

SCPEAC

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

PRESENTED TO:

The President of the South Carolina Senate
The Speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives

BY: THE SOUTH CAROLINA PLANNING EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SOUTH CAROLINA



PLANNING EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Committee Members:

Stephanie Monroe
Tillerson, Chairperson
Representing SCAPA

John Gaber
Representing Clemson
University

Mary Catherine Lawton
Representing MASC

Andrea Melocik
Representing SCAC

Neal Woods
Representing University
of South Carolina

DATE: March 12, 2025

TO: The Honorable Thomas C. Alexander
President of the Senate

The Honorable G. Murrell Smith
Speaker of the House of Representatives

FROM: Stephanie Tillerson, Chairperson

RE: Annual Report of the South Carolina Planning Education
Advisory Committee

In 2003, the Legislature established Educational Requirements for Local Government Planning or Zoning Officials or Employees. It also established a five-member Advisory Committee to compile and distribute a list of approved orientation and continuing education courses to satisfy the statute's requirements and to determine categories of persons eligible for exemption from these educational requirements. The Advisory Committee elected to operate under the title of the South Carolina Planning Education Advisory Committee.

Please accept this as the 2024 Annual Report of the South Carolina Planning Education Advisory Committee pursuant to Section 6-29-1330(D)(3) of the Code of Laws of South Carolina.

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**Continuing Education Program Approval Policy and Procedure*

Introduction

Article 9 of Title 6, Chapter 29 of the South Carolina Code of Laws establishes Educational Requirements for Local Government Planning or Zoning Officials or Employees. These provisions apply to all members of locally appointed planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, architectural review boards and all professional employees engaged in planning and zoning activities.

Unless expressly exempted, each locally appointed official and professional employee must attend a minimum of six hours of orientation training in certain subjects and annually attend no fewer than three hours of continuing education in any of the subjects determined by the State Advisory Committee.

Approved training topics include, but are not limited to, land use planning, zoning, floodplains, transportation, community facilities, ethics, public utilities, wireless telecommunications facilities, parliamentary procedure, public hearing procedure, administrative law, economic development, housing, public buildings, building construction, land subdivision, and powers and duties of the planning commission, board of zoning appeals, or board of architectural review.

An appointed official or professional employee who has one or more of the following qualifications is exempt from the educational requirements:

- (1) certification by the American Institute of Certified Planners,
- (2) a master's or doctorate degree in planning from an accredited college or university,
- (3) a master's or doctorate degree or specialized training or experience in a field related to planning as determined by the advisory committee, or
- (4) a license to practice law in South Carolina.

Appointed officials are subject to removal from office or suspension or dismissal from employment if they fail to complete the requisite hours of orientation training and continuing education within the time allotted by State Code or fails to file the certification form and documentation required by State Code.

The local governing body is responsible for tracking and filing the proper certification forms for their planning or zoning officials or employees with their municipal or county clerk.

Newly appointed board and commission members and newly hired staff members must receive the required orientation training within one year of their start date. All board, commission and staff members require a minimum of three hours of continuing education each year following completion of the orientation training.

Section 6-29-1330 of the Code establishes an Advisory Committee composed of five members appointed by the Governor. The Code provides that the members shall include a planner recommended by the South Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association, a municipal official or employee recommended by the Municipal Association of South Carolina; a county

official or employee recommended by the South Carolina Association of Counties, a representative recommended by the University of South Carolina's Institute for Public Service and Policy Research, and a representative recommended by Clemson University's Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture.

This Committee, operating as the South Carolina Planning Education Advisory Committee, or SCPEAC, is charged with

- compiling and distributing a list of approved orientation and continuing education programs that satisfy the educational requirements in Section 6-29-1340,
- determining categories of persons with advanced degrees, training, or experience that are eligible for exemption from the educational requirements in Section 6-29-1340, and
- making an annual report to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

As required by Section 6-29-1330(D)(3) of the Code, the annual report provides a detailed account of the following areas:

- (a) activities,
- (b) expenses,
- (c) fees collected, and
- (d) determinations concerning approved education programs and categories of exemption.

This report covers activities for the calendar year of 2024.

