



**MINUTES
AGENDA
LIBERTY CITY COUNCIL
WORKING SESSION**

January 6th, 2026, at 6:45pm

Rosewood Center

419 E Main St. Liberty, SC 29657

- **Mayor and Council Orientation & Training (MASC) – Rob Wolfe, Field Representative**

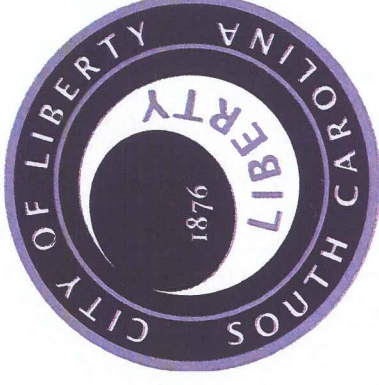
No vote required. Please see the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Approved: 1/12/26

Mayor, Andrea Wagner: 



You've Been Elected, Now What?



Newly Elected Officials Orientation
January 6, 2026
Rob Wolfe
Field Services Manager

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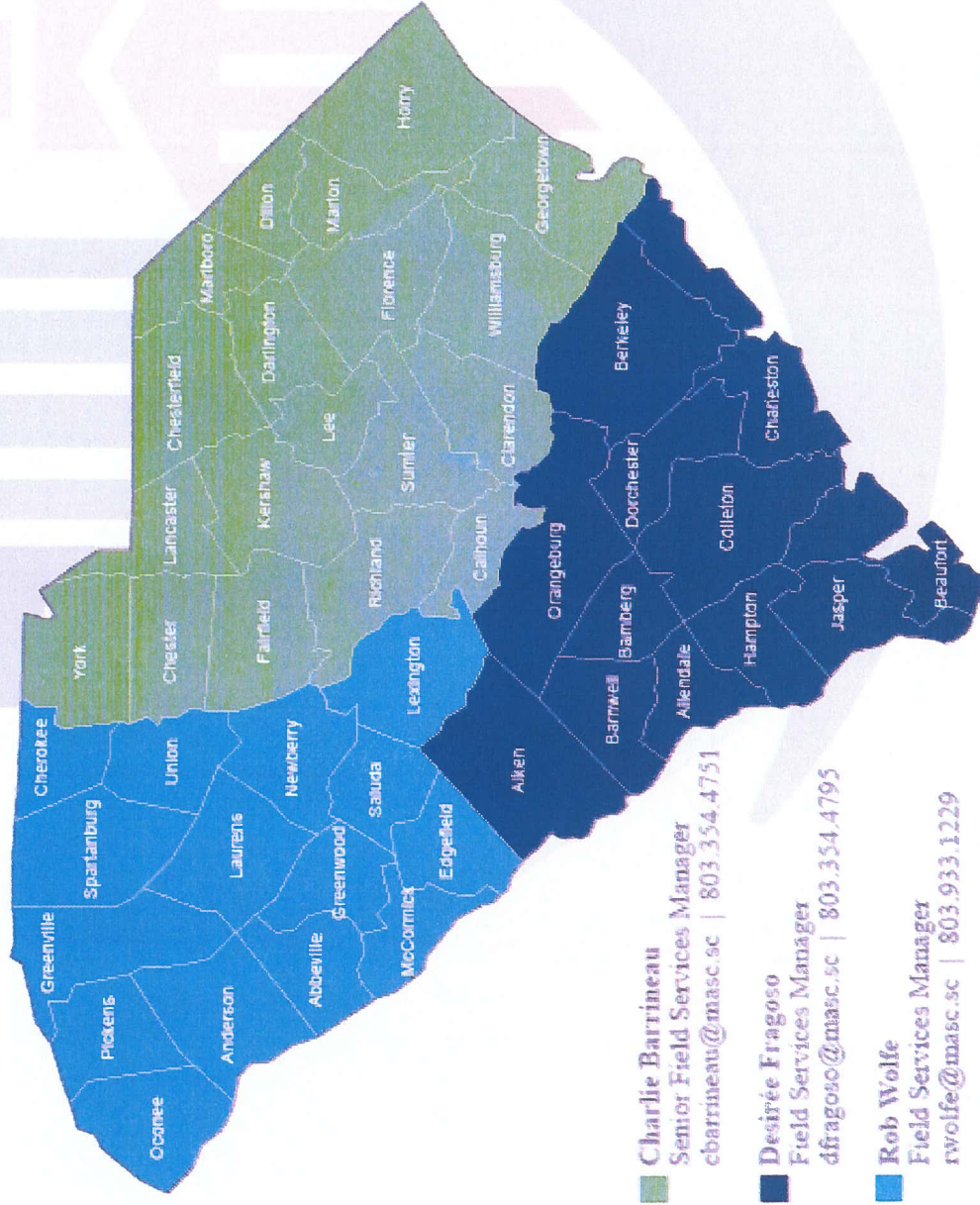


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Field Services Managers



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Presentation Overview

- Overview of the Municipal Association of SC
- Leadership and Your City
- Civility in Government
- Form of Government
- Effective Meetings
- Primer on Municipal Finance
- Risk Management
- The SC Freedom of Information Act
- Ethics





