



Registration now open!

TML Virtual Legislative Conference

March 15 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m./ CST

Mark your calendar and plan to join us to hear state leaders address the various municipal issues currently being considered before the 112th Tennessee General Assembly.

We are pleased that Gov. Bill Lee has accepted our invitation to join our program.

Other speakers for the Legislative Conference include Lt. Gov. McNally, Speaker Sexton, and Comptroller Mumpower. Senate State and Local Chairman Sen. Richard Briggs and House Local Government Chairman Rep. John Crawford will also participate in our program.

Registration is currently underway. More program information will be coming soon. This is a free event, and all municipal officials and staff are encouraged to tune in.

TML visits with state leaders to talk city issues



Above: TML Vice President and Franklin Mayor Ken Moore (left) and TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes (right) met with Lt. Gov. Randy McNally (center) to discuss key issues facing municipalities in Tennessee. TML President and Gatlinburg Mayor Mike Werner also participated in the meeting by phone.

At right: Mayor Moore and Haynes also met with Comptroller Emeritus Justin P. Wilson (second from right) and Comptroller Jason Mumpower (far right). Mayor Werner dialed into the meeting from his home in Gatlinburg.



Chattanooga public fiber network generates \$2.69B



Chattanooga EPB's fiber optic network has generated billions in community benefit during the past decade. The availability of the network has eased the transition for many who found themselves working or attending school from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having internet access also increases positive educational outcomes for students.

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

The city of Chattanooga's public fiber optic network has generated \$2.69 billion in community benefit during its first decade, according to a newly-released research project.

Chattanooga's EPB, formerly known as the Chattanooga Electric Power Board, launched America's first gig-speed community-wide network in 2010, establishing the nation's most advanced smart grid power distribution system.

Since then, a new study has found the fiber optic network has increased funds for public services and local schools, helped grow the local economy and attract new business, and helped entrepreneurs get their businesses off the ground. The new study was conducted by Dr. Bento Lobo, head of the Department of Finance and Economics at the Rollins College of Business at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

"The true economic value of the fiber optic infrastructure for EPB's customers is much greater than the

cost of installing and maintaining the infrastructure," Dr. Lobo said. "Our latest research findings show that Chattanooga's fiber optic network provides additional value because it provides high speeds, with symmetrical uploads and downloads, and a high degree of network responsiveness which are necessary for the smart grid and other cutting-edge business, educational, and research applications."

Jim Ingraham, vice president of strategic research, said EPB commissioned the study as part of their business plan to see what the economic payback from job creation, generated commerce, and other added value their fiber optic network would bring to the area. The results were far beyond what EPB projected back in 2006.

"We originally did the forecast that said we could expect about 2,500 new jobs and about \$600 million in economic benefit," Ingraham said. "This was very attractive to a community that had been seeing 1% economic growth for a very long time. It was the first time the See EPB on Page 5

Hackers tried to poison a city's drinking water supply in Florida

By KATE ELIZABETH QUERAM
Route Fifty

A hacker breached the computer system at a water treatment facility in Oldsmar, Fla., and attempted to add dangerous levels of sodium hydroxide to the water supply, but was foiled by an employee at the plant, officials said.

"Because the operator noticed the increase and lowered it right away, at no time was there a significant adverse effect on the water," Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said at a press conference. "The public was never in danger," he added.

The hacker accessed the treatment plant's computer system remotely and toggled the levels of sodium hydroxide from 100 parts per million to 11,100 parts per million, a more than 100-fold increase that could have had potentially deadly effects on Oldsmar's 15,000 residents.

Sodium hydroxide—otherwise known as lye—is used to control acidity and remove metals from drinking water, but it's also the main ingredient in liquid drain cleaners and can be lethal if ingested in large quantities.



The cyberattacker used remote access to toggle levels of sodium hydroxide at a water treatment plant near Tampa, but an operator at the facility quickly fixed the problem, officials said.

That was unlikely to happen, officials noted. The contaminated water would have taken up to 36 hours to reach the public, and the system would have alerted operators to the danger before then.

"Our monitoring protocols work. That's the good news," said Oldsmar Mayor Eric Seidel. "The important thing is to put everybody on notice. These kinds of bad actors are out there. It's happening."

The hacker accessed the treatment plant's computer system twice—once in the morning and again in the afternoon. The operator at the

facility noted the first breach when he saw the mouse on his computer screen moving on its own but didn't think much of it at first, Gualtieri said.

"His supervisor and others will remotely access his computer screen to monitor the system at various times," he added.

The second breach was different, Gualtieri said—the person accessed the system for around five minutes, and opened "various software functions" that control water treatment, including sodium hydroxide levels. After increasing the levels, the hacker left the system and the operator immediately returned them to normal, then alerted his supervisor.