South Carolina Planning Education Advisory Committee Members

John Gaber, Ph.D., AICP

Professor and Director Master in City and Regional Planning Program

Clemson University

Phone: 864.656.1208

Email: jgaber@clemson.edu

Represents: Clemson University

Mary Catherine Lawton, MPA

Research and Legislative Analyst

Municipal Association of South Carolina*

Phone: 803.933.1244

Email: mlawton@masc.sc

Represents: Municipal Association of South Carolina

Andrea Melocik, AICP

Deputy Director Planning and Zoning

Charleston County

Phone: 843.202.7219

Email: AMelocik@CharlestonCounty.org

Represents: South Carolina Association of Counties

Stephanie Monroe Tillerson, AICP

Town Administrator

Town of Kiawah Island

Phone: 843.768.5103 (direct office)

Email: stillerson@kiawahisland.org

Represents: SC Chapter of the American Planning Association

Neal D. Woods, Ph.D.

Professor

Department of Political Science

University of South Carolina

Phone: 803.777.7359

Email: woodsn@mailbox.sc.edu

Represents: University of South Carolina

* Ms. Lawton became a Municipal Association of South Carolina employee in December 2023.

Activities

A quarterly schedule of meetings was established, as allowed for under Section 6-29-1330(F) of the Code. The members have committed to conducting at least the first scheduled meeting of each year in person; and thus, the February 8, 2024, meeting was conducted at the offices of the Municipal Association of South Carolina. The May 9, August 8 and November 7 quarterly meetings were conducted via Microsoft Teams video conferencing. As part of the reorganization of the Committee in late 2023, the Committee agreed to revise and streamline the process for submitting continuing education program approvals. Thus, over a course of several meetings including a special called meeting conducted on September 24, 2024, the Committee approved a draft of the Continuing Education Program Approval Policy and Procedure. The revamp of the continuing education approval process resulted in the following committee decisions.

Advisory Committee Decisions:

- Effective immediately, all requests for approval of continuing education programs should complete an online application form and upload the required attachments. Once the form is complete, an email will be sent to a dedicated email address for the advisory committee at scepac@masc.sc. This email address will be used for all future inquiries related to the advisory committee or follow-ups on the status of approvals. The emails are monitored by staff at the Municipal Association of SC, as approved by the Committee in November 2023.
- Effective immediately, the approved facilitator list is no longer required. Applicants applying for continuing education training approval on behalf of their organization must submit a resume and meet the following minimum requirements — an undergraduate degree plus five years' experience in the planning field.
- Effective immediately, a third method for continuing education approvals as a Continuing Education Instructor was approved. Municipal or county staff who qualify may submit an online application to be approved as a Continuing Education Instructor. As an approved Continuing Education Instructor, this individual may conduct continuing education training without preapproval from the Advisory Committee. (See addendum for *SCPEAC Continuing Education Program Approval Policy and Procedure*, approved 9.24.24)

Other Committee activities included:

- Submitting the SCPEAC Annual Report for 2022 – 2023, to the State Legislature in March 2024;
- Updating the Notice of Decision Letter for continuing education requests with the signature of the newly elected chairperson;
- Approved 14 requests collectively from municipal and county officials for Continuing Education program approvals under a “consent agenda” at each meeting.
- Approved the 2025 Advisory Committee calendar:
 - Thursday, February 6, 2025, at 11 a.m. – in-person
 - Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 11 a.m. – virtual
 - Thursday, August 7, 2025, at 11 a.m. – virtual

- Thursday, November 6, 2025 @ 11 a.m. - Virtual

Expenses

The committee incurs minimal operating expenses. De minimis postage, copying, printing, and domain costs have been absorbed by the Municipal Association of SC. South Carolina Legislative Printing, Information and Technology Systems Department maintains the Committee's website. The South Carolina Legislative Printing, Information, and Technology Systems Department maintains the Committee's website at no cost to the Committee at the domain, <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/SCPEAC/>.

The individual members or their employers have borne costs for travel to meetings of the Committee. No costs for overnight stays or meals have been incurred.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina donates the meeting space for the Committee's annual on-site meeting, as well as administrative support to the Committee. Limited refreshments are provided similarly to other groups that use the Association's facilities.

Fees Collected

No fees have been collected.

Section 6-29-1330(G) of the Code provides for the imposition of a nominal fee to each entity applying for approval of an orientation or continuing education program. The Committee has chosen not to impose such a fee at this time.

