

Belton City Council—Taking Time to Train and Plan

Council members often get caught up in routine business and day-to-day problems while neglecting their own professional development and long range goals. Missed garbage pickups, dead dogs and potholes assume a higher priority than capital planning and the long term prosperity of the City. Today's minor crisis is followed by another tomorrow and the next day. Sometimes it becomes very difficult for a city council to just stop, regroup and take a look at where the City is heading.

The City of Belton is one of several Upstate municipalities that have recently participated in Council orientation and strategic planning sessions conducted by the Appalachian Council of Governments. Five more municipal councils have scheduled planning sessions in February alone.

This past December, the Belton Council spent an entire evening being briefed by ACOG staff on various Home Rule issues including forms of government, freedom of information, land use planning, annexation, municipal finance and general administration. Council met again recently in ACOG's boardroom in Greenville and spent a Saturday establishing prioritized lists of short term and long range goals for the City. Council members were able to spend time together in relaxed surroundings working to reach a consensus on issues important to the future of the City of Belton.

A single training session and a planning retreat did not solve all of Belton's problems and challenges, but the City Council now has some common



Mayor, Council and staff of the City of Belton participate in ACOG Home Rule Training and Council Orientation.

goals and is working together to accomplish them. Other busy councils could learn from Belton's example.

Senate Confirms President Bush's ARC Appointments

On November 18, the U.S. Senate confirmed the nominations of Anne B. Pope to be Federal Co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and Richard J. Peltz of Pennsylvania to be Alternate Federal Co-chair.

Pope has served as commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance since 1999, and was previously the executive director of the Tennessee Film, Entertainment

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Liberty Endorses Strategies for Big and Little Mill Villages

On January 13, 2003, Liberty's City Council signed a resolution endorsing the strategies identified in a strategic plan for the Big and Little Mill Villages within the City. The City had been awarded grant funds to develop a study aimed at identifying the needs of these targeted areas and to develop a list



of strategies to mitigate negative conditions. Staff from the Appalachian Council of Governments assisted the City of Liberty with the development of the plan, which included outstanding participation from the citizens of both mill villages. A series of citizen-driven meetings were conducted to gather information about the areas of the communities that needed to be addressed or improved. This information provided a framework for plan development and was used to identify strategies that could be used to help improve conditions. Citizens identified housing rehabilitation as the top priority, followed by stormwater and erosion control, and the need for additional recreational facilities. The Planning Commission reviewed the plan and recommended that

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GIS Fills the Bill for GASB 34/35 Compliance

“Public agencies have known for some time the benefits of using GIS (geographic information systems) and other information tools to convert rooms full of filing cabinets into searchable, integrated computer databases. But now, with the implementation of GASB 34 and 35 – the Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statements Number 34 and 35 – public agencies have a clear incentive to transfer their files and manage them with the latest information technology. By June 15, 2003, all state and local agencies must report their capital assets in compliance with these requirements.”

“GASB 34 and 35 require all government entities that receive federal funds to report on the value and condition of all their physical assets and infrastructure. Two methods are allowed: a simple depreciation method, and a modified method. The modified method takes into account maintenance expenses and the value that those expenses add to an asset. This method requires a current inventory of all assets, condition reports every three years, and estimates of annual maintenance costs.”

“Whichever method is used, public agencies will have to gather data on their physical assets and store it in a manner that will make it easily accessible for future reference. If ever there was a project tailor-made for GIS and similar technologies, this is it.” The optimum solution is a system that integrates asset management software such as GIS, executive information systems (EIS) and asset management systems (AMS).

“Public agencies that have already taken inventory of their assets and have built a GIS program to manage the data may find that they are already prepared for GASB 34 and 35 reporting, or at least are well on their way.” Agencies of all sizes usually follow the basic steps in the asset management process, using GIS and other technology to make GASB reporting easier.

The first step is a complete inventory of assets. In most cases, this re-

quires locating and counting features such as light poles, monuments, or manholes with a GPS unit. Often, information about infrastructure and equipment is held in the collective memory of managers and supervisors and must be transcribed into a database. An average-sized agency can expect to spend as much as a year to assess and evaluate their capital assets.

“The next logical step is to put the data into a useable and accessible format. In the past, that would have meant paper files, a complicated indexing system and a staff to manage and access the system. But thanks to GIS, EIS and AMS, there’s a new and better way. EIS and AMS are primarily balance sheet programs, while GIS links all the collected data – maps, photos, building statistics, parcel information – to create a searchable database.”

The final step of the GASB compliance process is to use the information to the advantage of the agency. “As long as an agency has to comply with GASB reporting standards, it makes sense for them to use the effort as a means to achieve additional goals such as training, economic analysis for capital renewal, or an inventory control system for maintenance and repair.

Once an agency has committed to a GIS program, they must establish policies and procedures to keep the information current. This is not a one-time process. Inventory collection continues as new assets are acquired, and the data changes as existing assets are repaired, maintained or retired. An information update policy is not just important for GASB 34 and 35 compliance; it is also vital for getting the full benefit of a GIS program. Let the information grow stale, and you’re right back where you started.



“The ability to take a long-range look at maintenance and capital needs may be a new experience for government entities that have been accountable on a current-year basis, but it is one of the greatest benefits of GASB 34 and 35. It prompts agencies to establish an accounting standard more readily recognized by voters, legislatures and other governing bodies. Once an agency has gone through the time and effort of assessing their assets and compiling the data required for GASB 34 and 35, and once that data has been processed into a GIS program, they will be in better shape than ever to make informed decisions about future capital needs.”

