

Open Government Subcommittees hash out recommendations

BY CAROLE GRAVES
TML Communications Director

Last week, the Open Meetings Subcommittee adopted recommendations similar to what 37 states have enacted into their open meetings laws. The majority of the states use a quorum standard that requires that the majority of its members must be present when determining what constitutes a public meeting.

The proposal was presented by Rep. Ulysses Jones and approved by the subcommittee with a 7-2 vote.

"It is my belief that there are potentially major problems with the open meetings statute as is, where there are violations or chance violations that may be committed by elected officials, such as having lunch or attending a community forum," said Rep. Jones. "Newly elected officials, in an effort to become more educated and aware of issues, may make inquiries about certain legislation, and then expose them to allegations of violating the open meetings act."

"It is my recommendation that these elected officials come under the same code or statute as the Tennessee General Assembly, and that there at least be a quorum present before it is determined that a violation has occurred," said Jones.

The Tennessee Municipal League, the Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA), and the Tennessee School Board Association (TSBA) are also advocating for the quorum standard to add clarity to the law in

order to better establish when the Act applies and to what type of communication it encompasses.

"The language of the Act is very broad and in some instances the terminology used is not clearly defined," said David Connor, TCCA executive director. "There needs to be a bright line. The so-called 'chance meetings' provision is worded in such a manner as to effectively swallow up the rule itself."

Under current law, chance meetings or informal assemblies of two or more members of a public body are not considered to be a public meeting. "Nothing in this section shall be construed as to require a chance meeting to two or more members of a public body to be considered a public meeting." [T.C.A. 8-44-102 (c)]

The statute defines a public meeting as "the convening of a governing body of a public body for which a quorum is required in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward decision."

However, some rulings by the courts and rendered AG opinions since the 1974 law was first enacted have interpreted the chance meeting requirement to mean that a meeting of two or more members of a public body that is not by chance is considered a public meeting.

"As the law currently exists, and as it is being interpreted and enforced, it may, in some cases, be a hindrance to good communication and effective representation of See **SUNSHINE** on Page 5

Tennessee opens China development center; pledges cooperation with Chinese

Gov. Phil Bredesen opened the state's first economic development office in the People's Republic of China as part of the state's official trade mission.

"We envision the Beijing office becoming a clearinghouse for information we can provide to Chinese companies interested in expanding into the U.S. market and for Tennessee companies trying to attract new customers in China," said Gov. Bredesen. "Ultimately the result of both efforts will be new jobs and new investments in Tennessee."

The Tennessee China Development Center will be located in the Silver Tower, Number 2 Dongsanhuan North Road in the Chaoyang District of Beijing, and the director will be Li Weaver, a native of China and former Tennessee resident. The office becomes the fourth international office for Tennessee, joining locations in Dusseldorf, Germany; Yokohama, Japan; and Toronto, Canada. All four offices are administratively managed by the Tennessee Department of Economic Development.

"We believe there is a strong economic potential in developing our ties to China," said ECD Commissioner Matt Kisber. "This is a country that purchased \$1.8 billion dollars worth of goods and services from Tennessee in 2006, and we want to help Tennessee companies aggressively market themselves in one of the world's fastest growing markets."

China is Tennessee's third larg-



Gov. Phil Bredesen opened the state's first economic development office in the People's Republic of China as part of the state's official trade mission.

est trading partner, behind only Canada and Mexico. In 2006, Tennessee companies sold more than \$22 billion dollars in goods and services to foreign customers. The state's primary exports to China are agricultural crops, such as cotton and soybeans, industrial machinery and automotive parts, as well as scrap metal and paper. Tennessee becomes the 28th U.S. state to establish an office in China.

"The opening of the office is an important step in raising the profile of Tennessee among Chinese business owners and investors," said Li Weaver, director, Tennessee China Development Center. "Many Chi-

nese business people are well aware of the U.S. market, but may not be as knowledgeable of the strong business climate in Tennessee. Our job is to educate them about opportunities in Tennessee."

Capital investment in Tennessee from China is at a very early stage. A few companies like FHG of Guangzhou and Fushi International, Inc. of Dalian have made initial investments in Tennessee. FHG has opened a chain of kitchen and bath retail stores in Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville, and Fushi recently purchased Copperweld Bimetallics, a leading manufacturer of bimetallic See **CHINA** on Page 4

Cities embrace toll projects

BY VICTORIA SOUTH

As interest soars concerning toll projects in Tennessee, the criteria controlling the number of projects pursued by the state could be expanded before pilot studies are complete. This year's passage of the Tennessee Tollway Act has prompted municipal leaders to examine the potential benefits toll projects could bring to their communities generating some discussion among Tennessee's legislators.

"Chairman Phillip Pinion, (House Transportation Committee) commented during the last Joint Transportation Summer Study Committee meeting that the passage of the tolling bill has so far resulted in multiple bridge proposals and it might be worth taking a look at expanding the criteria," said Julie Oaks, Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) spokesperson.

Under the bill, TDOT is authorized to pursue only two pilot

projects, a toll bridge and roadway toll project as a test of the success of toll roads in Tennessee.

Three bridge projects presented by local leaders are the current candidates under consideration with a final selection deadline of January 2008. They are: the Hadley Bend Connector, a toll bridge over the Cumberland River near the Old Hickory Dam providing Hendersonville commuters an alternative route to Nashville proposed by Sen. Diane Black; the New Tennessee River Bridge, north of Chattanooga near Soddy Daisy, proposed by Rep. Jim Cobb; and the New Mississippi River Bridge, proposed by the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization.

According to Oaks, there has also been discussion about the possibility of utilizing tolls to finance portions of I-69 that will be located in West Tennessee, but no formal See **TOLLS** on Page 8

U.S. Senate, House approve Internet tax moratorium extension

BY CHRISTINA FLETCHER
LOFTUS
Nation's Cities Weekly

Earlier this month, the House Judiciary Committee approved H.R. 3678, legislation that would extend the current moratorium on taxes on Internet access for another four years.

H.R. 3678, sponsored by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, also has bipartisan support from other committee members.

Besides extending the moratorium that is scheduled to expire on Nov. 1, the legislation would clarify the definition of "Internet access," preserve the grandfather clause in the original legislation that protects state and local taxes imposed on Internet access prior to 1998, and exempt from the moratorium general business taxes imposed by four states as either a substitute to or a supplement to corporate income taxes paid by businesses.

NLC supports the temporary moratorium created in H.R. 3678 as an alternative to legislation introduced in this session of Congress that would make the Internet tax moratorium permanent.

With the expiration of the moratorium looming, House floor debate on H.R. 3678 is expected by the end of the month.

Its companion bill in the Senate S. 1453, was approved last week to extend the moratorium for seven years. U.S. Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Tom Carper (D-DE) are cosponsors of the Senate legislation.

"This agreement is a common sense victory both for Internet users and for state and local governments," said Sen. Alexander. "It continues the moratorium on Internet taxation, avoids unfunded federal mandates on states and cities, updates the definition of Internet access, and allows Congress to revisit the issue after seven years."

The tax ban was first passed in 1998 and last updated in 2004.

THP advances new interdiction initiative

BY VICTORIA SOUTH
TML Communications Coordinator

It was "snowing" in Knoxville recently as local police and sheriff's departments in the Eastern District of Tennessee, troopers with the Tennessee Highway Patrol and representatives from the Tennessee National Guard Counterdrug Division and the Methamphetamine Task Force took part in intensive training classes known as "Desert Snow" as part of a new interdiction initiative "Interdiction Plus," headed by the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

Learning to spot cocaine smugglers, identifying potential terrorists and uncovering weapons of mass destruction are all part of the plan to enhance regional highway interdiction operations, ultimately uniting city police and county sheriff's departments from all across Tennessee with state and federal law enforcement agencies in the fight against highway crime.

