municipal budgets, "especially as the state of South Carolina grows."

These key economic indicators, she said, play a critical role in many aspects of municipal budgeting.

"It impacts economic development, demand on infrastructure," she said. "I think it's all very relevant but it's especially relevant when considering tax revenues."

The economic factors have also shown an urban and rural divide, with some areas seeing much greater population and commercial growth than others, a trend that is likely to continue.

Find the full agenda and details for Hometown Legislative Action Day at www.masc.sc (keyword: HLAD).

Apply for a
2024
Achievement Award
by February 7

Purpose	Categories

• **Highlight innovative municipal projects, share them with other cities and city residents throughout South Carolina**
 	
• **Demonstrate the value of cities and towns**
	Municipalities with populations of 20,000 or fewer can compete in a population category or a subject category, and municipalities with populations greater than 20,000 can compete in a subject category only:
	  • **Communications**
	  • **Economic Development**
	  • **Public Safety**
	  • **Public Service**
	  • **Public Works**

What to Submit	**Dates**
• **Completed application form signed by the mayor** • **Completed responses to the 10 application questions** • **Supporting material** • **Three digital photos**	**Submission deadline: Wednesday, February 7** • **Cities competing in subject categories will be assigned an oral presentation time on February 26 or 27** • **Award winner recognition during the Annual Meeting in July**

For more information and the awards application, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards).

NEWS BRIEFS

The SC Business Licensing Officials Association elected its new board of directors. They are President **Joy Krutek**, Dorchester County; Vice President **Jarrett Epperson**, City of Cayce; Secretary/Treasurer **Cynthia Oliver**, City of Hardeeville; Members at Large **Rita Bruce**, City of Landrum; **Teresa Eaton**, City of Florence; and **Kathy Teague**, City of Union; and Past President **Alten Driggers**, Horry County.

The **SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association** elected its new board of directors. They are President **Patricia Brown**, City of Marion; Vice President **Erika Hammond**, City of Columbia; Secretary/Treasurer **Laura Snelling**, City of Abbeville; and Directors **Amber Barnes**, Town of Pendleton; **Bert O'Rear**, Town of Olar; **Paula Payton**, Town of West Pelzer; **Lynne Lingo**, City of Wellford; and Past President **Amanda Childers**, Town of Harleyville.

The **SC Association of Stormwater Managers** elected its new board of directors. Its members are President **Angela Jordan**, City of Rock Hill; Vice President **Chris Wannamaker**, Charleston County; Secretary/Treasurer **Brandon Wagner**, Horry County; Member at Large **Stephen Thun**, Kimley-Horn & Associates; and Immediate Past President **Mark Johnson**, Town of James Island.

Short-term Rentals
Remain a Concern at the State House

This editorial was originally published by The Post & Courier on May 3, 2023, and is reprinted with permission.

The proviso in the 2023-24 state budget discussed in the editorial, which would have prohibited cities and towns from banning short-term rentals in their jurisdiction, was removed from the budget before its adoption. However, the issue continues to see legislative activity, such as in the bill H3253, which would prohibit a municipality from enacting an ordinance stopping the rental of a residential dwelling to a short-term guest.

Strip SC House's Short-Term Rental Protections From Budget

There's nothing new about property owners renting their vacation home for a little or a lot of the year. What's new is the ease with which people who purchased second homes for their personal use can now make some money in rental income, thanks to Airbnb and the whole new short-term rental industry it has spawned. What's new is the ease with which people can rent out their primary residence for a few weeks or weekends a year. What's new, too, is the growing demand for these vacation rentals, in both resort and traditional residential areas.

The rapid growth of this industry raises complicated policy questions: To what degree should people who bought homes in traditional neighborhoods have to put up with the disruption of what are essentially small hotels opening up next door? To what degree should government be able to tell homeowners what they can and can't do with their property?

But a couple of answers are easy: The S.C. Legislature shouldn't tell local governments — whose leaders are elected, just like legislators — what they can and can't do to regulate or even restrict short-term rentals. And if legislators insist on ignoring the principles of home rule — which unfortunately is one of their favorite habits — they absolutely should not do it as part of the state budget.

Yes, this is sort of wonkish, but it's extremely important.

And it's one reason we were glad to see Senate President Thomas Alexander rule — correctly — that Sen. Sandy Senn couldn't insert a provision into the state budget last month to punish Folly Beach and other small Charleston County beach communities for trying to preserve their way of life by limiting the number of short-term rentals, or in other ways regulating or restricting them.

Another reason we were glad to see Sen. Alexander's ruling was that Sen. Senn's amendment was almost certainly a violation of the state constitution, which limits the circumstances under which the Legislature can carve out special laws that apply to a limited number of people — in this case, Charleston County communities with populations between 1,800 and 4,400.