Steps were then taken to prevent further remote access, officials said. The sheriff's office launched an investigation and is working with the FBI and the Secret Service. Officials were following leads but had no active suspects. Gualtieri said he didn't know if the cyberattack originated from inside or outside the U.S., or why Oldsmar was targeted.

He also said he had not heard of any other systems being targeted, but urged other government agencies to review and update their computer security protocols as necessary.

The incident garnered national attention and was addressed at a White House press briefing. Press Secretary Jen Psaki referred questions to the investigating agencies, but noted that the Biden administration is "focused on elevating cybersecurity as a threat."

Knoxville reinvests in community affected by urban removal

By KATE COIL

The city of Knoxville is reckoning with past projects that negatively impacted the city's African-American community and hoping to move forward with a new initiative that aims to right past wrongs.

In December 2020, the Knoxville City Council unanimously approved a measure brought forward by Vice Mayor Gwen McKenzie to invest \$100 million in public and private funds over ten years in projects determined by a new African American Restoration Equity Task Force.

The first African-American woman to serve as vice mayor of the city, McKenzie said the resolution came after she did her own research into why members of the

city's black community seemed to be disproportionately impacted by poverty. The result was a story from black history that has been long left untold.

She discovered Knoxville was one of many cities across the U.S. that saw once-thriving neighborhoods and business districts torn down to make way for projects like the federal interstate system or federal housing projects. Urban renewal projects undertaken in Knoxville between 1959 and 1974 negatively impacted the majority of African-American populations of Willow Street, Mountain View, and Morningside. The construction of the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum, James White Parkway, and Interstate 40 were only accomplished See KNOXVILLE on Page 3



Photo by Calvin Mattheis, Knoxville News-Sentinel

Knoxville Vice Mayor Gwen McKenzie stands outside the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum. In December, the Knoxville City Council unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by McKenzie aiming to right the wrongs created by urban removal projects. McKenzie found poverty rates among Knoxville's black citizens could often be directly tied back to projects under the Federal Housing Act of 1949 that unfairly displaced minority neighborhoods to make way for projects like Interstate 40.

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



ALCOA

Amazon will establish a new, state-of-the-art fulfillment center in Alcoa, which will create nearly 800 new, full-time jobs with benefits. Amazon employees at the more than 634,812-square-foot fulfillment center will pick, pack, and ship smaller customer items, such as books, electronics and consumer goods. The Alcoa facility is expected to open in 2022. It will be Amazon's third fulfillment center in Tennessee to use innovative robotics technology and the company's eighth fulfillment center in the Volunteer State. In 2020, Amazon announced it would establish similar fulfillment center operations in Memphis and Mt. Juliet. Amazon currently operates fulfillment and sortation centers in Charleston, Chattanooga, Lebanon, Memphis, Murfreesboro, and Nashville. The company is in the midst of building Amazon Nashville, a new downtown office that will bring more than 5,000 tech and corporate jobs to Nashville.

CHATTANOOGA

Axle Manufacturing company will locate new operations in Tennessee, investing \$42 million and creating 240 jobs. Sese Industrial Services will build a new 300,000-square-foot Axle Assembly plant at 6153 Hickory Valley Road in Chattanooga. Products manufactured at the facility include Axle Components for the Volkswagen electric vehicle line. Sese Industrial Services operates under parent company Grupo Sesé, an international logistics conglomerate headquartered in Zaragoza, Spain. Grupo Sesé provides logistics, distribution and assembly services primarily in the automotive sector. The company already has operations in Chattanooga and a longstanding history with Volkswagen.

CHATTANOOGA

The Chattanooga Department of Transportation and the Glass House Collective have been jointly awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Asphalt Art Initiative, which is designed to help cities use art and design to improve street safety, revitalize public spaces, and engage communities. A mural will be painted at Crutchfield Street between Glass Street and Dodson Avenue as part of the grand funds. In addition to the asphalt art piece, the Glass House Collective is working with local artists, designers, and community members to design and implement two other mural projects in the Glass Street Gateway area that is located within a five-minute walking radius of the Crutchfield site. A new streetscape design was recently completed for the area by Chattanooga's Department of Transportation.

CLARKSVILLE

Microvast will establish a new manufacturing facility in Clarksville, investing \$220 million and creating 287 jobs. At the request of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Microvast began the process of establishing a Li-ion battery facility in the U.S. in 2019. As part of the project, Microvast will renovate and expand a facility located at 780 International Boulevard in Clarksville to manufacture battery cells, modules, and packs. Founded in 2006, Microvast is a leading global provider of next-generation battery technologies for commercial and specialty electric vehicles, a \$30 billion

total addressable market. It has an established, and industry-leading, portfolio of battery technologies that out-perform its competitors on battery life, charging times, safety and total cost of ownership. Microvast plans to begin the recruitment process in the fourth quarter of 2021 and into 2022, with employment opportunities available as early as August 2021.

