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SCAC Adopts Policy Positions for 2016 Session of the General Assembly

SCAC's Legislative Steering Committee adopted policy positions for the 2016 Session of the General Assembly on Friday, Dec. 4 at the Association's 2015 Legislative Conference in Charleston (Dec. 3-4). The committee did so after reviewing recommendations from the following policy steering committees:

County Government and Intergovernmental Relations—Chaired by Ronald Young, Aiken County Council Chairman;

Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation—Chaired by Charles T. Edens, Sumter County Council Member;

Public Safety, Corrections and Judicial—Chaired by Julie J. Armstrong, Charleston County Clerk of Court; and

Revenue, Finance and Economic Development—Chaired by Belinda D. Copeland, Darlington County Treasurer.

SCAC President John Q. Atkinson, Jr. (Marion County Council Member) presided over the two-day conference, which included a presentation on ethics and public integrity, and a legislative panel discussion.

Current Views of Public Integrity

On Thursday, Dec. 3, Tony Bartelme, Senior Reporter for *The Post and*



John Q. Atkinson, Jr.
SCAC President

Courier, shared his views on public integrity in South Carolina. His views were based on his experience as a reporter, and a joint investigation of campaigns and expenditure statements of economic interest by *The Post and Courier* and the Center for Public Integrity.

Bartelme said that being watched makes people behave differently, and that transparency is needed to make governments and communities better. He then explained transparency and suggested ways that county officials could avoid getting in trouble.

According to Bartelme, *The Post and Courier* teamed up with the Center for Pub-



SCAC's 2015 Legislative Conference, The Mills House Wyndham Grand Hotel, Charleston, Dec. 3



lic Integrity and obtained the S.C. Ethics Commission's entire database to determine how candidates in the state spent and received money, and what kind of economic interests they reported on their disclosure forms.



Tony Bartelme
Senior Reporter
The Post and Courier

"We looked at more than 100,000 records," Bartelme said, "and we found that candidates—state officials and state lawmakers that we looked at—really had personal ATMs at their disposal. Most candidates spent and received money in honorable ways, but a sizeable number of candidates were slack and just didn't report well. They didn't identify what they spent

their money on, and they were very vague about their expenditures. And then, there were quite a few who really didn't follow ethical rules."

He provided examples of several high profile cases, involving candidates who didn't follow ethical rules. Bartelme also acknowledged that the definition of campaign activity is a prob-

lematic area, and that the lack of a clear definition creates problems for county officials.

Meanwhile, he said that the whole idea of what it means to be in public view is changing, and the public's expectations of transparency are changing as well. For example, reporters who once could just ask a county official for public documents, now have to file FOIA requests and wait up to 15 days to receive them.

Bartelme suggested that, with current technology, county officials consider posting receipts for expenditures and other purposes online to save time and money, and to avoid irritating everyone by requiring FOIA requests. He also recommended that county officials be more descriptive of their campaign activities, that they document everything, and that they be prepared to produce receipts and other documents.

"Keep in mind that it's probably okay to be watched," Bartelme said. "Again, it's human nature to perform better when you know you are. And in the end, I think that's really what we all want to see in our communities."

Legislators Discuss Priorities for 2016 Legislative Session

On Friday, Dec. 4, Sen. A. Shane Massey (District 25) and Rep. Walton J. McLeod III (District 40) discussed what they believed would be legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

Sen. A. Shane Massey (District 25)

Sen. Massey said that the upcoming session would be dominated by two things—money and elections. The state's infrastructure, including roads and bridges and the impact of the flooding in October, would be one of the top issues. Money for education, in light of the S.C. Supreme Court's opinion, would be another.



Sen. A. Shane Massey
(District 25)

He said that there would be a big discussion concerning the "good bit of extra money," which the state has found in its budget. Because all members of the House and Senate will be up for reelection at the end of 2016, Sen. Massey said elections would also have

an effect.