Sen. Senn wanted to withhold state funding from municipalities that prohibit short-term residential rentals, which she defined bizarrely as any period of more than three consecutive days. She argued that local governments are getting state money to help renourish their beaches and then making it impossible for people from the rest of the state to vacation on those beaches — which might be a good argument if the question were whether to give those communities more renourishment money, but not when it's whether to give them state money to do routine government work the Legislature orders them to do. The Senate adopted her amendment while Sen. Chip Campsen, who represents all the affected beaches, was out of the chamber. When he returned, he came within one vote of convincing the Senate to kill the amendment; he then raised the point of order.

Senate rules and good sense prohibit using the budget to amend state law. Sen. Senn's proposal would have effectively

amended the state law that divides state funding among local governments based on their share of the state's population. Lawmakers can pass stand-alone legislation to withhold that money for actions they don't like, but they can't do that through the budget. So that battle was won. But the war's not over.

Without any debate, the House included a proviso in its version of the budget that withholds state funding for communities that prohibit short-term rentals unless they spend money and adjust their zoning requirements to help provide affordable housing. Now, we think all communities ought to do both of those things, and it's true that in some communities the short-term rental market is making it more difficult to find affordable housing. But this was a particularly clumsy pairing, the decisions about how or whether to support affordable housing should be left up to individual communities, and again, the state budget is no place to deal with such complicated questions.

It's worth recalling that the House spent 90 precious minutes on the penultimate day of last year's legislative session on a bill that ended up protecting the short-term rental industry by outlawing restrictions on the rentals. That there was no debate at all in the full House this year — and less than five minutes of friendly conversation in committee — strongly suggests that most House members didn't recognize what their short-term rental proviso did.

Once the state budget passes the House and Senate and a conference committee reaches a compromise between the two versions, it's an all-or-nothing affair — and there's tremendous pressure on legislators not to raise points of order that could unravel the whole deal. So Senate Finance Chairman Harvey Peeler and the Senate's two other budget negotiators need to make it clear from the start that they're not going to accept a proviso that deals with short-term rentals. In fact, House leaders should strip it out of the version of the budget they ask the House to adopt before they even start those negotiations.

If the Legislature insists on tying local governments' hands on this matter, it needs to do it through stand-alone legislation, where the debate can focus on the very real issues at play, and not part of a grand compromise, on completely unrelated matters, in the one bill the Legislature has to pass every year.

Association Highlight:
Subscribing to Regular Municipal Association Emails

There are many regular emails that can help elected officials and staff keep up with the Municipal Association of South Carolina's training opportunities and resources.

- The *City Connect* blog – The blog offers short, timely updates on a variety of municipal issues.
- *From the Dome to Your Home* – This legislative report, sent every Friday during the legislative session, recaps the week's activity on bills affecting cities and towns, suggests actions for local officials and previews the upcoming week.
- *Daily News* – This morning email provides recent news clippings about all aspects of municipal government.
- *RiskLetter* – This quarterly publication addresses a wide range of risk management topics. The email is available to members of the SC Municipal Insurance Trust and SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund.
- *The Uplift* – This email, sent every Wednesday to subscribers in place of the *Daily News*, showcases South Carolina cities and towns at their best.
- *Uptown* by email – This monthly email highlights the content also available in the print edition of *Uptown*.
- *Uptown Update* – This weekly email highlights a variety of news, training opportunities, available grants and other time-sensitive information.

Elected officials and city staff can choose the subscriptions most useful to them by accessing their profile on the Association's website.

On the Association's website at www.masc.sc, click the "Member Home" link in the upper-right corner. Those without a profile will see directions on the login screen to gain access. Once they are logged into their profile, they can update their title and contact information and provide an email address. The Association never sells or shares email addresses.

In the "My Profile" section at the right, users can select "Update Now," then select "manage subscriptions" at the right to select which emails to receive.

All elected officials and city staff with certain designated roles automatically receive emails containing the monthly *Uptown*, weekly *Uptown Update* and *From the Dome to Your Home*.

Take Advantage of Professional Development Opportunities in 2024

Education and professional development, both for elected officials and municipal staff, are key functions of the Municipal Association of South Carolina. The Municipal Association therefore offers numerous affiliate organizations for specific job areas to help local officials serve their cities and towns to the best of their ability.

These affiliate groups connect peers in various fields of local government to network, learn through specially-developed training and share best practices and experiences. Membership in the affiliate associations includes online listserve systems that make sharing information and best practices around the state easier and faster.

Each affiliate is led by a board of directors elected by its membership. The Municipal Association provides management support to the boards.

Find all the affiliates' membership applications for 2024 on the respective pages of the affiliates, linked below. The nominal membership costs provide each participant with discounted training registrations and access to that group's closed listserve.