Initially comprised of three teams consisting of 10-12 officers and K-9 support from the Eastern District of Tennessee, in the Tri-Cities, Knoxville and Chattanooga areas, the program is on target to expand statewide.

"The Department of Safety and



City and county law enforcement teams experience "Desert Snow" training together in Knoxville for the "Interdiction Plus" initiative

Tennessee Highway Patrol are very excited about working with our local partners in this initiative," said Commissioner of Public Safety David Mitchell.

"I have been very impressed with the team work and partnerships that exist in East Tennessee. The sharing of intelligence and information with the men and women who protect our citizens and enforce the

laws on our roads and highways will be the key to the successes of "Interdiction Plus."

"Interdiction Plus" will focus on vehicles, both private and commercial, traveling interstates, U.S. highways and state highways with a mission to intercept and dismantle terrorist and criminal operations while preserving the safety of citizens traveling See **INITIATIVE** on Page 8

East Ridge Construction Academy remodels vocational tech education



East Ridge Construction Career Academy students receive instruction at a construction site as part of the academy field trip/job shadowing experience. Story on Page 3

Photo courtesy of AGC of East TN

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



BY TML STAFF REPORTS

CHATTANOOGA

More than \$1.6 million in federal grants will flow to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga to assist in nursing recruitment, support and continuing education with one of the grants focusing on increasing the qualifications of nurses in rural areas. UTC staff members hope their efforts will bolster the ranks of nursing school faculty members, many of whom are eligible to retire in a few years. U.S. hospitals had 116,000 registered nurse vacancies, according to the American Hospital Association's 2007 survey of hospital leaders with that number expected to increase to more than 340,000 by 2020.

CLARKSVILLE

Clarksville's Rivers and Spires Festival is the recipient of the International Festivals & Events Association's Gold Grand Pinnacle award, considered the top award in the festival industry. Winners were chosen from 1,506 entries from around the world. Rivers and Spires Festival also won a Tennessee Tourism Spotlight Award during the 2007 Governor's Conference on Tourism held last week in Chattanooga. The award recognizes great ideas and concepts in the tourism industry. Rivers and Spires Festival was conceived for two purposes, to honor the military, especially in times of deployment, and "to celebrate the rebirth, the revitalization and rebuilding of the town after the 1999 tornado. The 2008 Rivers and Spires Festival is scheduled for April 17-19 in downtown Clarksville. For more information, visit www.riversandspires.com.

CLEVELAND

The Cleveland Municipal Airport Authority was named the Governing Body of the Year by the Tennessee Aeronautics Division of the Transportation Department. The local body was chosen for its demonstrated exceptional leadership. Other nominees were Beech River Regional Airport Authority and McNairy County Airport Authority. CMAA won the award for demonstrating long-term guidance and leadership by proving the airport is beneficial not only to the aviation system but also in supporting local economic, business and recreational aviation activities.

CLEVELAND

City residents now have another way to make their opinions known at City Hall. Cleveland recently began add-

ing notices of public hearings to its Web site along with a response form for anyone wishing to make an online comment. Those comments are routed to the appropriate officials, either on the Cleveland Planning Commission or the City Council.

JACKSON

Jackson's McKellar-Sipes Regional Airport will have commercial flights again beginning Nov. 18. Commercial service at the airport was halted in March when the Federal Aviation Administration grounded the airport's previous carrier, Smyrna-based RegionsAir, for federal training violations. Big Sky will now operate a daily flight to Cincinnati as a connector carrier for Delta Airlines. In Cincinnati, passengers can connect to 112 nonstop destinations. Service is expected to increase to two flights a day toward the end of the year.

MANCHESTER

Manchester is making plans for a new 16,000-square-foot arts center. The Manchester Municipal Arts Commission hopes to build the center on a 4.5-acre piece of land located adjacent to the Coffee County Administrative Plaza. The building will include a theatre with a 200-seat capacity, an art gallery, practice rooms, a history museum, gift shop, café, concessions area, and art studio. Estimated cost for the structure is \$3-\$4 million. The Arts Commission plans to use existing funds and grant money to pay for some of the construction. Once the project gets underway, it will take about 10 months for the building to be completed. The 12,000-square-foot Manchester Arts Center was destroyed by fire in December.

NASHVILLE

Dell Inc. call center has laid off 250 technical support workers as part of a company-wide restructuring. The layoffs took effect immediately, and make up 6 percent of Dell's 4,000-employee Middle Tennessee workforce. Dismissed employees were given severance packages including financial benefits for an unspecified amount of time, as well as job placement and counseling services. Some of the employees had been with the company since the opening of the Nashville facility in 1999. Texas-based Dell — the nation's second largest manufacturer of computers — announced in May that 10 percent of the company's global workforce would be eliminated over the course of the following 12 months.

OAK RIDGE

Oak Ridge is one of three new Bioenergy Research Centers receiving \$9.97 million from The U.S. Department of Energy in order to accelerate research in the development of cellulosic ethanol and other biofuels and making biofuel production cost competitive on a national scale by 2012. This \$30 million investment of end-of-fiscal-year funds comes in addition to a total of \$375 million announced by DOE in June. The other two centers are located in Madison, Wis. and the Berkeley, Cal. area.

SMYRNA

Smyrna is ranked in the Top 10 Best Places to Retire, according to the recent edition of *US News World & Report*. The magazine began with a list of 2,000 American places with a population above 15,000. From the first 2,000, US News used criteria including cost of living, climate, crime rate, access to healthcare, educational opportunities, and cultural and recreational amenities to develop their list for the Top Ten Best Places to Retire. According to the article, Smyrna boasts many amenities that people look for during their retirement years — state of the art healthcare, recreational and cultural amenities, and a rapidly expanding economy that offers diverse job opportunities for retirees who want to keep working.

SOMERVILLE

Somerville has received a \$251,000 state grant to construct a streetscape on the Town Square. The town is one of 32 communities approved for an 80/20 matching grant provided by the Tennessee Department of Transportation's Enhancement Program. The grant will be used to construct roadside improvements on the north and south sides of the Fayette County Courthouse Square. They will include decorative pavers inlaid into a portion of the sidewalks, curb extensions that provide reduced pedestrian crossing distance, and new crosswalks meeting requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The improvements are a continuation of enhancement efforts completed in 2001, which included landscaping and roadside improvements around the courthouse and along East and West Court streets.

WILSON COUNTY

According to a report released by the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, visitors to Wilson County had an economic impact of \$91 million, a 7.13 percent increase over 2005. The report is based on several factors including lodging, transportation, meals, and retail. The county ranked 16th of 95 Tennessee counties in tourism spending.



PEOPLE

BY TML STAFF REPORTS

Former Vice President **Al Gore** and the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to spread awareness of man-made climate change and lay the foundations for counteracting it. Gore was congratulated by Gov. Phil Bredesen who said, "From his time in Congress to the present day, Al has continued to shine a spotlight on the challenges of the global environment. We are extremely proud of our native son."



Gore

Mayor Karl Dean has tapped **Greg Hinote** to be Nashville's deputy mayor and chief operating officer. Hinote, a former businessman, managed U.S. Congressman Jim Cooper's congressional campaign in 2002 and has been his top aide since Cooper took office in 2003. Hinote's new position with Mayor Dean brings his career full circle, having previously served in former Nashville Mayor Richard Fulton's office in 1987.