The Municipal Association of South Carolina

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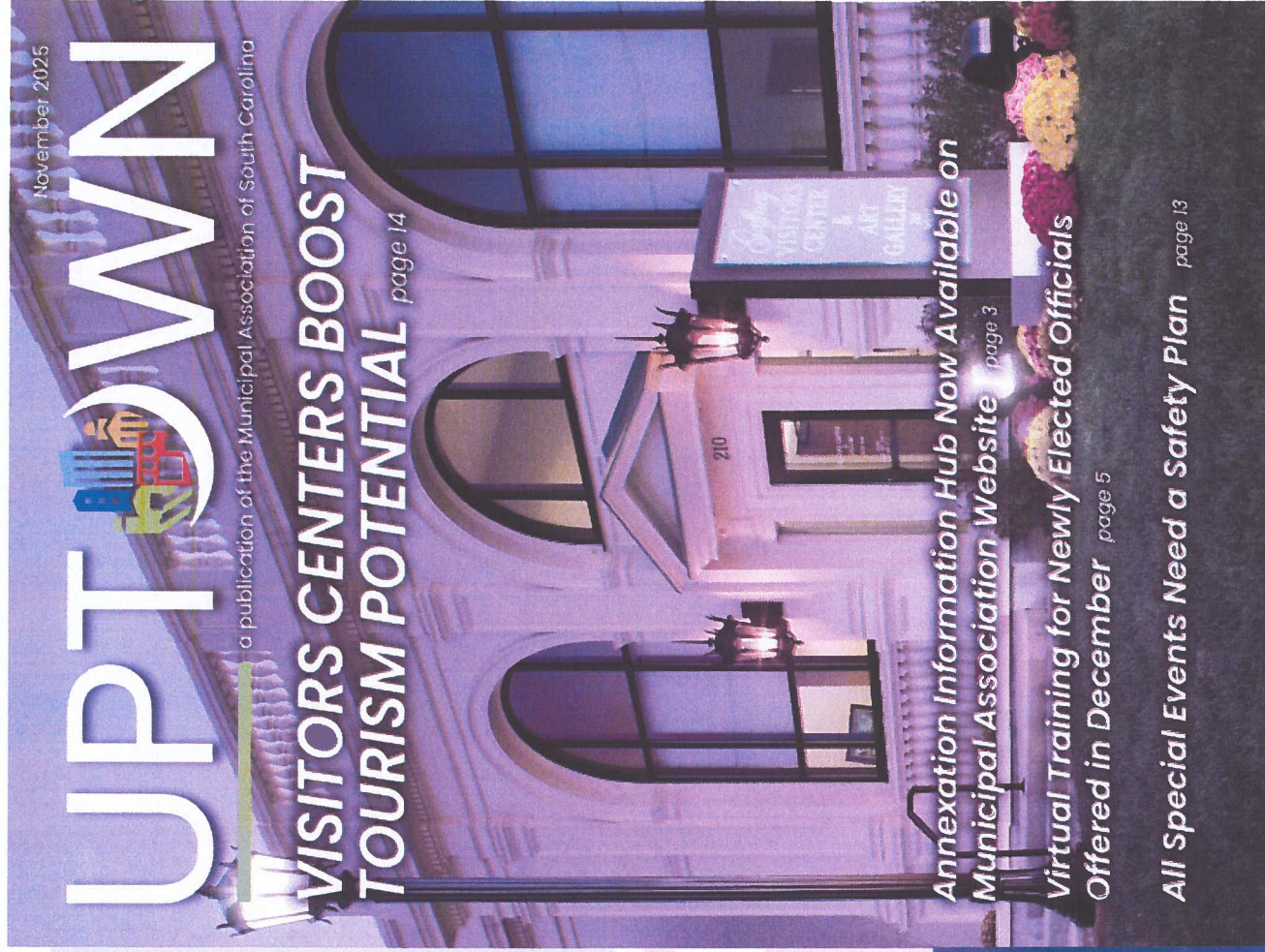
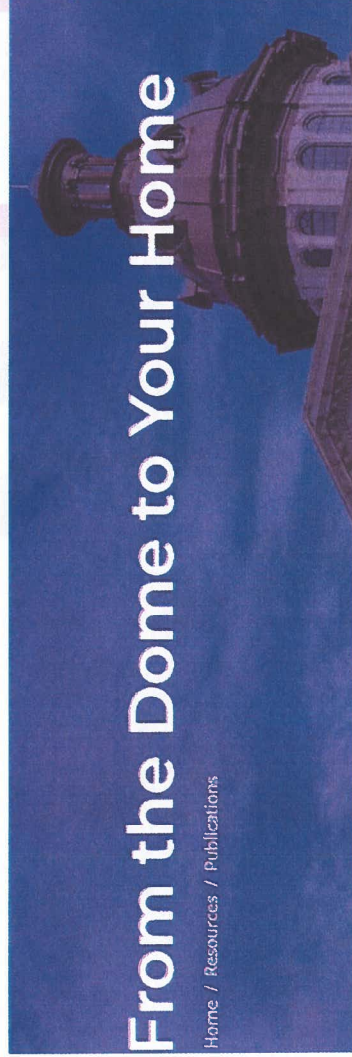
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- Local Revenue Programs
 - Liberty 2025 - \$442,000
- Advocacy and Communications
- Risk Management Services
- Liberty is a member of SCMIT and SCMIRF
- Education, Training, and Technical Assistance