The affiliate organizations available through the Municipal Association include these:

Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

MCAA provides training for court administrators, clerks of court, municipal judges and other employees involved in court administration. The Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on Continuing Legal Education and Specialization and the Office of Victims Services recognize these workshops for continuing education credits.
Staff contact: Sara Whitaker

Municipal Technology Association of SC

MTASC exposes members to a broad range of technology systems, platforms and solutions. It offers training for IT staff, those with GIS responsibilities and employees working in other departments but whose duties include technology services.
Staff contact: Sara Whitaker

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

SCAMPS focuses on legislative initiatives, mutual aid and providing training for elected officials, management staff and operational personnel of the electric cities in the state. Twenty of South Carolina's municipal electric utilities are SCAMPS members.
Staff contact: Elizabeth Copeland

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

SCASM offers quarterly training on stormwater management policies and best practices. The SC Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors recognizes the quarterly training sessions for continuing education credits.
Staff contact: Sara Whitaker

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

BLOA promotes best practices for administering the local business and professional license tax through training, networking and the Accreditation in Business Licensing and Masters in Business Licensing credentials.
Staff contact: Elizabeth Copeland

SC Community Development Association

SCCDA provides educational forums for its members to address economic and community development needs. Members come from local and state government as well as private industry, elected positions and volunteer positions.
Staff contact: Sara Whitaker

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

The SCMAA annual meeting covers issues important to municipal attorneys,

whether working as municipal staff or as a municipality's outside counsel. The Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization approves this training session for continuing education credits.

Staff contact: Eric Shytle

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

MFOCTA training covers the diverse job responsibilities of its members. All of the training sessions qualify for a combination of continuing education credits for certified municipal clerks, certified public accountants and certified public treasurers. MFOCTA sponsors the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute with the Municipal Association and the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities.

Staff contact: Elizabeth Copeland

SC Municipal Human Resources Association

MHRA promotes sound human resources administration and encourages innovative programs. The national Human Resources Certification Institute and the Society for Human Resources Management recognize this training for continuing education credits.

Staff contact: Sara Whitaker

SC Utility Billing Association

SCUBA provides training and networking opportunities for its members, including billing clerks, meter readers and department managers. SCUBA's meetings encompass a variety of topics focused on customer service, safety in the workplace and new technologies to increase the efficiencies of utility billing and collections.

Staff contact: Ken Ivey

Current members of each affiliate association receive a renewal notice the first week of January. Learn more at www. masc.sc (keyword: affiliate).

How Ordinance Codification Works

As cities and towns make local laws by enacting ordinances, they systematically identify those ordinances by title and, in most cases, ordinance number. But over time, as the volume of enacted ordinances increases, it may become hard to research and find local laws on a given subject. All levels of government face the challenge of organizing the laws that have been enacted through the years.

The solution is "codification" — the process of collecting, organizing, and indexing all of the applicable local laws.

In fact, SC Code Section 5-7-290 requires codification of municipal ordinances: "Each municipal council shall provide by ordinance for the codification and indexing of all ordinances, either typewritten or printed, and the maintenance of ordinances in a current form reflecting all amendments and repeals."

The resulting document is called the city or town code of ordinances.

For cities and towns that have never codified their ordinances, the first step is to gather all existing ordinances enacted by the city. The clerk or other official will then review all ordinances and determine whether each ordinance remains effective and in what form, since some may have been repealed or amended. Next, the clerk or official will organize the operative ordinances into categories, assign article and section numbers to them, and publish them in a single, indexed volume.

Once the initial code of ordinances is published, the city or town may keep it updated by periodically repeating the process, but only going back to the last codification date. The clerk or official will need only to review those ordinances and either add them in an appropriate place to the code, for new laws, or revise existing language in the code for laws that amend prior ordinances.

Most cities and towns use a codification service like Municode or American Legal Publishing. Although hiring a professional service can be expensive, the expertise and experience of the codification companies can be a valuable and time-saving tool.

Aspiring Main Street SC Members Share Successes

The Municipal Association of SC's Main Street SC program offers technical assistance to guide local revitalization programs in implementing the nationally recognized Main Street Four-Point Approach.

Main Street programs work differently across the participating 33 communities in South Carolina — each with its own capacity and resources. To help them, Main Street SC offers four levels of participation, including the Aspiring level for those building a sustainable revitalization program.

Over three years, Aspiring communities engage in an asset-based strategic planning process that defines development strategies and actions to take. They regularly engage with residents, stakeholders and partner organizations to create positive economic change in their downtowns.

Two such Aspiring communities entering the last of their three years are Fountain Inn and Clover. Each program is housed in a city department with staff and an advisory board or steering committee support.

Fountain Inn

In 1953, Greenville County extended its water lines southward from Greenville, bringing growth opportunity to the area — the "Golden Strip." As the corridor's end, Fountain Inn became "the Diamond Tip of the Golden Strip."

Fountain Inn has since experienced unprecedented expansion. Its Main Street has become a central growth hub of new residents, development and infill revitalization. After hosting its first Main Street stakeholder meeting in January 2022, the city prioritized several initiatives including a robust façade grant program.