Hinote

Willie Herenton won a fifth consecutive four-year term as mayor of Memphis. Herenton, 67, won 70,177 or 42 percent of the votes. He beat back a challenge from City Council member Carol Chumney in one of the most contested races since his election in 1991. She garnered 57,180 votes, or 35 percent, with former Memphis Light, Gas & Water executive Herman Morris finishing third with 35,158 votes, or 21 percent.



Herenton

Bob McKee, former state House representative from McMinn County, has been named executive director of the General Assembly's Select Oversight Committee on Corrections in Nashville. He brings to the job 14 years of experience as a member of the committee he heads, serving as co-chairman of the committee from 2004 to 2006. House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh and Lt. Gov. Ron



McKee

Ramsey appointed McKee to replace Claire Drowota, who retired in September.

Harold Ford Jr.

former five-term U.S. Representative from Memphis has been named a visiting professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Ford will conduct classes at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs as part as the school's American Politics and Policy Seminars. Ford has also taught at Vanderbilt University. He currently serves as a vice president at investment firm Merrill Lynch and leads the Democratic Leadership Council



Ford

Sen. Jim Tracy

is competing in the annual Marine Corps Marathon held this month in Arlington, Va. It will be the third marathon for Tracy, who turns 51 this month.



Tracy

Tony Burriss was sworn into office Oct. 6 as Trenton's new mayor. He won the August election with 635 votes or 52 percent, defeating incumbent mayor Tommy Litton, who received 490 votes. Burriss recently retired from a 30-year career in education with 16 of those years as the Peabody High School band director.

Kaye Burton

longtime administrative assistant with Athens, is retiring after 26 years of service. Her last day with the city will be Dec. 31.



Burton

Murfreesboro

City Attorney **Susan Emery McGannon** has been appointed to a six-year term on the Tennessee Judicial Evaluation Commission. The commission is responsible for evaluating all state appellate judges, Tennessee Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and Court of Criminal Appeals. Speaker Naifeh also appointed Memphis lawyer William D. Massey to the Commission. He was nominated by the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.



McGannon

Johnson City municipal attorney **James Epps III** died at home after a long battle with cancer. He was 71. With more than 40 years representing Johnson City, Epps was the longest serving municipal attorney in the state. Officials sought not only his legal opinions but his knowledge of the city's history. Epps was to receive the Charles S. Rhyne Distinguished Public Service Award at the International Municipal Lawyers Association conference Oct. 30. It will be given to him posthumously.



Epps

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East Ridge Construction Academy prepares students for college, workforce

BY VICTORIA SOUTH

TML Communications Coordinator

The division between college and career tracks is a thing of the past at East Ridge High School in Chattanooga as students at the Construction Career Academy focus on mastering the art of masonry, carpentry, electrical work, and plumbing all while completing a core curriculum that includes Advanced Placement classes, athletics, band and other electives.

Sponsored by the Associated General Contractors of America in Washington, D.C., and the AGC of East Tennessee, this award-winning program established in 2002 is a model for school systems across the country with an emphasis on post-graduate construction skills for grades 10-12. Students are enrolled in pre-requisite classes as early as the 9th grade.

"The East Ridge High School Construction Career Academy serves as a model of what an academy should be," observed Liz Elvin, AGC of America director of Workforce Development. "It is a cooperative effort of industry and education to introduce high school students to the wide range of career

nance; information technology; mathematics education and training; hospitality and tourism; and science/technology/engineering as initiatives for future industry.

"We realize that schools must educate young people for success in the new economy. The Construction Career Academy is a true learning community that engages both adults and young people in challenging courses with the intent to make school more relevant, realistic, and engaging," said Roger Tudor, executive director of AGC, East Tennessee.

Erasing the academic stigma frequently associated with students who choose vocational paths over college, students at the career academies will be prepared to enter both college and the workforce upon graduation.

"Some of my kids are the best and brightest in the school," said Career Tech Instructor Tim Fowler, a 25-year master electrician and member of the academy leadership team.

According to Fowler, highlights of the academy include a caring faculty and soft skills pertinent to job seeking and everyday living.

to year two. Drop out rates have decreased in Hamilton County schools and graduation rates are rising after developing the academies.

With an applied approach toward core curriculum courses, teachers report that students display greater interest in subjects such as math, English, and science, as they discover how these disciplines are applied to the real world.

Fowler's students experience field trips and job shadowing along with hands on construction assignments at the school. East Ridge's new soccer building is currently under construction, built solely by students using donated materials.

As the industry's aging workforce nears retirement, the U.S. Department of Labor reports a critical need for skilled, educated employees on all levels in the construction industry.

"This academy is the perfect example of the business community and educators working together for the betterment of the community as a whole, said Jim Scales, Ph.D., Superintendent of Hamilton County Department of Education.

"With the input of local construction industry leaders, we were able to create a curriculum based on the Tennessee State Standards that is infused with construction industry standards and practices. As such, this academy gives our students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed after high school in the construction in-



Construction Career Academy instructor Tim Fowler assists an electrical student



Academy students may concentrate on one construction discipline or several within the scope of their educational plan



The U.S. Department of Labor reports a critical need for skilled, educated employees at all levels in the construction industry

options available in the construction industry while providing a rigorous, integrated education."

Modeled upon the "school within a school" concept, the Construction Academy is one of 35 premiere academies established by the Hamilton County school system during a five-year initiative to pare large impersonal high schools into smaller career focused communities.

Partly funded with \$8 million in grants from the Carnegie Corporation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and \$6 million from a local education foundation and federal money, the academies are governed by a board consisting of students, parents, teachers, businessmen, and representatives from post-secondary education, unions, and other local organizations.

Academy topics have been established through a Community Research Council report on local labor market trends commissioned by the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce. Recommended studies from the report point to architecture and construction; health care; fi-

"We teach interview techniques and how to create a resume," said Fowler. "Students actually participate in the interview process. The faculty is so good to work with. For myself, if I know a student's grades are dropping, I'll keep up with that student and encourage them. Some kids just need a pat on the back. There are strict rules and guidelines here. Fail two subjects and they're out of the academy."

"The AGC of America is committed to construction career academies because they have a proven record of increasing attendance and graduation rates among at-risk students, while preparing students for a future in the construction industry - whether they want to go straight to work or continue their education through an apprenticeship program or two- or four-year degree," said Elvin.

AGC reports show Construction Academy students experienced a 51.7 percent increase in grade point average from pre-academy enrollment to the completion of their first year in the academy and GPAs increased 4.77 percent from year one

Career Academies at a glance

Career academies in Tennessee schools have gained national attention for their success in combining rigorous standards with real-world technological experience.

National education publisher *Education Week* spotlighted Hamilton County Schools as a model of reform in Career Technical Education.

Career academies differ from traditional academic and vocational education because they prepare high school students for both college and careers. Academies provide broad information about a field such as health care, finance, engineering, media, or natural resources. They weave the themes into academic curricula that qualify students for admission to four-year colleges or universities.

Studies have found that students in career academies perform better in high school and are

more likely to continue into post secondary education, compared to similar students in the same schools. After assessing the most extensive, longitudinal study yet on academies by MDRC, William Rasberry, of the *Washington Post*, observed, "The magic, apparently, is in the combination of linking academies to job prospects and the intensive involvement of adults."

There are now some 2,000 academies nationwide and they are growing with the advent of school-to-careers and comprehensive school reform legislation and funding.