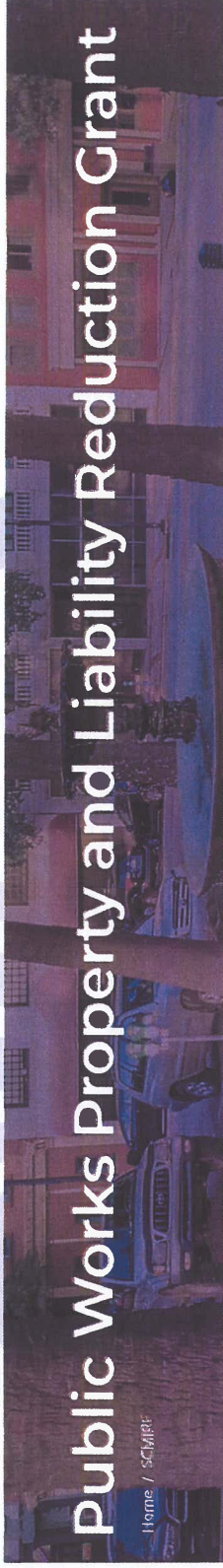
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Publications



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Grants



Municipal Association of South Carolina **IMPACT FUND**



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2026 Schedule

Hometown Legislative Action Day – January 20,
2026, Columbia

Municipal Elected Officials Institute – January
21, 2026, Columbia

Annual Meeting – July 15 – 19, 2026, Greenville

Small Cities Summit – August 12, 2026,
Columbia



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Leadership and Your City

Orientation for Newly Elected Officials

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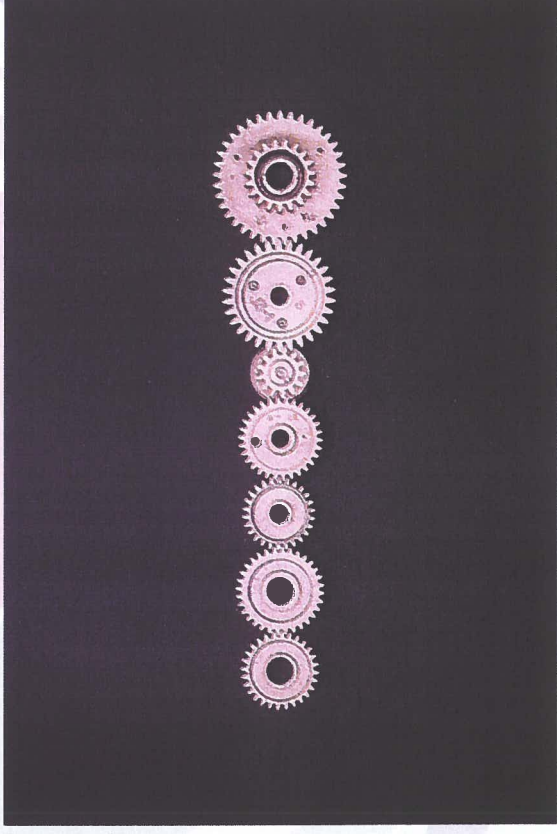
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Council's Leadership Role

- You've been elected – time to govern!
- Teamwork is key!

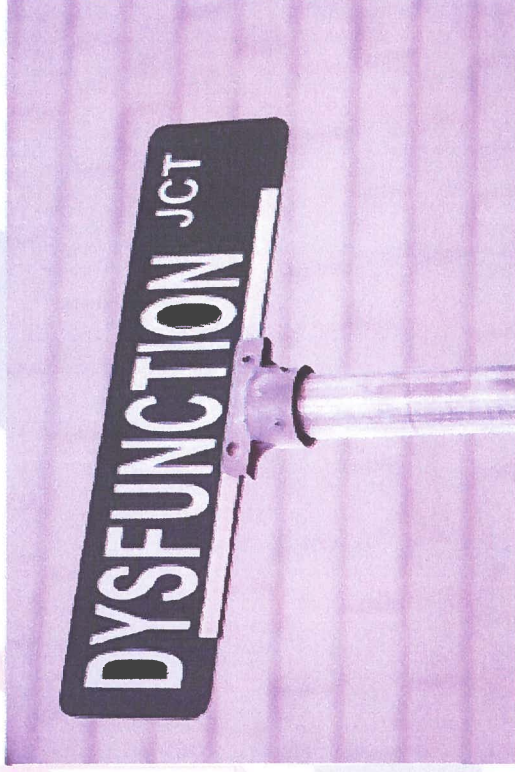


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Council's Leadership Role

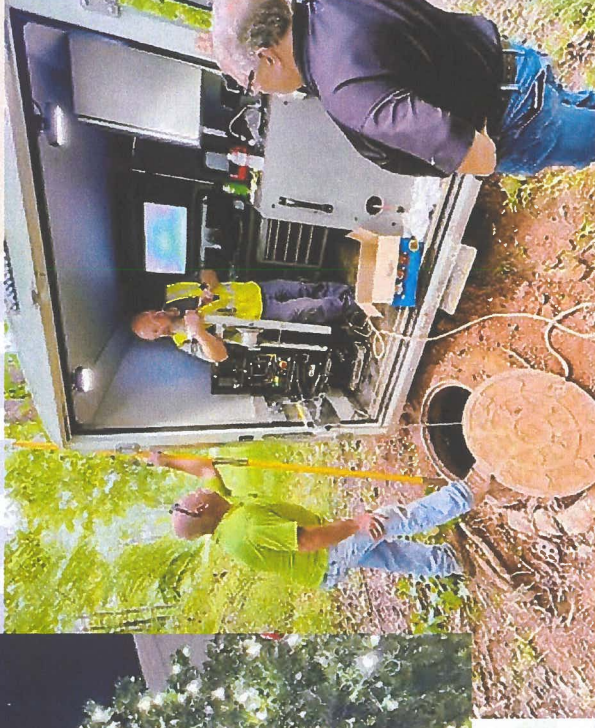
Key Tips

- Do your homework
- Ask questions
- Learn the town's form of government
- Know your duties