In 2022 alone, Fountain Inn's downtown tracked over $1 million of investment, 19 building rehabilitation projects, and seven new businesses.

"Over a dozen restaurants, as many retail shops, artist galleries, museums, and parks mean that those new residents have plenty to do and typically spend more than 90 minutes in our downtown core," said Martin Lane, director of community relations.

City leaders realized that growth would require infrastructure improvements, so work began on a new Main Street streetscape project including improved parking, new trees and a splash pad, most of which was made possible through community and statewide partnerships.

Leaders also expanded the events calendar. Perennial favorites like Christmas Inn Our Town and the Mac Arnold Cornbread and Collard Greens Blues Festival still draw tens of thousands of visitors, but they're joined by newer events like Jeepers Creepers and the Italian American Heritage Festival.

"Fountain Inn is certain to continue to grow," Lane said. "As a suburb of Greenville, we offer the best of both worlds – small town charm and new investments."

Clover

Over the past two years, Clover brought several major revitalization goals to life. It emphasized business friendliness and a diverse mix of businesses, which has drawn in four new businesses — everything from a skate shop to shared offices.

"By adopting the holistic Main Street Approach, we are able to create and follow a comprehensive planning process to transform our downtown. The citywide impact from prioritized initiatives in our downtown district is visible," said Alicia Griffith, Main Street director.

Strengthening partnerships and communication have also been priorities. Clover Main Street hosts quarterly small business and building owner workshops and expanded its numerous event partnerships with the Clover School District.

Clover's ambitious revitalization efforts include drafting a new business step-by-step guide, drafting an ordinance for desirable storefronts on Main Street, and the installation of electric vehicle charging stations. A banner system is connecting North Main and South Main businesses, as they are separated by a short distance. Installing a consistent and dense light post banner treatment will visually link the two areas into one consolidated downtown district.

"Downtown revitalization work is a serious and ongoing commitment to planning and action," said Jenny Boulware, Main Street SC manager. "Our state's Main Street leaders strategically work the Main Street Approach to create jobs, expand businesses and catalyze investment."

To learn more, contact Jenny Boulware at jboulware@masc.sc or 803.354.4792.

Fountain Inn's Mac Arnold Cornbread and Collard Greens Blues Festival celebrated its 17th year in 2023. Photo: City of Fountain Inn.

Keep Your Facilities From Freezing

The ice and snow that can come with freezing temperatures can do much to damage municipal properties. Damages in climates that face less severe winter weather, like the South, are often among the costliest since workers can be less prepared to address the dangers.

Freeze-ups can lead to damaging floods and loss of operational facilities. Here are steps that cities and towns can take before and during severe winter weather to protect their properties:

Before winter weather

- Buildings – Openings into buildings should be as weather-tight as possible to prevent the intake of the extremely cold air that can lead to fire protection systems freezing. Workers should also inspect heating equipment for potential failures routinely. If the building has alarms to alert of low building temperatures, test those alarms.

- Tanks and pipes – Insulate piping wherever possible. Drain and close all exposed water pipes and valves. For water-cooled equipment, provide adequate heat, locate the equipment in a heated enclosure, or apply an antifreeze solution appropriate to the equipment.

- Fire protection equipment – Equipment such as water mains, extinguishers and hydrants can be vulnerable to failing in freezing temperatures, which can prevent the containment of a fire should one occur. Workers should ensure that fire hydrants are drained, working properly and leak-free.

During winter weather

- Buildings – Keeping temperatures at a point where water inside the building cannot freeze can greatly help prevent damage. Monitor indoor temperatures and keep them above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and circulate air near the outer walls. Keep roof drains clear of ice and snow. Be aware of snow, ice and water accumulations on rooftops which can lead to collapses, and remove excessive amounts if there are safe conditions to do so.

- Air conditioning equipment – For idle AC systems, remove the water from oil coolers and water jackets. Drain the condensers of chilling units.

- Fire projection equipment – For dry-pipe valves, deluge-valve and pump enclosures, maintain temperatures above 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep outdoor sprinkler valves clear of snow.

Closing a facility during winter weather

If a building is facing an extended loss of heat, workers need to immediately take steps to prevent freeze-ups of mechanical systems, water lines and automatic sprinkler systems.

- Close all affected water valves, including sprinkler valves and all fire-pump water valves.

- Drain fire-pump motor jackets, sprinklers, domestic water pipes, instrument pipes, process pipes, boilers, toilet water closets, heaters and coolers.

- When using portable heaters in the building, use only those approved by Underwriters' Laboratories, or UL, or Factory Mutual. Use them only when they can be safely supervised and where there is adequate ventilation. Use extreme caution to keep heaters away from nearby combustible material.

When the building's heat is restored, workers should restore fire protection systems. If water pipes have frozen, they should not use torches to thaw them. Torches can generate steam inside the pipes, which can cause explosions and large fires.