Several leading organizations of career academies have agreed on a common standard for academies, and use the following parameters when describing a career academy:

- A small learning community, comprised of a group of students within the larger high school,

who take classes together for at least two years, and are taught by a team of teachers from different disciplines;

- A college preparatory curriculum with a career theme, enabling students to see relationships among academic subjects, and their application to a broad field of work; and
- Partnerships with employers, the community, and local colleges bring resources from outside the high school to improve student motivation and achievement.

The Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation changing the name Vocational Technical Education to Career Technical Education to reflect the new face this path of study has taken to acclimate to 21st century demands.

For more information on Career Technical Education or career academies, contact Assistant Commissioner Ralph Barnett at 615-253-2114.

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STATE BRIEFS



TML STAFF REPORTS

The state is hoping to save \$22 million by building a new standalone prison in Bledsoe County instead of expanding the existing facility. The state originally planned a \$144 million expansion of the Southeast Tennessee State Regional Correctional Facility, but a 2005 review found that a new prison would be cheaper to build. The department plans to begin construction by summer of 2008. The facility should be complete by early 2011.

Tennessee cotton production is predicted to be the lowest since 2002 while the corn harvest will beat last year's harvest by 25 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cotton yields are expected to average 815 pounds per acre, down 14 percent from last year. Producers expect to harvest 495,000 acres, which is down 200,000 acres from 2006. The agency says lack of rain stressed plants and led to unusually early development. The cotton yield will bring producers nearly \$298 million this year, according to the USDA Economic Research Service. Corn yields are expected to average 100 bushels per acre and corn production for the state is expected to hit 78 million bushels.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation has partnered with LoJac Enterprises to test a warm-mix asphalt in Williamson County. The new asphalt looks like regular pavement, but state transportation officials say it's cleaner, less harmful to the environment and smells better, too. The warm mix releases fewer pollutants into the air and is easier on workers laying it in the summer because it's about 100 degrees cooler than traditional hot-mix asphalt. While the new asphalt has been 28 percent more expensive in tests done by other states, TDOT is trying it at one location to see how it stands the test of time. LoJac decided to create the mix at two of its plants, in Murfreesboro and Franklin, and TDOT agreed to use the asphalt in the state's first test on a public road. LoJac is also selling the mix to private companies.

Three \$425,000 hazardous-waste grants have been awarded to Chattanooga, Knoxville and Nashville. The grants will assist in the operation and maintenance of permanent household hazardous-waste facilities over the next five years. Memphis will also become eligible for a \$425,000 grant when its new perma-

nent collection facility is completed in December.

Tennessee collected \$1.1 billion in taxes in September. That was \$16.8 million below the budgeted estimate but about \$88 million, or 8.9 percent, above collections a year ago. The general fund collected \$24.9 million less than expected. Only the highway and city and county funds came in above revenue estimates by a combined \$8.2 million. Sales and use tax collections, the largest single revenue item, grew by 3.55 percent to more than \$573 million last month, while franchise and excise collections, the second-largest revenue producing category, increased by 13.72 percent to \$295 million.

Officials with the Tennessee Department of Safety want to add cable guardrails to the state's interstates in hopes of preventing fatal crossover crashes. Safety officials say that steel guardrails are often not enough. Cable guardrails are more forgiving and act like a spider web, preventing cars that leave the roadway from crossing the median. Officials hope to install the cable guardrails along Highway 96 from Deal Road in Dickson County to the Williamson County line. It would become the first stretch of roadway to have the new guardrails in Middle Tennessee. The state of Tennessee has already spent \$2 million installing the guardrails elsewhere across the state. The cables are actually cheaper than steel barriers and could save lives and money in the long run. In 2005, 66 percent of all fatal accidents were from crossover accidents.

A new report on foster care reimbursement rates released by Children's Rights, the National Foster Parent Association, and the University of Maryland School of Social Work shows that Tennessee is providing adequate reimbursement to cover the basic needs of most children in foster care in the state. The report represents the first-ever nationwide, state-by-state calculation of the real expenses of providing for the basic needs of children in foster care - including housing, food, clothing, and school supplies. According to the most recent federal data, Tennessee has more than 9,000 abused and neglected children in its foster care system. Tennessee's basic monthly rates range from \$627 to \$737 for different age groups. The full report is available at www.childrensrights.org/hittingthemark.

GNRC recognizes Dover's Scurlock, CTAS' McKee

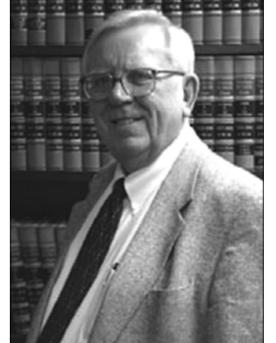
Jimmy Scurlock, city manager of Dover, was presented with the Maynard F. Pate Award for Leadership in Regional Cooperation by the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC). Frank McKee with the County Technical Advisory Service also received this award. The awards were given at GNRC's annual meeting Sept. 27 in Nashville.

Both were recognized for working tirelessly to promote the welfare of the cities and counties in this region through their professional affiliation with organizations that have led to strong regional partnerships and better understanding as they have shared their expertise and experience with the entire region.

The Maynard Pate Regional Leadership Award is named for Maynard Pate, who followed Marshall Stuart as the council's next executive director. Maynard served from 1986 to 2004 upon his retirement from the council. Throughout his 42-year career in urban and re-



Jimmy Scurlock



Frank McKee

gional planning and economic development, and most especially during his service with GNRC. Maynard provided professional guidance, expertise and leadership to cities and counties, and their staffs and elected leadership, and others, on a range of needs, issues, benefits and opportunities regarding regional cooperation and regional

planning and coordination.

"The council and all local officials in the GNRC area have benefited for many years from the presence of Mr. Scurlock and Mr. McKee in the region. Their legacy will be the improvements and professionalism they brought to the region," said GNRC Executive Director Sam Edwards.

Legislation filed to make Clinton's Green McAdoo Museum a national historic site

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander and Congressman Zach Wamp have introduced legislation to begin the process of making the site of the Green McAdoo School in Clinton part of the National Park System.

"America has been, and will continue to be a work in progress," Sen. Alexander said. "It's critical we teach the next generation about people and events - like the Civil Rights movement - that propelled our nation over tough hurdles. The Clinton 12 bravely stood up and became the first public high school students to enter a desegregated school in the South, and we need to honor the important place they hold in our nation's history and preserve their story for years to come."

The museum highlights the history of the formerly segregated all-black Green McAdoo School and all-white Clinton High Schools. Both played a vital role in the school desegregation crisis that preceded and followed the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

On Aug. 27, 1956, 12 students from the Green McAdoo School, later dubbed the "Clinton 12," met at the school before walking together to the all-white Clinton High School to become the first African-American students to integrate a southern, state-operated school.

The proposed legislation, The Green McAdoo National Historic Site Study Act of 2007, would direct the Secretary of the Interior to study



Sen. Lamar Alexander discusses the life-size sculpture of the "Clinton 12" with Minnie Dickey Jones at the Green McAdoo Cultural Center in Clinton. On Aug. 27, 1956, 12 students from the Green McAdoo School, later dubbed the "Clinton 12," met at the school before walking together to the all-white Clinton High School to become the first African-American students to integrate a southern, state-operated school.

the feasibility of designating Green McAdoo School as a unit of the National Park System. Upon receiving the designation, the site would become part of the 391-unit National Park System and would receive federal funding for operational costs. It would also receive national recognition as part of the Park System's mission to preserve and protect the natural and cultural history of America.

During the 50th anniversary of

the school in 2006, Sen. Alexander and former Sen. Bill Frist secured \$750,000 for the city of Clinton to transform the school into a cultural museum as part of the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, and Housing & Urban Development Appropriations Bill.