Sen. Massey talked about the Local Government Fund (LGF). "The Local Government Fund matters," Sen. Massey said, "because I hate paying property taxes. I think they're the most onerous taxes that we have. Because property taxes are the largest revenue source that counties have, I also know what happens if you're not getting the financial support from the state, and I don't want that to happen. So, this is an incentive to fund the



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John Q. Atkinson, Jr.
Marion County Council Member

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Local Government Fund more.”

Yet, he said he does not believe that counties would ever get back the money they’ve lost each year since the state ceased to fully fund the LGF each year since 2009. The best county officials could hope for, he added, would be for the funding to improve going forward.

Sen. Massey emphasized the importance of county councils developing and maintaining good relationships with their legislative delegations, and especially with legislators who write the initial state budget.

Rep. Walton J. McLeod III (District 40)

Rep. McLeod began his presentation by telling a story involving a newly-elected 21-year-old mayor of Walterboro asking his father, the city’s attorney, many years ago to help him be a good city mayor. Explaining how his father successfully worked with the mayor for 12 years, he said it demonstrated how a little cooperation goes a long way.

Next, Rep. McLeod described how the Capital Project Sales Tax (also called the “One Penny Sales Tax”) that Newberry County has passed three times has been a wonderful thing. In

fact, he encouraged county officials to vigorously encourage the passage of the Capital Project Sales Tax in their counties if they haven’t already done so.

“When people see where their tax money is going, they like it,” Rep. McLeod explained. “They’re proud of their county, they’re proud of the projects, and they’re proud of themselves for voting for the Capital Project Sales Tax.”

After telling how Chapin-Newberry American Legion Post 193/24 sponsored the baseball team that won the 2015 American Legion Baseball World Series, and explaining how the team repeatedly extracted itself from the jaws of defeat four times, he emphasized that it was important for county



**Rep. Walton J. McLeod III
(District 40)**

County Officials Voice Concerns About the Local Government Fund at SCAC’s 2015 Legislative Conference

On Friday, Dec. 4, county officials had the opportunity to ask legislative panelists questions immediately following their presentations. Many county officials, including those shown here, voiced their concerns about the Local Government Fund which has not been fully funded since 2008.



Henry H. Livingston III, Newberry County Council Chairman



Barbara Clark, Jasper County Council Chairman



Reginald Dexter, Oconee County Council Member



Charles Jennings, McCormick County Council Chairman



W.B. Wilson, Williamsburg County Council Member



officials to have the same determination.

Rep. McLeod said he strongly supported fully funding the LGF, because it helps keep the lid on property taxes, and that he's surprised that every year there seems to be a new scheme by the state legislature to reduce the LGF.

"I want you to be ever zealous in protecting your interests, because there's a host of legislators who want to cap it entirely and use the money themselves," he emphasized. "This would be a rough burden on county councils in particular and to municipalities to some extent. You don't want the LGF to be eliminated. You want to keep it in place, and in the state budget, so

that it can be used in like manner by county councils and city councils of South Carolina."

Rep. McLeod said when campaigning for reelection in 2014 he discovered that about 80 percent of Newberry County residents he spoke with said they would vote for a gas tax increase to repair roads and bridges. As a result, he assured county officials that the same percentage of residents would still vote today for a gas tax increase.

He then explained recent efforts in the House to raise the gas tax 10 cents and 12 cents per gallon that have failed, and expressed his hope that the Governor and the Senate would recognize the necessity of bridge and road improvements in our state and strike some sort of agreement with the House to address the issue.

Rep. McLeod said South Carolina had better roads when the S.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) was composed of one member representing each of the state's 14 and later 16 judicial districts, and when money was divided up more equitably. However, he said the situation has deteriorated since changing the governance of the DOT from judicial to congressional districts.

"We need to get away from the idea of having congressional districts do anything except be used to represent us in Congress," Rep. McLeod said. "You can use judicial circuits or regions to form the governance of DOT, but lay off this using congressional districts, because it just doesn't work."