Spreading the Word

Cities Communicate Services, Finances, Planning

Adam Kelly, Goose Creek's marketing, branding and design assistant, interviews Crystal Reed, the city's recreation director, at Central Creek Park. Photo: City of Goose Creek.

In a world now full of trending social media posts, scrolls and stories, trying to get residents to pay attention to the latest information about a city's sewer improvements can be challenging at best.

Many cities are using all of the media platforms at their disposal, from social media to video to printed newsletters, to get their messages to residents about everything from events and what's new in recreation to where work is being done on sewer lines.

The City of Goose Creek is one of several cities that have found a sweet spot of engaging their audiences while getting essential information to residents. The city's video series "This Week in the Creek" offers a news-program-style presentation spotlighting local successes from student achievements to fire department milestones.

Led by Adam Kelly, the city's marketing, branding and design assistant, the series and other social media posts help bring in younger audiences with Instagram and TikTok.

Kelly said much of his inspiration comes from watching other content.

"If you want to create this fun content, you've got to know what is happening right now," he said. "You have to be the one that's watching. Do you see one video then you scroll, and you see tons of people doing the exact same thing, and the date is within the last week? Then that is something that is currently trending. But then I have to then decide whether or not that is appropriate and workable for the city."

He also follows the social media accounts of other cities to see what they are doing. One recent series of posts he did for the city's parks department was inspired by another city.

The social media team for the parks and recreation department in Mansfield, Texas, used the excitement around the July opening of the "Barbie" movie to showcase different facilities around town.

"They took [the Barbies] to different parks and playgrounds doing things and dressed up, but had them really close up," Kelly said of the campaign. "And it was like, 'This Barbie is doing this at this park.' So, I took my interns and we executed the idea as well."

Kelly said he has the trust of his departments now when he calls with ideas

about how to spotlight their employees or their news, but it took time to build that rapport.

"It's taken me a year to build relationships with our public works team, our fire team, to let them know, what I do," he said. "With our content, with our employee newsletters and things like that, I can now reach out to some of them and say, 'Hey, I have this idea.' If you can get them to trust that you will make them look great then they'll be more on board with your plan."

It's essential to know what the audience wants, Kelly said.

"If you want to get more people coming to your events, if you want more people to utilize your resources … the only way to move it forward and get that content to reach your audience is to cater it to what they're watching," he said.

The City of Florence also blends traditional and new communications to ensure transparency and community engagement. The city coordinates its social and web presence to help educate residents about complex municipal finances, such as road funding campaigns and its recent stormwater master plan.

The city worked with its stormwater engineering consultants to create a portal that residents can look at to see where work is being done, what has been completed and what is planned.

"We have made a concerted effort to try to keep the public abreast of projects so that they can see their tax dollars at work," said Amanda Pope, the city's marketing, communications and municipal services director. "It's easy for people to find where projects are, when they're happening, timelines and that sort of thing. And we're trying to also take that project information and share it through social media outlets, Facebook and Instagram, and in our biweekly newsletter."

The portal has been so successful that the city plans to use the same format to show residents what capital improvements are being done with the recently passed penny sales tax increase.

"When you talk about raising fees, like the stormwater fee was raised and you talk about adding a penny to the sales tax, we want to show people that we're working in the neighborhoods and making progress, so the public has a visual of that work being done," Pope said.

The city also uses social media to share the information that it also sends to traditional media outlets — things like city council meeting agendas. It also invites residents to participate in City University, an intensive multi-week experience where residents meet department heads and see for themselves how their departments operate. It has now had two sessions of 25 participants each.

"It has been amazing to see the interest in this program," Pope said. "It really gives residents the opportunity for one-on-one conversation with city departments and gives them a behind-the-scenes look at daily operations in the city."

The City of Hanahan has also broadened its resident outreach, realizing that traditional channels of communication just weren't getting the job done.

"We pride ourselves in being transparent and having great communication within the community, and we worked our hardest to communicate at council meetings, on our website, trash-can fliers and with mailings, but we realized that our efforts on our social media sites had room for growth," said city administrator Courtney Soler.

There was no room in the budget to create a new position, so the city converted one full-time position to two part-time positions and one of those became a social media coordinator role at 12 hours a week. The city hired Paige Turner, who also works in marketing at a credit union.

"Hiring a social media coordinator was one of the best decisions we've made as a city," Soler said. "To have that unified voice on our city social media pages, and to be able to communicate well with our citizens is such a valuable asset."

The position has paid off. Since Turner started working in August 2022, Facebook followers have grown by 16% to 10,815 and the city has reported more than 110,000 profile views. For its 50th anniversary celebration, the city created video testimonials from elected officials about what living in the Hanahan meant to them. The three-minute video was seen more than 800 times on the city's Facebook page.

Having someone already plugged into the community in that role was key.