The Tennessee Municipal League recognized the city efforts with a 2006 achievement award for Excellence in Historical Preservation.

China trade mission beneficial

CHINA from Page 1
wire located in Fayetteville.

Bredesen also signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Investment Promotion Agency of the Ministry of Commerce. Commissioner of Economic Community Development Matt Kisber signed a letter of intent with the Chinese Ministry of Health's Foreign Loan Office.

The MOU calls for greater cooperation and information sharing regarding economic development opportunities in Tennessee and lays out a framework for the organization of two-way investment exchanges, promotion missions and trade fairs.

"This memoranda is a logical 'next step' given the amount of interest the Chinese have in Tennessee," said Gov. Bredesen. "Ultimately, Chinese companies will begin expanding around the world and our hope is that they will invest in and create jobs in Tennessee."

The MOU is a broad agreement that doesn't bind either party to take specific action, but names the Ministry of Commerce and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development as the points of contact for both governments. Both agencies pledge to increase their level of communication and refer potential investors to each other.

"Tennessee companies are already doing business with China at record levels," said ECD Commissioner Matt Kisber. "The amount of products and services being bought by Chinese customers warrants a more formalized dialogue with the Chinese government on how we can strengthen economic ties between Tennessee and China."

The letter of agreement Commissioner Kisber signed with the Chinese Ministry of Health's Foreign Loan Office formalizes the framework of discussions surrounding the delivery of rural health care. The Foreign Loan Office administers international grants and programs aimed at improving rural health care delivery. As part of the

trade mission, Governor Bredesen and health care experts from four of Tennessee's leading universities held talks aimed at establishing more frequent exchanges between medical scientists in Tennessee and China. The aim of the exchanges would be for Chinese health care providers to receive education and training at Tennessee medical schools and would give Tennessee researchers insight into programs designed to expand health care services to traditionally underserved communities. The talks were attended by officials of the University of Tennessee, East Tennessee State University, Vanderbilt University and the University of Memphis.

Under the plan, 20-40 Chinese scholars would visit Tennessee each summer for extensive training on rural health care economics, leadership, management of health care systems and other topics.

"Tennessee is in a good position to help with many of the rural health issues that China is facing," said Dr. Sten Vermund, Ph.D. director of Vanderbilt University's Institute for Global Health. "Avian flu and SARS demonstrate how, from a health standpoint, all of humanity is interrelated. I am convinced that sharing knowledge and 'best practices' in health care in China can eventually improve the health of Tennesseans."

"Tennessee is well regarded as a center for health care and medical training," said Dr. Randy Wykoff, dean of the College of Public and Allied Health at East Tennessee State University. "I can see this program evolving from one of education and training to a dialogue involving both Tennessee and China in the development of solutions for some truly global health care challenges, especially in rural health care."

The trade mission to China began in Beijing on Oct. 17, continues to Shanghai Oct. 20 and wraps up in Hong Kong on Oct. 24.

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Subcommittees work through recommendations

SUNSHINE from Page 1 citizens," said Chad Jenkins, TML deputy director. "It is not in the best interest of Tennesseans to limit all communication between elected representatives."

The Alabama Open Meetings Act revised in 2005 was cited by the TSBA as a model that establishes clear guidelines and realistic exceptions to public meetings. The Alabama statute, like 36 other states, applies open meetings only to gatherings of a quorum of the governmental body, committee, or subcommittee.

Alabama also imposes strict penalties to public officials who violate the law, which the subcommittee voted to include in their recommendations. Public officials who violate the law would be fined \$1,000 or one-half their monthly salary, whichever is less.

The subcommittee will meet again Nov. 13 to take up additional recommendations, in particular those submitted by the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (TCOG), as well as a proposal offered by local governments that deals with executive sessions.

Media reports have characterized local governments' efforts as a maneuver to promote secrecy and weaken Tennessee's Sunshine laws when there are very specific situations regarding sensitive matters that should be discussed in private.

"Ask someone if government business should be secret or open and 100 percent will say it should be open," said Jenkins. "But ask those same people if the medical and financial history of the Parks Department's landscaper should be discussed in a public forum, I believe you would get a different response. It's not necessary to parade personal difficulties and tribulations of a non-elected public servant in front of their friends, neighbors and family to ensure good government."

"We are asking for effectiveness in government; we are not asking for secrecy," said Connor. "There are some certain circumstances where the public is best served when they are more appropriately deliberated in a private setting."

Among those situations that should be conducted in executive session are:

- security plans and assessments of the security and safety of public buildings and infrastructures;
- information that would disclose the identity of an undercover law enforcement agent or informer;
- discussions of the price the government is willing to offer or

accept when negotiating the sale or purchase of property;

- discussions regarding the mental health and competence of public employees; and
- discussions with an attorney regarding how to settle or pursue a lawsuit that is brought against the government or being pursued by the government.

The full Joint Study Committee on Open Government is scheduled to meet Nov. 27 - 28 to consider recommendations from both subcommittees before presenting their final recommendation to the General Assembly when it convenes in January. All recommendations must be adopted by the Legislature before becoming law.

Open Records Subcommittee

The Subcommittee on Open Records has also spent most of the Fall considering proposed changes to Tennessee's open records laws.

Among the many issues discussed is the role of the newly established ombudsman office. Ann Butterworth, assistant to the state Comptroller for public finance, has been named director of the Office of Open Records Ombudsman. The office is currently in the process of hiring an open records specialist, who will serve as the primary contact for citizen complaints concerning access to local government records.

Comptroller John Morgan testified before the subcommittee that the role of the new hire will be to serve as a problem solver, mitigating conflicts and disputes, and helping citizens gain access to public documents. But because the statute does not provide legal authority, the new hire will not issue new interpretations of the law, but to help educate the public and local government officials about their duties and rights under the open records laws.

Morgan recommended letting the new office operate for awhile to determine what types of requests the ombudsman receives and how the new position will need to respond to

the requests.

"Let's let it work and determine what structure, if any, needs to be written into a statute," said Morgan.

Local governments, including the County Officials Association of Tennessee (COAT) that represents county clerks, state court clerks, registers and trustees of Tennessee, are in agreement with the Comptroller.

"Let the ombudsman work," said Marie Murphy, COAT executive director. "Why change courses before we even begin?"

TCOG is pushing for the ombudsman to issue advisory opinions, similar to the state attorney general, and wants the specific duties of the ombudsman enacted into law.

The subcommittee voted to adopt TCOG's recommendations and create the office by statute to issue informal advisory opinions. The ombudsman could also mediate and assist the resolution of complaints concerning the open records laws.

Other actions taken by the open records subcommittee include:

- Establishing an advisory committee for the ombudsman office that consists of citizens, members of the media, and local and state governments to provide guidance and oversight to the ombudsman office; and
- Require local governments to respond to records requests from individuals and firms from out of state. Currently, local governments are only required to respond to requests from a Tennessee citizen.
- Local governments must within four business days of the request (1) make information available, (2) deny the request in writing citing the specific legal exemption, or (3) furnish a written acknowledgment of the request and a statement of the time reasonable necessary to produce such information or to determine whether the request shall be granted or denied.



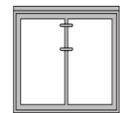
Let us know the particulars about your most important festivals at least six weeks in advance of the event. E-mail Gael Stahl at gstahl@TML1.org or fax to 615-255-4752.