More information about GASB 34 and 35 is available at the following websites: Governmental Accounting Standards Board – <http://www.gasb.org> Government Finance Officers Association – <http://www.gfoa.org/gfoa2000/gasbfrum.htm> American Public Works Association – <http://www.apwa.net/education/cll.htm> ESRI – <http://www.esri.com/industries/localgov/gasb34.html>

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ment, and Music Commission. She is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University.

Peltz previously served with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation as Deputy Secretary, overseeing the Bureau of Public Transportation and the Bureau of Municipal Services. He was also previously district administrator for Pennsylvania Congressman Bill Clinger. He is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Pope is to be sworn in as ARC Federal Co-chair in early February. Peltz was sworn in as Alternate Federal Co-chair on December 23 and will serve as acting Federal Co-chair until Pope assumes her post.

Senior Advocate Volunteer Program Needed

You may ask the question, "Why do we need Senior Advocate Volunteers?" There are over 10,000 residents in long term care facilities in the Appalachian region who depend on the Ombudsman Program for a variety of services. Due to the large number of complaints filed on behalf of these residents, the majority of the Ombudsman's time is spent on investigations, and the other services cannot be carried out in a timely manner.

Complaint investigation of abuse, neglect, exploitation and other quality of care issues is only one area of service. The Ombudsman is also responsible for:

- (1) Issuing reports and recommendations;
- (2) Ensuring that residents have regular and timely access to representatives of the program and timely responses to complaints and requests for assistance;
- (3) Providing Public Education and Facility Staff In-Service trainings;
- (4) Supporting the development of resident and family councils.
- (5) Representing the interests of residents before governmental agencies; and
- (6) Analyzing, commenting on and monitoring the development and implementation of federal, state and local laws, regulations and other governmental policies and actions pertaining to the health, safety and welfare and rights of residents.

All of these responsibilities are

very important and need to be provided on a regular basis. There are only four investigators in this region, and there were 1,719 complaints filed on behalf of vulnerable adults in long term care facilities in the last program year (2000-2001). There were 287 cases of alleged Abuse, 54 Alleged Neglect Cases and 887 Quality of Care concerns. The numbers are predicted to rise each year.

Senior Advocate Volunteers would be the eyes and ears of the community, working to ensure that residents are treated with respect and dignity. They would be responsible for regular friendly visits to the facilities and advocating for the residents' best interests. They would act as a kind of "moral guide" to encourage respect for the principles and laws that facilities must abide by. They would be impartial, neutral fact-finders and mediators at the facilities, helping the residents to help themselves and to negotiate with the facilities to satisfactorily resolve problems.

South Carolina is one of only five states that do not have a Volunteer Ombudsman program. Efforts are currently underway to implement the Senior Advocate Volunteer Program in South Carolina. The Appalachian region has volunteered to become one of the pilot programs in the state. This program can be a great asset for our residents, and could provide tremendous assistance in accomplishing all the tasks required of the Ombudsman program.

If you are interested in this program and would like more information, please call the Ombudsman toll free at:

Greenville	242-9733
Anderson	225-3268
Cherokee	489-6960
Oconee	882-7538
Pickens	855-0163
Spartanburg	582-1403

Outstanding Older South Carolinian Award



Walter Ijames, of Simpsonville, was recently presented the Outstanding Older South Carolinian Award at the 2002 S. C. Conference on Aging. This award is given to an individual who renders outstanding and ongoing contributions to aging-related services. Mr. Ijames volunteers with Senior Action of Greenville as an escort volunteer, driving elderly clients to medical appointments.

Mr. Ijames transports individuals to medical appointments 2-3 times each week, often waiting at the doctor's office with individuals that may need support. He also serves as a telephone reassurance volunteer, calling homebound clients to check on them daily. Even while hospitalized himself, Mr. Ijames continued his daily calls to check on the safety and well-being of others.

As a volunteer, Mr. Ijames has given over 2500 hours of service since he began volunteering with Senior Action in 1997.

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the City Council endorse the outlined strategies. The City intends to seek additional grant funding for implementation of strategies contained in the plan to improve conditions within these communities.

Please contact Shawn Colin at the Appalachian Council of Governments with any questions or concerns.

VIEWPOINT

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Development Corporation Activity

A loan closed and was funded to Warsi Family Holdings of Simpsonville in the amount of \$50,000 for participation in the establishment of a Great Clips Hair Salon. New Commerce Bank provided primary funding. The project is located in Greenville County and will create seven to ten new jobs.

The Corporation closed and funded a loan of \$85,000 to Performance Automotive of Gaffney, Inc., to participate in the purchase of the building from which the business is operating. Performance Automotive employs three and is looking to add an additional person or two.

The Small Business Administration granted the Corporation approval for a loan of \$800,000 to Westminster Beacon, LLC. Westminster Beacon is a wholly owned subsidiary of North American Heritage Brands, Inc. The business is purchasing the former Beacon Blanket assets in Westminster, with plans to reopen the plant to manufacture cotton blankets. Employment should be between 100 and 200 people.

The Corporation also closed and funded a loan to Victory Lane Ideas, Inc., in the amount of \$100,000 for expansion of their manufacturing operations in Greer. Victory Lane Ideas makes automobile racing vending games, and in response to recent orders, is expanding. Employment will increase by four to six people.

The Small Business Administration granted approval for a loan of \$294,000 to Smart and Brown, LLC. Smart and Brown will build a new building in the Duncan Industrial Park that will house IDC Trim and Upholstery and Smart Supply, Inc. IDC and Smart Supply are wholesalers of automotive material and accessories covering three states. Employment at the new facility will exceed 20 people when fully occupied.