"On a practical level, a lot of time and energy would be spent getting the person up to speed on the city's happenings and events, if they are not already an active member of the community," Soler said.

She added that having someone with a media and marketing background was important as well.

"Speaking on behalf of any organization takes a particular skill set, especially when some of the information that you share is linked to ongoing police investigations or other sensitive topics," she said.

PROMOTION ANNOUNCEMENT

LIEUTENTANT BRIAN DIAZ ASSIGNED LADDER 2701 "C" SHIFT

Among its other functions, Hanahan's social media celebrates the city's employees and their careers. Photo: City of Hanahan.

Awareness Campaign
ROAD MAINTENANCE & FUNDING

Take a ride with us this week and we'll answer some commonly asked questions about road maintenance and funding in Florence.

Each stop has a different topic to fuel your knowledge!

Tuesday
STOP #1
Topic: COST

Wednesday
STOP #2
Topic: RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

Thursday
STOP #3
Topic: POTHOLES!

Friday
STOP #4
Topic: FUNDING

The City of Florence took to social media to explain many of the issues of road funding for which residents are often not aware. Photo: City of Florence.

Talking Trash (Politely)

Spartanburg's "Talkin' Trash with Jes" has addressed everything from bulk waste to rollcart procedures to identifying recyclable types of plastic. Photo: City of Spartanburg.

Collecting trash and recycling is a critical part of many municipalities' services, but it comes with a significant communications challenge — how do they talk about it in a way that will resonate with constituents, outline proper handling protocol, and how to do so pleasantly. The City of Spartanburg and the City of North Myrtle Beach are two municipalities taking the lead on turning the trash talk conversation into a polite one. Here's how.

For Jes Sdao, marketing manager for the City of Spartanburg, talking about trash is just another day at the office. In her newly-appointed position, she has made a career of just that. Also the host of the "Talkin' Trash with Jes" YouTube videos, Sdao started her career journey with the City of Spartanburg in 2005 as an environmental educator, creating environmental education programs for children. With a background in environmental education and environmental studies, she started out by teaching kids about the environment, from gardening to recycling to exploring nature trails.

Then after her time with the parks and recreation department, Sdao took a pause to pursue higher education, and found her way back to government, this time with the Spartanburg County Soil and Water Conservation District.

"I did that for about four years and got really deeply into stormwater and urban stormwater runoff pollution," she said, which also included a little bit of agriculture, because of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Ultimately, I kept coming back to environmental education … I would go to schools, and I would talk to kids about various topics — ecology, stormwater pollution, ways that we can all do our part to save the environment.

However, she kept coming back to a subject that she was most passionate about: recycling.

"This is going to be a really strange way to phrase it, but recycling is sexy – people like it; people want to hear about it; they want to talk about [it]," Sdao said. "If you tell people that you're into recycling, the first thing they say is, 'I recycle everything! I'm so into it.'"

In 2012, Sdao made recycling as a career her reality when she became the head of the program for Spartanburg County, a position she held for 11 years.

"People want to know: how do I get rid of my waste? How do I recycle this? Why do I recycle? What to recycle?" she said. "People wanted to know this. I was already doing education programs; so, I created our social media and kind of ran that."

While at the county, Sdao started publishing the "Talkin' Trash with Jes" educational videos, an informal way to educate the community on trash and recycling.

Last year, Sdao carried her expertise over to her new position as marketing manager for the City of Spartanburg. Although in a new role, she said her passion for the topic did not leave.

"I had already been working very closely with the city because the city and county both run their own recycling programs and Spartanburg County handles . . . what the city's curbside collections cannot handle – stuff like, motor oil, cooking oil, appliances, electronics, tires," she said.

Already acquainted with the city's department, Sdao said that when she stepped into her new role as marketing manager, she met with the public works department to discuss ways to better market the program. After speaking with her supervisor and communications manager, Christopher George, Sdao was able to resume her "Talkin' Trash with Jes" videos focusing more on the city's program.

"And it does bleed in a little because there are topics where people want to know, how do I get rid of something that the city doesn't handle? Because the programs coincide, I get to talk about them concurrently," she said.

To further get the word out, Sdao takes to social media. "I try to post a few times a month. I don't want to overwhelm people with information, but I circulate the same information phrased in different ways on a pretty regular basis," she said. Posts range from sustainability tips to showcasing Spartanburg as a sustainable place to live. "I want to keep information fresh in peoples' minds while still not beating the dead horse."

As for her new position, Sdao says that she is in a unique role to provide public works marketing.

Over in Horry County, the City of North Myrtle Beach does not take rubbish removal lightly, making how to handle trash and recycling is a high priority.

"Our website is a huge resource for the city," said Lauren Eckersley, who was recently appointed to the position of public information officer. "If [residents] have any questions about sanitation or street drainage and water and sewer – we have an abundance of information on the website under our public works tab, so we always point people in that direction if they need specific information."