20th annual Halloween Block Party- Oct. 31. This 20-year Halloween tradition in Historic Downtown Cleveland offers entertainment on three stages, 40 food vendors, and giant bags of candy for the kids. Stop by the Cleveland Museum from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. for the Halloween Labyrinth, family stories told by members of the Cleveland Storytelling Guild and pumpkin judging contest. For more information, contact Sharon Marr at 423-479-1000.

15th Annual Fayetteville Host of Christmas Past - Nov. 9-11. A fun-filled weekend in historic downtown Fayetteville. Celebrate the 6th Annual Lighting of the Festival's Christmas Tree during the "Love Lights a Tree" ceremony the evening of Nov. 9. Enjoy live music from the bandstand on the courthouse lawn and stroll the square as many businesses will be open late. Saturday is filled with children's activities: Storytelling Magic Show, Puppet Performances, Holiday Lunch, Elves Workshop, Carriage Rides, Santa Claus, Winter Wonderland and much more. For more information, visit the website at www.hostofchristmaspast.com

143rd Anniversary of The Battle of Franklin- Nov. 30. Living historians on the grounds of the Carter House throughout the day, and a two-mile walk from Winstead Hill to the Carter House. Contact 615-591-8500, for more information.

COMING UP



Nov. 13-17: NLC Congress of Cities & Exposition in New Orleans. For registration questions, call 888-319-3864 or 703-449-6418 or e-mail nlccoregandhousing@jspargo.com. For general questions, call 202-626-3105

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City officials participate in TML's Legislative Policy Day



Murfreesboro Mayor Tommy Bragg



David Gordon, Covington mayor and Finance Committee chair



Alcoa Assistant City Manager Bill Hammon



Jody Baltz, Tullahoma city manager, Janice Bowling, Tullahoma mayor pro tem, and Bob Pullen, Tullahoma Utility Board



Columbia Mayor Bill Gentner



Athens Mayor John Proffitt and McMinnville Mayor Royce Davenport



Ethics Commission Executive Director Bruce Androphy

Pictured to the right, James Miller, Cookeville planning director and Cookeville Vice Mayor Jean Davis





Chad Jenkins, TML deputy director, reviews with the Economic and Development Committee policies adopted in 2007. Franklin Mayor Tom Miller chaired the committee.



Martin Mayor Randy Brundige



Mitch Moore, Athens city manager, and Sally Olgesby, Crossville city recorder, participate in Finance and General Administration Committee.



Dover Police Chief Kim Wallace

Photos by Victoria South



Maryville Assistant City Manager Roger Campbell



Debbie Poplin, Knoxville city attorney, and Rick Emmett, Knoxville ECD director



Keith McDonald, Bartlett mayor and Public Safety chair



David Moore, Martin police chief



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IPS TRAINING CONSULTANT II

UT KNOXVILLE. The University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service has an opening for a Training Consultant in our Knoxville office. This position conducts formal and informal needs assessments, meets with customers and subject matter experts to develop course content and determines the best methodology for delivery of courses to appointed and elected municipal officials throughout the state of Tennessee. Creates training classes from conception by conducting research; exploring resources; developing exercises, course content, PowerPoint presentations, and student manuals. Curriculum development includes classroom versions and web-based versions. Ensures quality control of all curriculums that are developed by implementing standard formats for lesson plans and course material. Assures that courses comply with International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) standards. Meets with MTAS subject matter experts to ensure standards are understood and met. Occasionally facilitates training classes or programs. Also, serves on IPS CEU accreditation committee as an approving member. This position requires a master's degree in adult education, human resource development, organizational development, or a related field. This position also requires a minimum of five years in developing curricula, needs assessment, evaluating training programs, performing logistical development, and delivering training programs is essential. Prefer three years in a local government environment. Also requires thorough knowledge of training methodology, techniques and principles, a thorough knowledge of Adult Learning techniques, knowledge of research methodology as applied to adult education and training, ability to write clearly and concisely, ability to use teaching aids and techniques, ability to coordinate multiple programs simultaneously, ability to speak effectively before groups, ability to work effectively with colleagues, city officials and university staff, and ability to obtain certifications through American Society of Training and Development or other related professional organizations.

SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR

Murfreesboro. The City of Murfreesboro is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Director at the St. Clair Street Senior Center. Four year degree with major emphasis on Gerontology, Social Services or Business Admin. Preferred. Three years of management experience working with an aging program as well as experience working cooperatively with other community agencies to enhance coordination of service delivery. Excellent human relations and communications skills. Must maintain a minimum of \$100,000 automobile liability insurance. Salary - \$3,742.00 - \$5,425.83 monthly DOQ&E. Required application form and job description available at the Personnel Department, 111 West Vine Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130, phone 615-848-2553, TDD 615-849-2689, Fax 615-904-6506. Internet address www.murfreesborotn.gov. Applications will be accepted until position is filled. The city of Murfreesboro is an equal opportunity employer.

Cities embrace toll road, bridge projects

TOLLS from Page 1

study has been initiated.

"We are not yet into the study phase for any of these projects," Oaks said.

"It is important to note that TDOT is really taking a cue from the local officials and the MPO's (Metropolitan Planning Organizations) and RPO's (Rural Planning Organizations) on this. Each of the three bridge projects that will be studied was presented to TDOT for consideration by either a local elected official or an MPO, so involvement at the local level is key."

Estimated by a previous study as a \$245 million project, the **Hadley**

Bend Connector, a 6.4 mile connector road with bridges over the Cumberland River, would provide a straight access between Sumner and Davidson counties.

To drive to Nashville, Sumner County commuters are currently limited to I-65, which can't be widened, or cutting through several miles of busy streets and highways.

While hoping to move forward with the Hadley Bend Connector, Sen. Black acknowledges that the completion of detailed thoroughfare studies, including other travel options for the area, such as light rail, lay significant groundwork relative to the success of the project's selection.

"All technicalities should be ironed out," Black said. "We should not jump into anything. That would be like jumping into two feet of water. We could break our neck."

The **New Tennessee River Bridge**, a toll bridge near Chattanooga across the Tennessee River connecting Soddy Daisy to Harrison



Three bridge projects are being considered by TDOT as possible pilot toll projects. Currently, only two projects, a toll bridge and toll highway, can be recommended to the General Assembly under provisions of The Tennessee Tollway Act.

could increase economic growth in Rhea County while providing an access road the county could utilize in the event of an emergency, according to Rep. Jim Cobb. According to Cobb, the travel time around the two communities is currently 50 miles.

A recent chaotic shutdown of the Hernando DeSoto Bridge has prompted increased concern for Memphis area MPO's that another bridge, the **New Mississippi River Bridge**, is a necessary commodity. The project is predicted to cost more than a half-billion dollars which could be funded by tolls.

"We've looked at all the options, the pros and cons given the shrinking avenues of funding," said Bartlett Mayor Keith McDonald, who sits on the MPO board.

"The shutdown created a problem, a gridlock of commerce, of goods and services vital to this community. There ought to be an alternative route for commerce."

Under the established guidelines, the criteria that must be met by

the two pilot projects are:

- Project significance
- Alternatives — Are there non-tolled routes available?
- Value of route to motorists— Time savings, freight, etc.
- Type of trips being made — Commuter traffic, local traffic, trucks, distance trips
- Predictability—Is it enough to sustain tolls over a period of time
- Project feasibility
- Impact on adjacent facilities— Will it support them? Help relieve congestion?

The Tennessee Tollway Act gained momentum in the house shortly after TDOT placed a freeze on new road projects due to impending federal funding deficits and predictions of an accumulated shortfall of \$2 billion by 2015.

TDOT will host a series of public meetings to gauge community support before toll projects are selected with the final decision determined by the General Assembly.