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Celebrate your Community

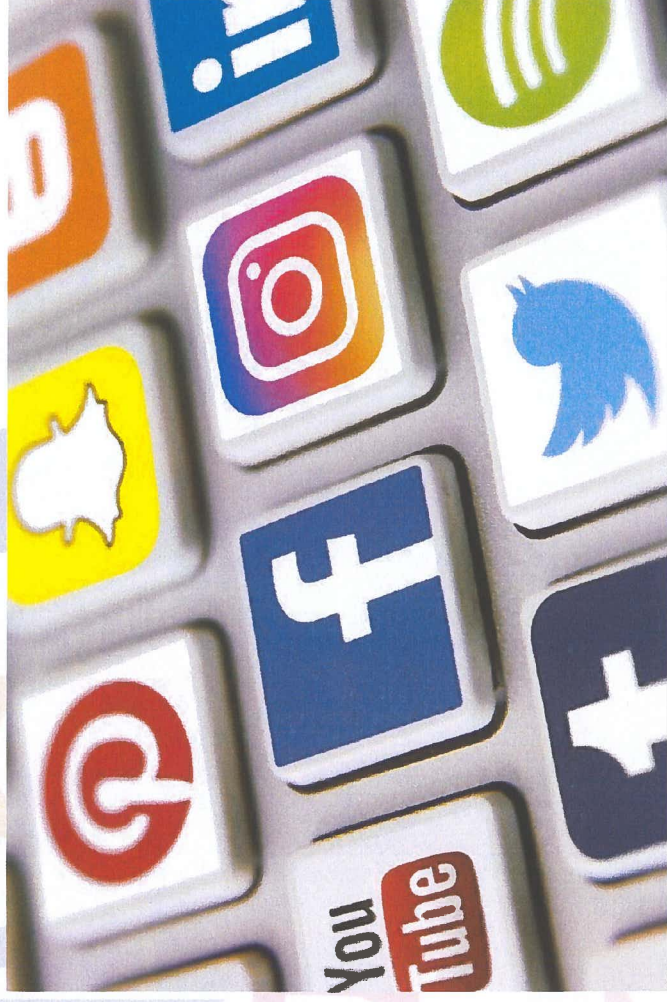


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Avoid the Social Media Trap

Key Tips

- Avoid engaging in back and forth.
- Be careful moderating comments. Official Facebook pages may be considered a public forum.



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Praise in public; criticize in private.

— *Vince Lombardi* —

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Pillars of Civility

Civility.
Respect.
Solutions.

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM

Be as eager
to listen as to
speak.

Concentrate on
what you have
in common, not
what separates
you.

Act as you
would expect
someone to act
in your home.

Make your case
on merits, not
on what people
want to hear.

Your time is
valuable. So is
everyone else's.
Respect it.

Ask questions
to learn. Answer
questions with
respect.

Concentrate
on facts, not
theories.

Ask "what will
persuade people
in this room?" not
"what will make a
great tweet?"

Make your point
about the issue,
not the person.

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Civility

- **Noun**
Formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech.

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Incivility

- **Noun**
Rude or unsociable speech or behavior

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Civility Pledge

I pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of my city or town.

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Form of Government

Mayor - Council

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Mayor – Council Form

Overview

- Most used form of Government (135 of 271)
- 1 Mayor and 6 Councilmembers
- Governed by S.C. Code §§ 5-9-10 to 5-9-40



Mayor — Council Form

Mayor

- Mayor is the Chief Administrative Officer of Municipality
- Directs and supervises staff and departments.
- Presides at meetings of council and votes.
- Prepares the budget.
- Provides reports to council.



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Mayor – Council Form

Council

- Has all the legislative and policy making authority.
- Adopts the budget.
- Elects a Mayor Pro-Tem
- Establishes Departments
- Employs an Administrator, City Clerk, City Attorney, Municipal Judge



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Mayor – Council Form

Council

- Investigates departments.
- Appoints members of the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.
- Appoints Special Committees



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Mayor – Council Form

City Administrator

- Employed by the council to assist the Mayor
- Duties assigned by ordinance (Liberty City Code Chapter 2 Section 161
 - Examples – Personnel management, monitor financial condition of city, make recommendations on purchasing, administer the budget.