The same goes for changes in the trash collection schedule, like holidays, she said, including that the city will push out information through its social media, in a newsflash that runs on the bottom of the city's website, and via text alerts to those who subscribe.

"We also do eblasts through Constant Contact, and if they subscribe to our email, they'll also get those notifications as well," Eckersley added.

Citywide Home Cleanup Day

KEEP NORTH MYRTLE BEACH Beautiful!

Nov. 6 9am-12pm NMB Transfer Station 1220 2nd Ave. S.

Details: www.NMB.us

Clean-up events, with the opportunity to dispose of appliances, tires and some hazardous items, are among the trash and recycling services advertised by North Myrtle Beach. Photo: City of North Myrtle Beach.

An additional resource to get the word out is by way of a jumbotron, formally known as the Main Street Events Sign, at the intersection of Highway 17 and Robert Edge Parkway.

"It's a digital screen, so we'll create graphics to upload onto there, that will run so it's very visible to people driving by," she said.

Events are yet another way of getting the word out about trash. The city recently held a citywide clean-up day hosted by volunteers with Keep North Myrtle Beach Beautiful. Over 100 vehicles turned up to dispose of waste and recycling.

"They were even doing everything, even paper shredding," said Eckersley. "We put that out through our social, like our eblast and our newsflash, and the sign to try to push that. That was a big event for us."

To further the initiative, the city also partners with Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education and their education partner, Clemson University Cooperative Extension, which provides educational resources and pamphlets on composting and how to dispose of certain wastes, among other topics.

In her new role as public information officer, Eckersley sees the direction going more digital and visual, trying to implement more social media channels — Facebook Live, graphics, photos and video.

"That's my goal for this position," she said.

Trash and recycling services might come with their own technical considerations, but communicating about them effectively is still a case of being personable, paying attention to what gets residents' attention, and meeting them on the media platforms where they are.

The City of Spartanburg's recycling web pages details what residents and businesses need to know to recycle items correctly. Photo: City of Spartanburg.

Engaging Residents With Every Tool Available

Municipal Association Uptown Editor Russell Cox, left, discusses resident engagement with Lara Hudson, former community development director who now handles human resources; Edisto Beach Town Administrator Mark Aakhus; and Goose Creek Marketing, Branding and Design Assistant Adam Kelly.

Cities might be the level of government with the most impact on residents' lives, but getting those residents to pay attention to the government's messages can be challenging. A panel of city and town officials joined the Municipal Association of SC Communications Workshop in November to discuss how they find ways to connect with residents and businesses.

In the Town of Edisto Beach, the council decided to mostly eliminate social media as a communication format that wasn't working for the community. But as Town Administrator Mark Aakhus described, the town's monthly e-newsletter has done a good job for resident communication.

"It works, it engages residents," he said. "We have 1,300 people subscribed to get these emails, and that's more people than we have in a permanent population."

When the town pursued a Master Recreation Plan, it engaged the community heavily to receive as much input as possible, using everything from focus groups to a multi-day open house workshop. This level of collaboration won the town a 2022 Achievement Award from the Municipal Association. Drawing residents into the planning process, Aakhus said, helps municipalities secure grants to fund master plan recommendations, since it demonstrates community buy-in.

"This was a fun topic — parks, recreation," he said. "People were excited, they came, they showed up. We're constantly doing public workshops because people come to them. Every year we do a hurricane [preparedness] workshop."

In the City of Greenwood, Lara Hudson has handled many kinds of communication. She has worked as the Uptown manager, facilitating the needs of Greenwood's central "Uptown" business district, as well as community development director. Hudson has been involved in everything from newsletters to social media to news media interviews, to say nothing of regular face-to-face communication with businesses and stakeholders.

Hudson stressed the attention-catching importance of creating compelling visual materials for things like special events — the photos and well-designed graphics that can be used in social media and other publications.

"We really invested in photography, I think that's one of the best things you can invest in. People want to see themselves, they want to see their kids," she said.

She called attention to software like Photoshop and Canva to refine images and design visually appealing materials.

"Anybody can use Canva. I think a really good-quality graphic is definitely going to grab people's attention," she said.

The City of Goose Creek handles communication using a public information officer, Frank Johnson, but it also uses Adam Kelly as a marketing, branding and design assistant. Kelly has found many inventive ways to create social media, video and other content that borrows from memes, or late-breaking internet trends.

His ideas, Kelly said, often come from a careful watch of media trends in general, and what other cities are doing. For example, the well-received "Your Week in the Creek" videos, produced in the style of television news, is not entirely dissimilar to the City of Greenville's "Week in Review" videos. Kelly has found new takes on the idea, however — an April Fools' Day edition of the videos alleged that the City of Goose Creek's name was to change to the "City of Duck Ditch."