Highway Patrol advances "Interdiction Plus"

INITIATIVE from Page 1

eling the state's highways through traffic and commercial vehicle enforcement.

Criminal activity will be investigated by law enforcement agencies 24/7 with full investigative cooperation when federal or state interests are detected.

Targets include: foreign and domestic terrorism; foreign and domestic drug trafficking/immigration violations; fraudulent documents/counterfeit money and documents; enforcement of state law violations and highway enforcement; and fugitive apprehension.

"Desert Snow" was initially started 17 years ago by former California Highway Patrol Officer Joe David to train officers to spot cocaine smugglers. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that 40 percent of all drug arrests in the country start with traffic stops.

"Desert Snow" has been expanded to include workshops on roadside interview techniques, detection of hidden compartments, concealment methods and the identification of false documents.

During the training, officers inspect a variety of commercial vehicles with hidden compartments containing drugs, bombs, portable methamphetamine laboratories and other contraband.

"The Desert Snow program is hands-on training on the multitude of current concealment methods utilized in passenger vehicles by terrorists and other major criminals," said Mike Browning director of Public Affairs with the THP.

"The utilization of passenger vehicles in the hands-on training revealed to the road officers ways in

which they can identify threats and concealment methods, while performing everyday assignments."

"Interdiction Plus" teams will also be directly coordinated with state and federal intelligence data bases/systems including the new Tennessee Fusion Center in Nashville.

Police and sheriff's departments in the Eastern District of Tennessee who have committed resources to this endeavor include: 4th, 8th, 9th and 10th Judicial Drug Task Forces; Bristol, Chattanooga, Cleveland, Clinton, Dandridge, Harriman, Johnson City, Kingsport, Knoxville, Loudon, Newport, Oak Ridge, and Wartburg Police Departments; and, Sheriff Departments from Anderson, Blount, Bradley, Campbell, Cocke, Coffee, Greene, Hamblen, Hamilton, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Marion, Monroe, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Sullivan, Unicoi, Warren, and Washington Counties. Although not announced, the McMinn County Sheriff's Department will also participate in the initiative.

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Sparta's concerns, like most towns, are jobs, education says Tommy Pedigo

Besides vintage politics, the mayor's interests include vintage cars, guitars

BY GAEL STAHL
Editor

Sparta Mayor Tommy Pedigo left home after high school to find out who he was and what he wanted to be. He worked and earned a college degree, taught, worked in insurance, raised a family, and after 31 years was able to go back home. Many small towns can support only so many teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, and insurance agents, but Pedigo found one of those slots in the prime of life. He wanted to help Sparta create more jobs so more of its youth could find work there. One way was to run for municipal office.

Born and raised in Sparta, Pedigo graduated from White County High School in 1965. He was involved in high school student government and spent the next seven years living in Knoxville where he worked and earned credits toward a bachelor's degree in history, with an emphasis on Tennessee history, at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. He also got involved in college student government.

In 1972, he moved to Sweetwater where his grandparents lived. He taught history and math and coached basketball at Sweetwater Junior High School. In 1973, he and Gail, a Sweetwater native and teacher, married. He left teaching after two years to accept an opportunity to work for State Farm Insurance. His interest in education continued. From 1978 to 1986, he served on the Monroe County School Board, and at age 28, became its chairman. He decided to run for that board because his education and experience taught him that anyone who wants to see change has to expend the energy to make it happen. His public service motto was fashioned: "You can't sit around and wait for other people to do it." It was the school board experience, he says, that taught him how to work together with others to solve mutual problems. It would pay off when he became mayor.

After 13 years as the Sweetwater insurance agent, State Farm made him manager of its agents from Knoxville to Kingsport. He lived mostly in Morristown at that time. That management experience would prove a second payoff for him.

When he learned that Sparta's State Farm agent was retiring, Pedigo called the information "an answer to a prayer." It turned out the agent's family knew Pedigo's family and, in 1996, Pedigo returned to Sparta to work as an agent.

Gail Pedigo has always been an educator, currently the vice principal of White County Middle School. Both Pedigos have always been active in the University of Tennessee where they and their two children all earned degrees. Pedigo serves on UT's Legislative Council. One of their daughters is an educator in Morristown-Hamblen County. The other works in Knoxville as a producer for a television station.

In 2000, Pedigo ran for and was elected to the Sparta Board of Mayor and Aldermen and served two years as alderman. Two years later, he was elected mayor. The city was struggling through an economic downturn at that time and, Pedigo says, his management skills were quickly put to work. For the happy results, he gives the aldermen full credit for the city's upbeat response to the challenge and for their noncompetitive, cooperative focus on making positive things happen.

Since his election in 2000, Pedigo has been involved in the Tennessee Municipal League, attended its functions, served on policy committees, and served two terms on the TML Board.

TT&C: What did you do during your seven years in Knoxville?

TP: I worked my way through college, so sometimes I had to put education on hold to work for awhile then continue with school. I wasn't one to leave high school in May and enter college by fall. I was one who asked himself: what is it I really want to do? I worked a while, decided that higher education was the thing to do, enrolled in school and realized it was expensive. I didn't have access to student loans and lottery scholarships so I worked at a parking garage, went to school until about 3 and parked cars until about 11. I enjoyed it; had a great time. I always knew I was going to get a college degree, just not in four years. It worked out well.

TT&C: For decades, smaller municipalities have been losing factory jobs, workers, and youth. Sparta too?

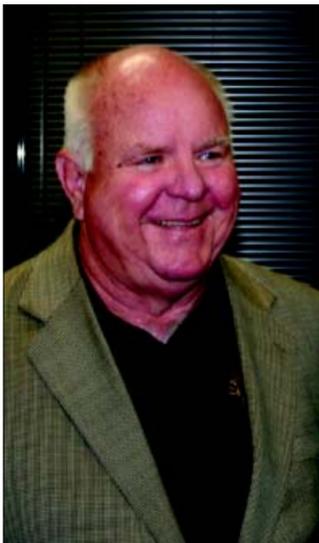


Photo by Gael Stahl

Pedigo, Sparta mayor, at TML Legislative Policy meetings at Nashville on Oct. 11

TP: When I was elected mayor five years ago, a major industry had moved to Mexico leaving Sparta-White County with the highest unemployment rate in the state. That made the last few years an interesting trip, one I've enjoyed, but it hasn't been easy. Today, our unemployment rate is averaging in the middle of the pack at 5.4 percent. It's something I'm proud of, something the whole board can be proud of because it happened by the city working together with the county to solve common problems. That's a must for a small community; the city and county have to work together to get things done. Just like cities have to work together as a Tennessee Municipal League to achieve what they need.

TT&C: How does Sparta-White County work with and cooperate with its neighbors?

TP: Sparta's population is 5,030, White County's 25,000. A second city, Doyle, has maybe 600. We're rural but part of a larger multi-county community, a mere 15-mile drive from Cookeville. That's not very far to go for a good job. Cookeville's population is 30,000, Putnam County's 65,000. After being elected mayor, I began lunching with then Cookeville Mayor Charles Womack. Every month, we talked about what our cities had in common and could provide each other. Then, we invited the city administrators to join us and then the directors of the chambers of commerce.

From that, there has developed a fantastic regional program that includes Sparta-White County, Cookeville-Putnam County, and Livingston-Overton County. Our regional partnership, The Highlands Initiative, works to bring in industry to those cities and counties that are all on the Highway 111 Corridor, a north-south interstate type parkway intersection I-40 running east-west through Cookeville.