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An Introduction to Effective Meetings



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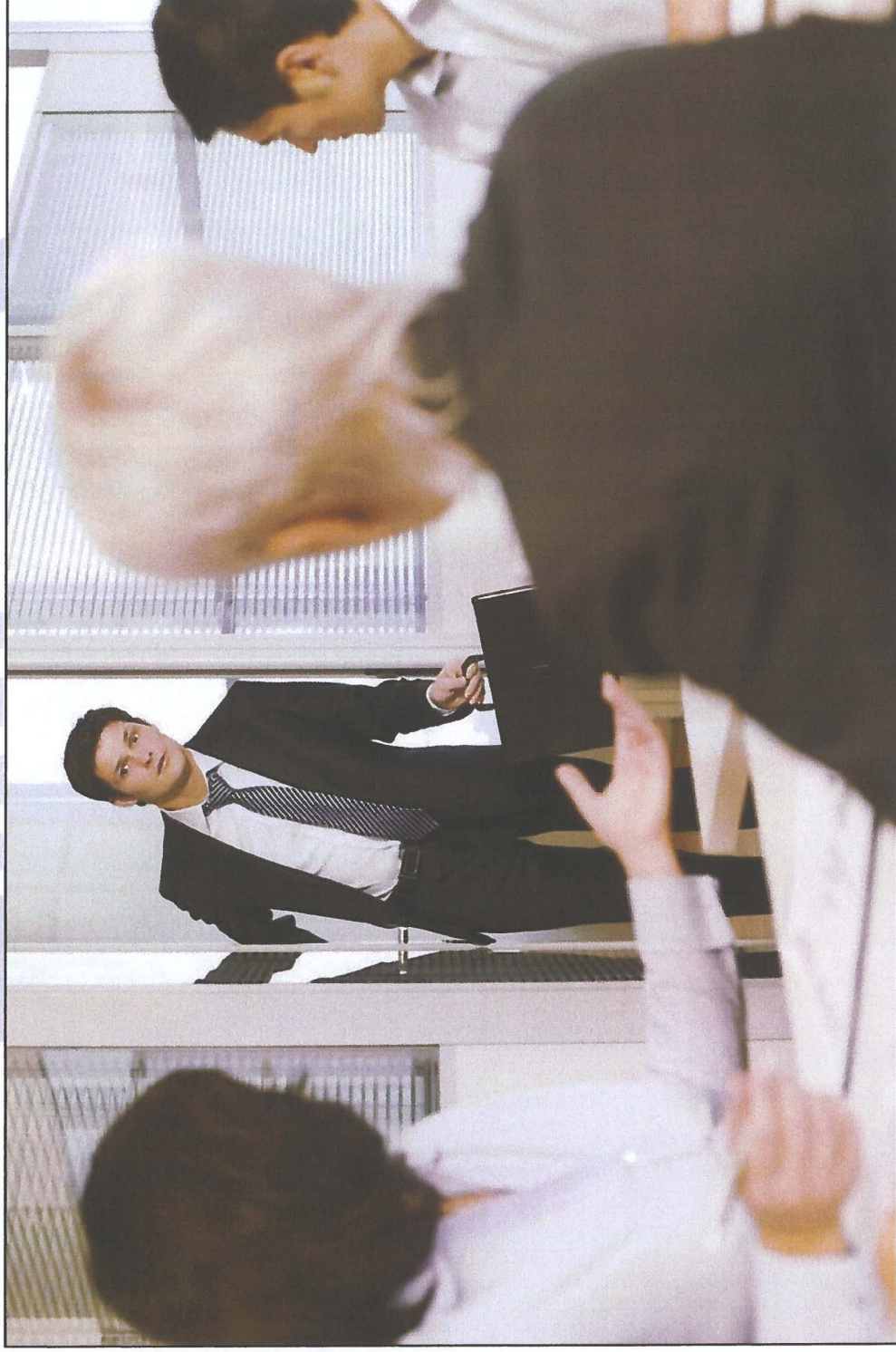