COOKEVILLE

The city of Cookeville will host the U.S. Angling Confederation's 2021 U.S. Kayak Open and the 2022 FIPSeD Kayak Fishing World Championship. The inaugural Kayak World Open championship competition is set for May 2022 with up to 150 anglers and hundreds of attendees expected to come to Cookeville for the event. Cookeville previously hosted the first Pan-American Kayak Bass Championship in 2019. Participants are expected to arrive early for pre-fishing various area waters, including Center Hill Lake, Cordell Hull Lake, Dale Hollow Lake, Caney Fork River, Cumberland River, Falling Water River, and Calfkiller River. Following the competition, both participants and spectators are also anticipated to stay and explore more local attractions, waterfalls, and the Cookeville area.

GATLINBURG

Gatlinburg has been named the top trending U.S. tourist destination for 2021 by travel website TripAdvisor. While the pandemic has been keeping many at home, travelers are using that time to plan their first post-pandemic trip. Gatlinburg is the top research destination and has seen the biggest increase in a combination of positive rankings and reviews in the past list. The city that serves as the gateway to the Smoky Mountains National Park beat out various beach destinations for the top spot. Nearby Pigeon Forge also came in at fourth on the list with seven of the top 10 destinations located in the South.

KINGSPORT

Eastman officials announced that the company will build one of the world's largest methanolysis facilities at its site in Kingsport. A global leader in plastics, chemicals and fibers, Eastman will invest approximately \$250 million in the facility over the next two years, which will support the company's commitment to addressing global waste solutions and mitigating challenges created by climate change, while also creating value for its stakeholders. The facility, which is expected to be mechanically complete by year-end 2022, will contribute to Eastman achieving its ambitious sustainability commitments for addressing the plastic waste crisis. The plan includes recycling more than 500 million pounds of plastic waste annually via molecular recycling technologies. The company has committed to recycling more than 250 million pounds of plastic waste annually by 2025. Through methanolysis, Eastman's new world-scale facility will convert polyester waste that often ends up in landfills and waterways into durable products, creating an optimized circular economy. Founded in 1920, Eastman is headquartered in Kingsport.

LAWRENCEBURG

Modine Manufacturing Company officials announced the company will expand its plant in Lawrenceburg, investing \$1.2 million and creating 45 jobs. The project will relocate three production lines

from company facilities in Missouri and Rhode Island. Modine will retrofit and expand its current facility for the new lines being added. The Tennessee plant is currently primarily an aluminum fabrication plant and the new lines have significant stainless-steel content. Modine manufactures heat transfer products for a wide range of markets including stationary power generation, mining, agriculture, construction, automotive, and building HVAC. The company has had a manufacturing presence in Tennessee for more than 30 years and currently employs more than 500 people across the state.

SEVIERVILLE

The city of Sevierville has been ranked among the top ten places to own a vacation rental. Sevierville ranked sixth out of the 300 cities included in the survey by homecare company LawnStarter. More than half of Americans plan to travel in 2021 and a third of those say they plan to stay in a vacation rental rather than a hotel or other accommodation due to concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Short-term rentals have helped Americans continue to travel during the pandemic with many consumers feeling that staying in short-term rental properties are safer than in hotels. Overall, the survey found that rental properties in Appalachia and at beaches were the most profitable.

MEMPHIS

Citizens have had a chance to weigh in on how the city of Memphis will develop a new addition to Overton Park. A 13-acre parcel of property on the east side of the park had formerly been home to a city of Memphis General Services facility for decades, but now has been handed over to the Overton Park Conservancy (OPC) for redevelopment. More than 1,000 citizens voiced opinions on how to develop the area with hiking trails, an expansion of the old growth forest, a nature center, and space for food trucks being among the top suggestions. A canopy walk, more grassland and meadow areas, outdoor classrooms, and a native plant nursery were also popular suggestions by survey respondents. Located in Midtown, the 342-acre park already includes the Memphis Zoo, and old-growth forest arboretum and state natural area, dog park, golf course, the Levitt Shell, and the Brooks Museum of Art. The redevelopment of the 13-acre parcel will be largely funded by the nonprofit OPC, who gains the majority of their funding through private donations.