The Highlands Initiative's informative web site at http://www.businessn.com/pub/3_4/features/7898-1.html gives a good account of what we are, a four-year partnership with a four-year economic and community development program for the area. Since Cookeville draws from a population of 325,000 from Tennessee's Upper Cumberland for shopping, we sometimes call this area the Jackson of I-40 east.

The Highlands Initiative was directly influential in bringing ORECK, a national vacuum cleaner manufacturer, to the Cookeville area and other industries to Sparta and other places in the partnership.

TT&C: For a small town, things are popping in Sparta?

TP: It's a part-time mayor's job, but it ends up being a full-time thought process. You've got to always be on your toes and ready to say: "OK, here's what we've got to do, and we've got to do it now."

We small town communities have learned from the TML's slogan, "Cities are the economic engines of the state." Of course, the Big Four and the second tier big cities are thriving. I lived in Morristown before moving back to Sparta. It's a city that is very active – and successful – in industrial recruitment. It's a little tougher for rural Tennessee. We learned that when Mallory, our manufacturer of timer controls, left and cost us 400 jobs. It devastated our community's employment base. We were told that although our jobs are going to Mexico and China, other jobs would be coming back.

Well, it's not necessarily true that the jobs that left Sparta will come



Photo courtesy of Two Mayors and Friends

Tommy Pedigo, musician, jamming with Jack Cothran, plant manager for Mallory Controls. Their group, sometimes referred to as Two Mayors and Friends, plays for fun and in hospitals, and nursing homes.

back to Sparta. New jobs will come back to industrial and commercial hot spots like Cool Springs in Franklin or to Mt. Juliet and other areas that have a lot more to offer.

The governor has done a good job recognizing that rural areas have a lot to offer business – cheaper land and infrastructure costs and a work force that is as dedicated, if not more so, than that of some larger areas. People here appreciate what they have. Every company that has come in since the Mallory factory closed comments about our area's dedicated work force.

TT&C: Did you replace the 400 factory jobs Mallory took from this area with similar or different kinds of jobs?

TP: We recovered 400 jobs, but we didn't do it with a factory that brought in 400 people. We did it by bringing in 10 factories or businesses that hired 40 people each. You don't always get the same kinds of jobs, either. The education level of your work force plays a big factor in the planning of new businesses.

When industries scout our communities, we can't overlook how important the education level is to them. So when they look at our physical infrastructure, hospitals, cultural attractions, and school system, we tell them Sparta-White County has a great university in Tennessee Technological University at Cookeville just 13-14 miles north up the road. We call that imaginary line dividing Putnam and White counties the county line, but, in fact, we are part of the greater Cookeville metropolitan area.

I'm proud to add that we can now tell industry recruiters that we have post-secondary education available right here in town. Motlow Community College began offering higher education classes in Sparta this year.

TT&C: What brought that about?

TP: Motlow became a higher education presence in Sparta through a cooperative effort of the city, White County, White County Schools, and Motlow College. We met with Motlow College and told them we needed some post-secondary schooling. With lottery scholarships and Pell grants, money was available for tuition. We all agreed to look into it, see if a facility could be found, and we left saying it might be something worthwhile down the road two or three years.

Well, we had no more than left the meeting than the superintendent of schools called me and said he had a building that could be remodeled. Three months later, classes were in session. It is just absolutely amazing how, by working together for a common cause, you can make that kind of result happen.

Before this year, if you wanted to attend a community college you had to drive to McMinnville or Crossville. That's not bad for a young person. But 25-year-old couples with children had to hire a babysitter, bear the expense of the gas and a 30-40 minute drive each way. They'd use an entire night for a one-hour class. By bringing Motlow teachers to a facility in Sparta, they can attend an hour class and be home in 90 minutes total.

TT&C: Did the classes attract sufficient students?

TP: The classes are full. The building is used as a dual enrollment facility – by the high school during the day and for college classes almost every night. When an industry comes to look at our area now, we can talk about a great K-12 school system and some higher education offerings here

back and ask if anyone remembers Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." A fellow will say, Yeah, it goes kind of like this," and we'll start playing. We enjoy getting together to make music, a nostalgia thing. We all say we'd rather jam than perform. It's a lot of fun. I've collected guitars since the 1960s. Not a lot of them, maybe eight or 10 vintage guitars.

Music is in the air. Sparta and White County have a musical heritage that is unparalleled being home to bluegrass legends Lester Flatt and Benny Martin, who was one of bluegrass music's premiere fiddlers and inventor of the 8-string fiddle. Both attributed their musical style to their musical families and upbringing. Our Lester Flatt Celebration is a hoot, but our roots are in all kinds of music, not just bluegrass.

TT&C: Do you have any non-musical interests?

TP: I have a '64 Impala Supersport that came out my junior year in high school. I drive it to a few car shows now and then. My wife and I have stayed active in the University of Tennessee and golf a lot. When someone asks who my golf partner is, I tell them it's Gail. We have a cabin in the Gatlinburg area where we get away for a day or two to play some golf or just have fun. Over the last 30 years we have traveled to a lot of countries and still enjoy that.

The major new interests taking up the balance of our time are two grandchildren, Madison and Noah. They live in Morristown and pretty much run the show. When Gail and I aren't working with the university or our jobs, we base our schedule on what they want us to do like going to plays and musicals they're in.

We stay busy, leave the house shortly after 6 every morning and may have dinner together, or not. Yesterday was typical. We started with early meetings for city, school, and the insurance business. I got home about 9:30, she at 10:30. We enjoy staying active helping make community things go.

TT&C: Why'd you get involved in TML so quickly?

TP: I've known Margaret Pearson all my life. She told me when I got elected alderman that I had no choice. She was then, and still is, a true believer in the Tennessee Municipal League. As mayor here in 1994, she was the first female ever elected TML vice president and was in the rotation to become TML president when she lost a bid for re-election as mayor. A few years later she was elected to the Board of Aldermen and served on the TML board again from January 2001 to June 2004. She said I had to be involved in TML because that's a primary place where Sparta is able to get things done working together with others. I have found that to be true. I was elected to the TML Board in 2004 and again in 2007.

Margaret Pearson still pushes TML and mentions people by name when I visit her at her nursing home. Her first question is always: What is going on in the city? Her second is always: What is going on in TML? She pushes me. I have tried to be active and do whatever TML wants me to do like serving on the TML Economic Community Development Committee and the TML Board. Two years ago, (TML Executive Director) Margaret Mahery appointed me to the Tennessee Insurance Commission where you work with various commissioners. I'm the TML representative. County governments have one too.

I am a firm believer in the effectiveness of TML. Just as the county, the school system and the city worked together to develop Motlow's presence in Sparta, TML does the same kind of thing. It puts cities together to work for the better good of municipalities everywhere. We must not overlook the need to be united. We are TML and we have a lot to offer. TML has always been a key to success for towns and cities from getting and then, protecting our state-shared taxes, MTAS consultants, insurance and bond funds, many municipal rights and services and relief from unfunded mandates.

TT&C: You'll surely convey TML's greetings to Margaret Pearson from all TML members?

TP: Yes. If TML ever had an advocate, Margaret Pearson is it. I'd like to tell the members that we just built a new city park in Sparta with a new pavilion named for her. Because of Margaret's past efforts in Sparta and TML to make our city a better place, let the folks know that Pearson Park is in Sparta.

TT&C: Have any of your interests in your youth carried over into adulthood?

TP: I was a typical 1965 rock 'n' roller and a guitar player who played in rock bands back then. We still have a group going. It's made up of another Sparta mayor, a retired plant manager, and a couple of other guys. We're always getting together to play for hospitals and nursing homes, picnics and things like that. We play a little bit of everything, not just country or rock. Like somebody will sit