PREPARATION FOR MEETINGS IS KEY TO SUCCESS



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Arrive on Time



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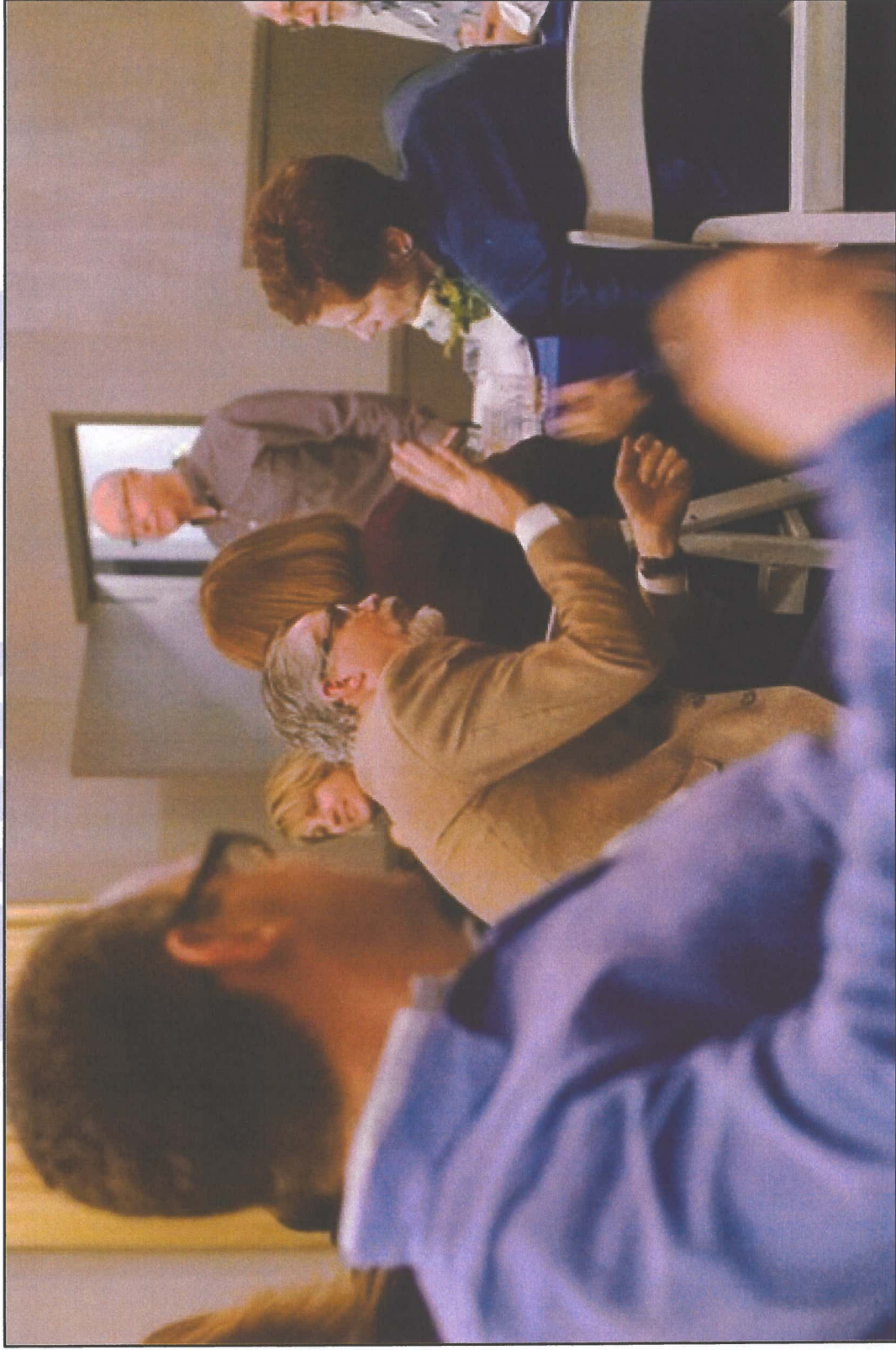
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Put Away/Silence Cell Phone



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Avoid Side Conversations



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Body Language



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What is a meeting?

- Five Types of Meetings
 - Regular Meeting
 - Special or called meeting
 - Public Hearing
 - Executive Session
 - Emergency Meetings
- Wherever a quorum (five members) is gathered, the public must be allowed to attend.
- Public meeting, not the public's meeting
 - The public gets to attend;
 - The public can record...includes "live" stream
 - But the public doesn't get to run the meeting.
 - Council meetings are business meetings!



All Members Are Equal

The body is the ultimate decider of all parliamentary decisions.

The chair serves the body, they do not control it.



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Setting the Agenda

- A written agenda is required under FOIA for all meetings.
- Provides a guide for issues to be discussed.
- Ensures transparency.
- Requires a 24 notice for items to be added.
- Liberty City Code Chapter 2 Section 41
 - Clerk Prepares Agenda, Mayor Approves
 - Councilmembers may request items be considered unless two members object.



Restrictions on Amending the Agenda

1. If the item is **not** a final action and an opportunity for public comment has been or will be granted at a publicly noticed meeting:
 - **2/3 vote** (members present and voting)
2. If the item is a final action for which there will be no opportunity for public comment at a publicly noticed meeting:
 - **2/3 vote** and a finding that exigent circumstance exists (i.e. *urgent or time-sensitive issue*) is required



Ordinances and Resolutions

- Ordinance – law made by council. Two readings on two separate days with at least six days between each reading. An adopted ordinance can only be amended by ordinance.

Annexation	Set Salary of Council	Conduct elections
Adopt Standard Codes	Rules of Procedure	Comp plan, zoning, land development
Establish/Abolish Dept	Est. fine or penalty	Borrow money
Annual budget	Sell or lease land	



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Ordinances and Resolutions

- Resolution – a formal expression of opinion, will, or intent voted on by an official body or assembled group. Requires a single vote. Can be written or oral.



Public Engagement

- Not mandated for all meetings. Council is permitted to set its own rules for public participation.
- Primary goal should be to maintain order.
 - Liberty City Code Chapter 2, Section 42
 - Any citizen of the city shall be entitled to an appearance before the mayor and council at any regular meeting concerning any city matter. Persons desiring to speak must notify the clerk on the topic which they want to speak no later than 4:30 p.m. on the Friday preceding the council meeting.



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Executive Session

Allowed for 5 Specific Reasons

- Section 30-4-70 (a) (1) – Personnel Matters
- Section 30-4-70 (a) (2) – Contractual, Real Estate, and Legal Matters
- Section 30-4-70 (a) (3) – Security Matters
- Section 30-4-70 (a) (4) – Investigative Matters
- Section 30-4-70 (a) (5) – Economic Development Matters



Executive Session

- Must Give a Reason for Entering into Executive Session
 - (Donohue v City of North Augusta 2015)
 - No minutes, no votes or polling in Executive Session
- Must indicate on agenda that action may be taken following items discussed in executive session.
 - (Brock v Town of Mt. Pleasant 2016)



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A Primer for Municipal Finance and Administration



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Annual Budget and Finance Requirements

- Annual budget adopted by ordinance after a public hearing.
- Newspaper notice a minimum of 15 days in advance of public hearing.
- Complete an annual independent financial audit.
- Submit annual Local Government Finance Report to SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs.
- Penalties for non-compliance.