"I'm always following different municipalities and seeing what they're doing, regardless of if they have a team of 100," Kelly said. "There's always something that you can glean from that and turn it into content for your page."

Upon his hiring, Kelly said, City Administrator Natalie Zeigler asked him to "make Goose Creek cool." Its communications have since used brand-new ways to show off park projects, events and city services. As for whether it's been enough to make the city "cool," Kelly pointed to a recent social media comment — "Kicking myself again for selling my Goose Creek house in 2019."

Grammar and Editing
Make Writing More Effective

Writing happens throughout municipal operations, in everything from drafting a council meeting agenda or resolution to crafting inter-office emails or responding to news media requests. Writing well can be the difference between conveying a message correctly, or undermining a message through confusion and the appearance of unprofessionalism.

These writing tips can help with writing for any audience:

- **Active voice almost always wins out over passive voice.** This is the difference between "the person took the action" and "the action was taken by the person." Consider saying "The mayor cut the ribbon to officially open the new park" is more effective than "The ribbon was cut by the mayor to open the new park."

- **Use simple words for impact. There are many examples:**

  "Find out" instead of "ascertain"

  "Send out" instead of "disseminate"

  "Use" instead of "utilize"

  "Best" instead of "optimum"

  "Explain" instead of "find an explanation for"

- **Know the difference between "it's" and "its."** The first means "it is" and the second is possessive. This is the difference between "it's time to go" and "the bag fell on its side."

- **Know when to use "I" and when to use "me."** For example, "he is going with John and me" is correct. Think of it without John, so that it reads "he is going with me." A writer who leaves John out of the sentence would not write, "He is going with I."

- **Understand the difference between "that," "which" and "who."** "That" is used for essential clauses in a sentence, for example, "The car that crashed into the tree could not be salvaged." "Which" appears in nonessential clauses and often requires a comma, for example, "the car, which is blue, crashed into the tree." When comparing "that" to "who," "that" refers to an object while "who" refers to a person.

- **Know when to use "affect" and "effect."** "Affect" is in many cases a verb that refers to causing an outcome, "effect" is in many cases a noun referring to the outcome created. Both words can make sense in a single sentence, such as, "The effect of the storm on the sports schedule will affect games for the rest of the year."

- **Be careful with homophones.** These are words with the same pronunciation but different meanings — "to" and "too," or "their," "there" and "they're."

- **Understand compound modifiers.** These are phrases acting together as an adjective modifying a noun, generally require hyphens. For example, with "city-owned street," "city-owned" acts as an adjective explaining what kind of street it is. Hyphens are not used, however, when the phrase contains an adverb containing an "-ly," for example, "highly praised officer."

- **Capitalize proper nouns only.** Proper nouns are the specific name of a person, place or thing, while common nouns are more generic references. For example, the "City of Columbia" is a proper noun, as it is the full name of the municipality of Columbia, but when discussing what a "city government" does, there is no proper noun and no capitalization, since no specific city government is being referenced.

- **Know when to use quotation marks.** Use them for quotations of speech or quotations of text passages, but not to emphasize words.

- **The first draft is never the best product.** Edit, rewrite, then edit some more. Rest between drafts. Let someone else with a fresh perspective look at a draft, then edit some more. Be on the lookout for convoluted sentences, or run-on sentences that continue far too long to be clear.

Calendar

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

FEBRUARY

6 Hometown Legislative Action Day. Marriott Columbia. Topics include civility in politics, an economic outlook, a legislative briefing, as well as Act 57 and affordable housing.

7 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government. Marriott Columbia.

7 SC Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust Annual Members Meeting. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

20 – 21 Municipal Court Administration Association 101 Session C. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia. Topics include court financials.

21 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Legislative Breakfast. Solomon Blatt Building, Columbia.

21 Main Street South Carolina First Quarter Training. SC State Emergency Operations Center, West Columbia.

27 Risk Management Services Hazard Identification and Assessment Training. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

29 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Associate Member Lunch. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

MARCH

6 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Academy. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

7 SC Association of Stormwater Managers First Quarter Meeting. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

11 – 13 SC Utility Billing Association Annual Meeting. Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach.

19 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Basic Budgeting and Municipal Finance. Regional Councils of Governments locations

20 – 22 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute. Hilton Garden Inn/Home2 Suites, Columbia.

21 Municipal Technology Association of SC Spring Meeting. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

26 Risk Management Services: Defensive Driving Course. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

APRIL

12 Municipal Court Administration Association of SC Spring Meeting. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

16 Risk Management Services: OSHA 10-Hour Training. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

17 Risk Management Services: OSHA 10-Hour Training. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

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

25 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Meeting. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

MAY

8 – 10 SC Community Development Association Annual Meeting. Cambria Rock Hill – University Center, Rock Hill.

14 Risk Management Services: Law Enforcement Training. Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

21 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Freedom of Information Act in SC and Municipal Governance Policy. Regional Councils of Governments locations.