He concluded his presentation by expressing his opposition to the State Infrastructure Bank, which he voted against in 1997. Rep. McLeod voted against the bank, he explained, because three or four counties receive most of the funding from the bank, and that money for roadways and bridges should be distributed more equitably.

"I hope the legislature will come together and work together in the coming session," he said, "so we can see some real improvement in our roadways instead of seeing them deteriorate right before our eyes."

Immediately after Sen. Massey and Rep. McLeod spoke, county officials were given an opportunity to ask questions. Most officials asked about the LGF.

SCAC developed legislative policy positions this past fall, based upon input received from the four policy steering committees, the County Council Coalition, various association groups and other county officials.

SCAC's Legislative Committee has 75 members, including 29 members of the Association's Board of Directors and council chairpersons (or their designees) representing the state's 46 counties.

Steering Committees met previously at the SCAC Office in September and November.



SCAC Policy Steering Committees Present Recommendations

Chairmen of SCAC's legislative policy steering committees present their committees' policy recommendations at SCAC's 2015 Legislative Conference on Friday, Dec. 4.



Ronald Young
Chairman of the County Government and Intergovernmental Relations Policy Steering Committee



Charles T. Edens
Chairman of the Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation Policy Steering Committee



Julie J. Armstrong
Chairman of the Public Safety, Corrections and Judicial Policy Steering Committee



Belinda D. Copeland
Chairman of the Revenue, Finance and Economic Development Policy Steering Committee



SCAC Hosts Annual S.C. Local Government Attorneys' Institute

By Owen A. McBride, SCAC Staff Attorney

On Friday, Nov. 20, approximately 250 attorneys attended SCAC's 2015 Local Government Attorneys' Institute at Embassy Suites in Columbia. Based on the evaluations completed by attendees, the program was well received.

The program offered required ethics CLE credits for lawyers as well as credit for several specific practical areas. The programming began with Michael R. Burchstead, General Counsel, S.C. Ethics Commission, discussing recent developments and common issues regarding the state Ethics Reform Act (1991) and economic interest statements required of public officials.

Franklin J. Smith, Jr., Attorney, Richardson, Plowden and Robinson, gave a presentation on surety bonds. Smith's presen-

tation was informative and well received by the attendees based on their evaluations. He was followed by the Honorable Mel Maurer, Richland County Magistrate, who presented an overview of magistrate court practices and ordinance violations. Then, Chuck Thompson, Executive Director and General Counsel of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA) and regular *County Focus Magazine* contributor, followed with an update on Federal case law, including recent decisions from the U.S. Supreme Court.

Lesley Coggiola, General Counsel, Office of Disciplinary Counsel, S.C. Supreme Court, presented the second ethics hour. This was a very beneficial presentation as demonstrated by the amount of questions from the audience. Kent Lesesne, SCAC Staff Attorney, was then joined by Elizabeth Potter, Legal



Michael R. Burchstead
General Counsel
S.C. Ethics Commission



Chuck Thompson
Executive Director and
General Counsel
IMLA



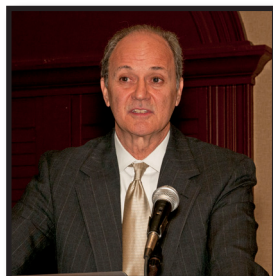
Lesley Coggiola
General Counsel
Office of
Disciplinary Council,
S.C. Supreme Court



Elizabeth Potter
Legal Counsel
DHEC



Adam Whitsett
Attorney
SLED



Franklin J. Smith, Jr.
Attorney
Richardson, Plowden and
Robinson



Mel Maurer
Magistrate
Richland County



Local Government Attorneys' Institute, Embassy Suites, Columbia, Nov. 20



Counsel, DHEC; Adam Whitsett, SLED Attorney; and James Mosteller, Barnwell County Attorney, to discuss updates to the Freedom of Information Act. The group participated in an interactive discussion with the audience during which many questions were asked. Josh Rhodes, SCAC Staff Attorney, wrapped up the session with a very brief overview of recent state case law and legislation pertaining to local governments.