Revenue Limitations

- Millage rate increases are limited to CPI and Population growth.
- **Liberty Millage Rate in 2024 - .093**
- Limited exceptions.
- **New service or user fees restrictions**
 - Adoption requires a positive majority vote.
 - Revenues are restricted to pay costs of a service or program for which the fee is paid.



Other Restricted Revenues

- State Accommodations Tax
 - Statutory restrictions.
 - Must be used on tourism related expenditures.
- Local Accommodations Tax
 - Local definition of tourism related expenditures.
- Hospitality Tax
 - Local definition of tourism related expenditures.
- Victim's Assistance Funds
 - Statutory definition of victim's assistance services.



Funds Held in Trust

- State fines, fees, and assessments
- Employee payroll deductions
 - Retirement payments
 - Federal and state tax deductions
- Insurance Premiums



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Public Funds for a Public Purpose

- Public Funds require a public purpose.
 - 4 Part Test – Goal, primary beneficiaries, speculative nature, probability of success. (Nichols v. SCRA)
- Council salary increase limitations.
- Council expense reimbursements
- Violations may trigger criminal or ethics enforcement actions





The Basics of Risk Management



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SC Tort Claims Act

As long as a public official is acting within the course and scope of their official capacity, the Tort Claims Act will protect them from personal liability in state court. The Act does not provide protection for an official acting outside of their course and scope. For example, a defamation claim could result if a councilmember gives false information regarding the reasons an employee was fired. In that instance, the official could be held personally liable in state court.



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Public Officials Liability

Public official's liability insurance provides coverage for damages or defense costs for claims against elected or appointed officials.

Generally, insurance coverage defends municipalities and their officers from suits alleging the municipality made an error in its decision-making or in its procedures.



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Place Holder

ADD SLIDE ABOUT SCMIT SCMIRF IF
APPLICABLE TO CITY



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Place Holder

ADD SLIDE ABOUT OUR RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER



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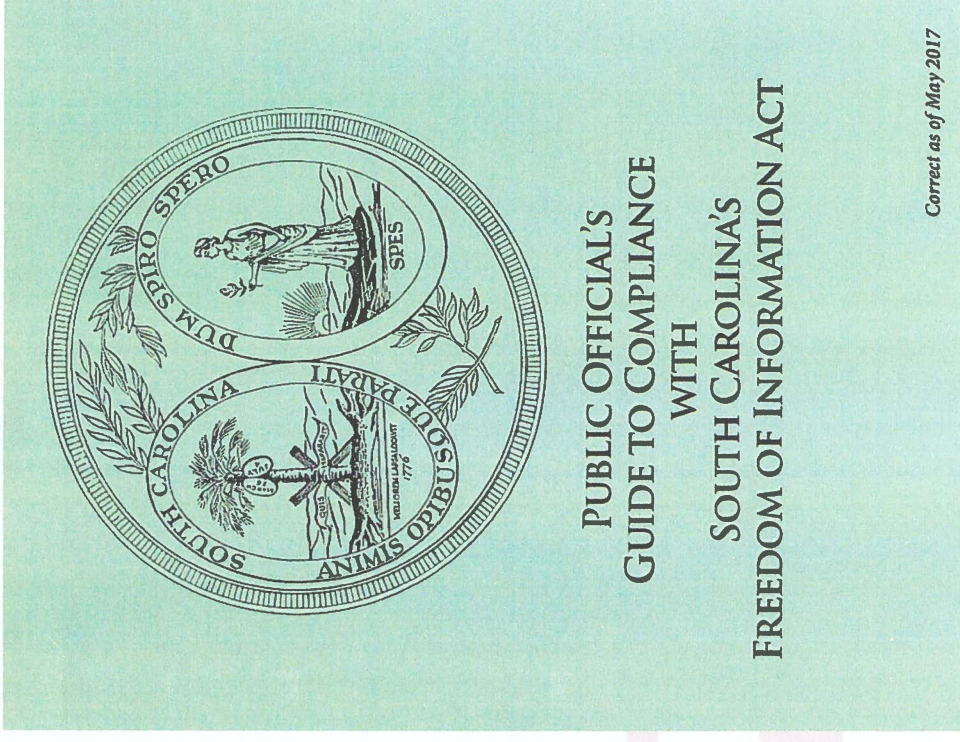
The South Carolina Freedom of Information Act