Determinations Concerning Approved Education Programs and Categories of Exemptions

In 2024, the South Carolina Planning Education Advisory Committee approved the following continuing education courses:

1. Dorchester County - Center for Heirs' Property Training, From Land Divided to Land Sustained (2023)
2. York County – Board of Zoning Appeals Variance Training (2023)
3. Fort Mill – The Carolina Thread Trail – Authorized Course No.: 2024-01
4. Charleston County – "Historic Preservation Ordinance Training May 2024" – Authorized Course No.: 2024-02
5. City of Rock Hill – "ZBA Functions" – Authorized Course No.: 2024-03
6. McClellanville Planning Commission – "Historic Properties Specialist" – Authorized Course No.: 2024-04
7. Catawba Regional Council of Governments – "'From NIMBY to Not Impossible, Maybe, Better' [Recording from Host Kansas APA CM #9289837]" – Authorized Course No.: 2024-05
8. City of Sumter – "Best Practices for an Effective Local Preservation Commission" – Authorized Course No.: 2024-06
9. City of Goose Creek – "Planning Commission & BZA Training" – Authorized Course No.: 2024-07

10. Town of Hilton Head Island – “Floodplain Management for Local Officials” – Authorized Course No.: 2024-08
11. City of Greenville – “Greenville History and Architectural Mobile Workshop” – Authorized Course No.: 2024-09
12. City of North Augusta – “North Augusta Annual Boards & Commission Training – Authorized Course No.: 2024-10
13. City of Rock Hill – “Zoning - Annexations” – Authorized Course No.: 2024-11
14. Town of Summerville – “Conducting Effective Meetings” – Authorized Course No.: 2024-12



SCPEAC Continuing Education Program Approval Policy and Procedure

- Only continuing education programs approved by the SCPEAC may be used to fulfill the continuing education requirement for South Carolina planning officials. The term "program" includes training in any format that complies with the provisions in Section 6-29-1340 of the South Carolina Code of Laws as interpreted by the SCPEAC.
- There are three options for Continuing Education Program approvals:
 - **Approval as a Continuing Education Sponsor**
 - A CE Sponsor is an organization, department or agency at the national, state or regional level respected and viewed as an expert in one or more of the CE subjects listed in Section 6-29-1340 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.
 - The following organizations are currently approved as [CE Sponsors](#).
 - All CE programs offered by an approved CE Sponsor are approved to satisfy CE requirements for planning officials, provided that the program's subject matter addresses one or more of the educational subjects defined in Section 6-29-1340 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.
 - It is the responsibility of the CE host or individual subject to the CE training requirement to verify that the subject matter meets this requirement.
 - Additional organizations wanting to be approved as Continuing Education Sponsors must complete this [application](#) for the SCPEAC to consider approval of its application.
 - The SCPEAC reserves the right to identify any organization, department or agency at the national, state or regional level that is respected and viewed as an expert in one or more of the CE subjects listed in Section 6-29-1340 of the South Carolina Code of Laws and approve them as a CE Sponsor without the need for an application submission to the SCPEAC.
 - **Approval as a Continuing Education Instructor**
 - A Continuing Education instructor is an individual who possesses a defined level of education and experience in land use planning deemed sufficient by the SCPEAC to qualify to offer CE programs without SCPEAC review and approval for each program offered.
 - Individuals wanting to be approved as a Continuing Education Instructor must:

- Complete an approved [Instructor Certification form](#) to document that the instructor possesses one or more of the following qualifications:
 - Certification by the American Institute of Certified Planners;
 - A master's or doctorate degree in planning from an accredited college or university;
 - A license to practice law in South Carolina, and
 - In addition to these qualifications, at least three years of combined experience, preferably at a planning director, senior planner or equivalent level.
 - Individuals who do not possess one or more of the educational credentials listed above may apply to the SCPEAC for consideration as a Certified Instructor if they have a bachelor's or master's degree in a related field and a minimum of five years of South Carolina planning experience preferably at a director, senior planner or equivalent level.
 - Approval at this level is at the discretion of the SCPEAC on a case-by-case basis.
- An Instructor Certification must be submitted to the clerk of the local governing body hosting the training and attached to the Certificate of Attendance filed by attendees for each CE program offered by the Certified Instructor.
- **Approval of Individual Continuing Education Programs**
 - Hosts of proposed CE programs that do not otherwise qualify for a review exemption as a CE Sponsor or Certified Instructor must submit an [Application for Accreditation of a Continuing Education Program](#) to the SCPEAC for review and approval.
 - A list of [approved CE programs](#) is housed on the SCPEAC website.
 - Qualified municipal and county planning officials may use the approved materials to hold CE training sessions for their officials without applying for approval. Attendance records must be maintained as outlined in Section 6-29-1360 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.

Policy approved September 24, 2024