This program is a service offered by SCAC to provide local government practitioners with relevant legal education at an economical price. The Local Government Attorneys' Institute has grown into the largest public sector legal seminar in South Carolina.



SCAC Launches New Association Management System



By Jennifer M. Haworth, SCAC Webmaster

SCAC recently launched its new association management system (AMS). The new system provides database features that will help improve operations such as member services, event management and communication.

The AMS allows members to easily search the directory and to register online for meetings and events. The new system also allows members to pay for registrations with a credit card. In the future, association members will be able to log in to the system to update their contact information and communication preferences, and access their transcripts for the Institute of Government for County Officials.

SCAC is excited about the possibilities created through use of this new system. Members will soon realize all the benefits this change has to offer.



SCAPA Planning Assistance Program Offers Resources to Underserved Communities

The S.C. Chapter of the American Planning Association (SCAPA) is taking applications for a new Community Planning Assistance Program that offers a unique opportunity for underserved communities to receive professional planning assistance and improve the quality of life of area residents.

Through this innovative program, SCAPA provides multidisciplinary teams of planning professionals to assist communi-

ties with limited access to planning resources and expertise. The Community Planning Assistance Teams (CPATs) work closely with community leaders, elected officials, and stakeholders to address local issues or concerns. Team members are selected for specific expertise needed on a project to offer pro-bono assistance for developing a planning approach that fosters sustainable, economically vibrant, healthy, resilient, and livable communities. Potential CPAT projects may include urban design, transportation, housing, economic development, energy, parks, recreation, historic preservation, land use, public health and environmental challenges.

Communities are encouraged to apply for this program and may include all levels of local government, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood associations and other advocacy groups.

Applications will be accepted through Feb. 8, 2016, and communities should visit <http://scapa.org/sc-cpat-community-application-submittal/> to download and complete an application. To find out more about this program, visit <http://scapa.org/community-planning-assistance-teams-cpat/>.

SCAPA is the leading organization and resource for planning activities in South Carolina, with an active and growing membership of nearly 500 individuals. The diverse membership consists of professional planners (public, private, and academic), elected and appointed officials, building officials, neighborhood group leaders, urban designers, economists, and students.

For more information about SCAPA, visit www.scapa.org.



Oconee County Holds Chainsaw Safety Class

*By John D. Henderson, ARM, ALCM
SCAC Director of Risk Management Services*

On Tuesday, Dec. 1, Oconee County held a chainsaw safety training class for 45 employees from its Public Works Department; Facilities Management; and Parks, Recreation & Tourism departments.



Tim Ard, a nationally-known chainsaw safety instructor, conducts classroom lecture on chainsaw safety for 45 Oconee County employees. (Photos by John D. Henderson)



The training was provided by Clemson University's Transportation Technology Transfer Service. The instructor, Tim Ard, is a nationally-known chainsaw safety instructor with 29 years of experience in the outdoor power industry. The class included a classroom lecture and field demonstrations of actual cutting techniques.



Tim Ard (left) explains to Oconee County employees the all important planning steps for safely felling a tree before demonstrating the steps (at right).

Counties often deploy employees for emergency storm debris removal. Sometimes, employees who have not been trained in the proper use of chainsaws, might not be equipped with all the needed personal protective equipment. The potential for employee injuries can be reduced if they receive formal chainsaw training.

Counties should not assume that employees who have experience using chainsaws at home are prepared for emergency debris removal.



Visual aids used in the technical discussion portion of the chainsaw safety class

PalmettoPride Awards \$240K in Grants to Help Keep South Carolina Beautiful

PalmettoPride recently awarded \$249,590 in enforcement grants to 19 enforcement agencies, and community grants to 43 organizations and local governments in South Carolina.

The 2015-16 PalmettoPride Enforcement Grants, totaling \$73,688, will provide law enforcement agencies with equipment needed to help enforce state and local litter laws, from citations to prosecution in courts. The 2015-16 PalmettoPride Community Pride Grants, totaling \$175,902, will provide organizations and local governments with funds to help create successful litter eradication programs and beautification projects in their communities.