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FOIA Basics

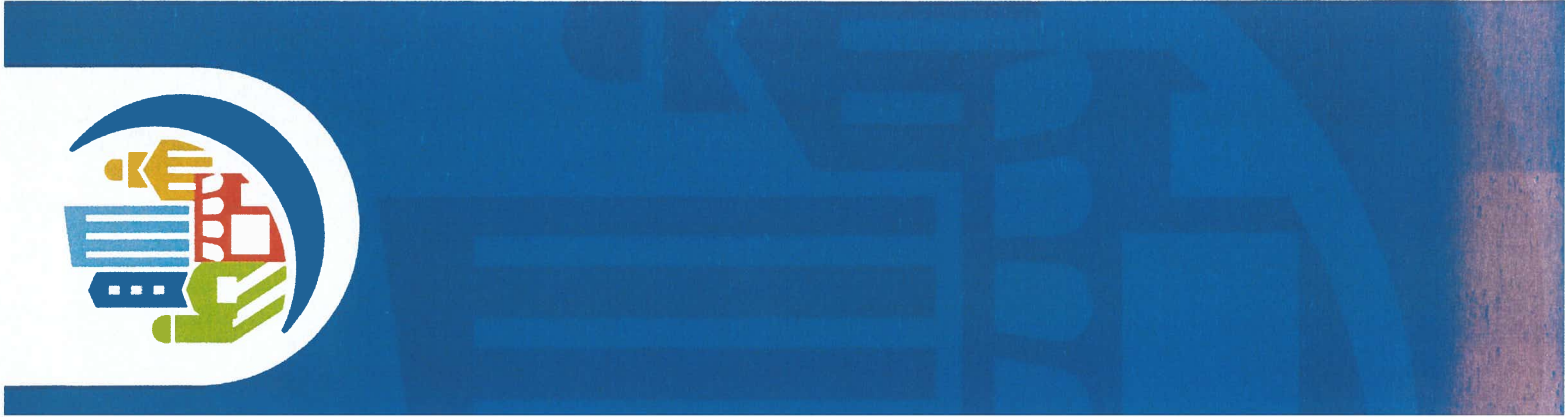
- Open meetings
- Open records
- Avoiding accidental meetings



<https://scpress.org/public-officials-guide-to-the-foia/>



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Ethics

SC Ethics Act

- Title 8 – Public Officers and Employees
- Chapter 13 – Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform



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SC Ethics Act – The SEI Report

- Public Officials must submit an Annual Statement of Economic Interest
- File by noon of March 30 of each year
- Filed online
- Covers source, type, and amount of income from government entity by the filer or their immediate family



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SC Ethics Act – The SEI Report

- Noncompliance
 - Initial penalty of \$100
 - After receipt of a certified letter, \$10 per day for 10 days
 - After 10 days, \$100 per day until maximum penalty of \$5,000
- Nondisclosure
 - If you fail to disclose you may be given a chance to correct omission
 - \$2,000 maximum fine



Conflicts of Interest

- Section 5-7-130
 - Refrain from voting and participating
 - Willfully do so and upon conviction forfeit office or position.
- Section 8-13-700
 - Prepare written statement describing matter and potential conflict. Must be filed with the meeting minutes.



Conflicts of Interest

RECUSAL STATEMENT

Member Name: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Agenda Item: _____ Section _____ Number _____

Topic: _____

The Ethics Act, SC Code §8-13-700, provides that no public official may knowingly use his office to obtain an economic interest for himself, a family member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated. No public official may make, participate in making, or influence a governmental decision in which he or any such person or business has an economic interest. Failure to recuse oneself from an issue in which there is or may be conflict of interest is the sole responsibility of the council member (1991 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 91-37.) A written statement describing the matter requiring action and the nature of the potential conflict of interest is required.

Justification to Recuse:

_____ Professionally employed by or under contract with principal

_____ Owns or has vested interest in principal or property

_____ Other: _____

Date: _____

_____ Member

Approved by Parliamentarian: _____



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Conflicts of Interest

- Section 8-13-700 (a)
 - Cannot use official office to gain economic interest for yourself, family member, individual associate or business associated with
- Section 8-13-700 (b)
 - Cannot use office to influence a governmental decision in which there is an economic interest.



Conflicts of Interest

- What is an economic interest?
 - (A) An interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a public official, public member, or public employee may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.
 - (B) “Large Class” Benefit



Conflicts of Interest

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 - (A) An interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a public official, public member, or public employee may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.
 - (B) “Large Class” Benefit



Conflicts of Interest

- 8-13-705 (B)
 - A public official, public member, or public employee may not, directly or indirectly, knowingly ask, demand, exact, solicit, seek, accept, assign, receive, or agree to receive anything of value for himself or for another person in return for being...
- 8-13-720
 - No person may offer or pay to a public official, public member, or public employee and no public official, public member, or public employee may solicit or receive money in addition to that received by the public official, public member, or public employee in his official capacity for advice or assistance given in the course of his employment as a public official, public member, or public employee.



Conflicts of Interest - Summary

- Recuse – Disclose in writing at meeting and avoid participation
- Seek counsel... SC Ethics Commission will issue an “informal opinion” - a non-binding opinion issued by the staff on a real or hypothetical set of facts or circumstances. *The Commission will consider advisory opinion requests having prospective application only.*
- Still unsure....recuse



Ethics and Expenses

- Members of council may receive “payment for actual expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties within limitations prescribed by ordinance.” – SC Code 5 – 7 – 170.
- According to the SC Attorney General’s Office – there is no provision allowing members to have an expense allowance of a fixed amount to cover future unknown expenses.
- Per diems are not allowed.





You've Been Elected, Now What?



Newly Elected Officials Orientation

January 6, 2026

Rob Wolfe

Field Services Manager

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