PalmettoPride is a 501(c)3 nonprofit litter prevention and
(See **Palmetto Pride**, P. 8)

South Carolina's 2016 Directory of County Officials

South Carolina's 2016 *Directory of County Officials* will be published and distributed in February. So, order a copy if you want to know "Who's Who" in South Carolina county government.

The *Directory* identifies all elected and appointed county officials in the state. This popular, award-winning publication also identifies SCAC's Officers, Board of Directors and Corporate Supporters; Regional Councils of Government; Federal and State Officials; and State Senators and Representatives. Addresses and telephone numbers are included for all county officials, state officials and members of the S.C. General Assembly.

Cost: \$25.00 per copy (including tax, postage, shipping and handling).

● To order your copy of the 2016 *Directory of County Officials*, please contact:

**Public Information Director
South Carolina
Association of Counties
P.O. Box 8207
Columbia, S.C. 29202-8207
(803) 252-7255
E-mail: smorgan@scac.sc**

SCAC'S 2016 WEBCAST CALENDAR



Thursday, March 24
9 a.m. to 12 Noon
Sharpening Your Supervisory Skills

Thursday, May 12
9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Planning and Zoning Continuing Education

Thursday, Oct. 6
9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Taking Charge of Change

For more information, please contact Leslie Christy-Jennings, SCAC, at (803) 252-7255 or ljennings@scac.sc. Or visit SCAC's webcast page at: <http://www.sccounties.org/webcast-training>

PalmettoPride ...

(Continued from P. 7)

beautification organization in South Carolina. The organization engages citizens to take an active role in keeping their communities clean and beautiful. Its programs have helped reduce litter in the state by more than 60 percent. For more information, including lists of 2015-16 grant recipients, please visit www.palmettopride.org or contact Sarah Lyles at (877) 725-7733 or syles@palmettopride.org.



James R. Frazier Resigns as Horry County Council Member

Horry County Council Member James R. Frazier (Dist. 7) recently announced his resignation from office, effective March 1, 2016. Frazier has served on Horry County Council for 36 years.

"I rise today to recognize a man of many achievements and talents, whose contributions to the Bucksport Community and our entire county have enriched many lives and contributed to the economic health of our community," said Horry County Council Chairman Mark Lazarus. "There are not enough words to express his love for Horry County and his dedication to service to the people of this county. It has truly been an honor to serve with Mr. Frazier."

Frazier was first elected to the Horry County Council in 1980. His lasting mark can be seen in the Bucksport Community with the construction of the James R. Frazier Community Center, completed in 2008. He has served on the SCAC Board of Directors since 2006, and served as SCAC President 2014-15.

Frazier retired after 23 years of service with the S.C. Department of Agriculture. He was a longtime member of the Horry County Democratic Party, and was elected as the first African-American chairman in 1986.



SCAC's 2016 Conference Calendar

Feb. 17 Feb. 18	Mid-Year Conference for County Officials Institute of Government Embassy Suites, Columbia
July 31–Aug. 3 July 30–31	Annual Conference Institute of Government Hilton Head Marriott, Hilton Head Island
TBD	Setoff Debt/GEAR (Location TBD)
TBD	Continuing Education Update for Risk Managers (Location TBD)
Oct. 19 Oct. 20	Institute of Government County Council Coalition Meeting Embassy Suites, Columbia
Nov. 18	S.C. Local Government Attorneys' Institute Embassy Suites, Columbia
Dec. 1-2	Legislative Conference The Mills House Wyndham Grand Hotel, Charleston

You can now register and pay online for SCAC conferences at www.sccounties.org/meetings.



NACo's 2016 Conference Calendar

Feb. 20–24	Legislative Conference Marriott Wardman, Washington, D.C.
July 22–25	Annual Conference and Exposition Los Angeles County (Long Beach), Calif.