WARTRACE

The town of Wartrace has implemented a new program aimed at maintaining its water and wastewater infrastructure while simultaneously training the next generation of system operators. The town is taking advantage of an apprenticeship program that offers both online and in-person, on-the-job training that prepares future operators for their license examination. Designed by the National Rural Water Association and sponsored by the Tennessee Association of Utility Districts, the two-year program is open to those over the age of 18 with a high school diploma or GED. Kenneth "Kent" Phillips and Peter Arni have been assigned to participate in the double-enrollment program in Wartrace and will work alongside Wartrace Utility and Public Works Manager Bruce Vaickus.

Municipal public works crews out amid snow



Municipal public works crews were out in force salting roads and clearing streets to ensure the safety of Tennessee citizens. Numerous communities also opened shelters for those in need of heat and electricity. Pictured above is the Paris Public Works crew working to clear downtown from snow and ice during a storm that blanketed West and Middle Tennessee.

Farragut delivers letters of support to frontline workers



The town of Farragut's Sign, Sealed, Delivered campaign has delivered more than 200 letters of love and support to frontline healthcare workers at the town's Turkey Creek Medical Center. The town began the campaign as a way for local citizens to show ongoing support for frontline workers as the pandemic closes in on its one-year mark in the community. Residents are encouraged to drop off messages on different themes to be delivered for free by town employees. So far, the town has made two deliveries of letters and hopes to deliver more than 800 messages by the end of the campaign.

Ashland City firefighters conduct unique ice rescue



Ashland City Fire Chief Chuck Walker helps warm up a young bull the fire department rescued after it fell into an iced-over pond. The Ashland City Fire Department and Harpeth Ridge Volunteer Fire Department used water rescue skills to help pull the bull from the pond. The animal is expected to make a full recovery.

TENNESSEE TOWN & CITY
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WAUFORD

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New Nashville museum celebrates African-American music

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

The doors of Music City's newest landmark, The National Museum of African American Music, are now officially open.

Located at Fifth Avenue and Broadway in downtown Nashville, the museum officially opened to the public on Jan. 30, 2021. The museum's original opening was delayed from fall 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, just part of a more than 20-year journey that moved the museum from concept to creation.

"We have been preparing for this day for more than 20 years, but this museum has actually been more than 400 years in the making," said NMAAM President and CEO H. Beecher Hicks III. "We look forward to welcoming music lovers from around the world to this magnificent cultural experience. We also want to thank the thousands of people who have supported us along the way, as we prepare to celebrate the history of African-American music, which truly is the soundtrack of our nation."

NMAAM is the only museum in the world dedicated to preserving and celebrating more than 50 music genres and styles that were created, influenced, or inspired by African Americans, including spirituals, blues, jazz, gospel, R&B, and hip hop.

The original idea for the museum was conceived in 1998 when Nashville community leaders Francis Guess and Dr. T.B. Boyd were inspired to start a Nashville museum honoring African American cultural contributions. The concept grew into a national museum and eventually one focused on African-American music and its impact on American society and culture.

Ian Dinkins, a spokesperson with the museum, said Boyd and Guess began with a feasibility study for the museum in 2001. Initially, the museum was to be called the Museum of African American Music, Art and Culture (MAAMAC) and would have included achievements in not only music and arts, but culture to include sports and civil rights, and Nashville black excellence. Initial meetings of the museum board



A new landmark for Music City, the National Museum of African American Music highlights artists in genres ranging from gospel to jazz to hip hop. Interactive and digital exhibits help visitors uniquely engage with music and artists in a journey starting in the 1600s and continuing to the present day.

took place at Boyd's home.

"In 2010, H. Beecher Hicks joined the museum board. He observed during a meeting that much of the talk was about architectural designs, 'deciding on the marble,' and that the artifacts are music-related," Dinkins said. "He raised the idea of fundraising for the museum and that, since so there was so much focus on music, why not call it a museum of music, especially since Nashville was known as 'Music City.' A board member suggested that Hicks should become board chair, which he agreed to on three conditions: that they conduct a study on the museum's name change, they reshape the board, and if there is no progress, shut down the museum."

By 2011, it had been determined the music should be devoted to African-American music and by 2014, plans were made by developers Spectrum Emery Oliver McMillan to build a 56,000-square-foot museum at the new Fifth and Broadway development. In 2017, the museum's budget was increased to \$48 million due to both increased construction costs and the desire to make museum exhibits more interactive.

While many cities all over the country have strong ties to African-American musical styles, Dinkins said Nashville proved a natural fit for the museum.

"Nashville really is America's Music City," he said. "If you look at it from a little bit of a historical presence, Nashville and Tennessee are the crossroads of American music. Really, it was born in the South and then at the end of slavery and the beginning of The Great Migration, when our grandparents began to migrate north, whether they were going to Detroit or New York or Los Angeles, they very possibly went through Tennessee. So they left breadcrumbs in Memphis, left breadcrumbs in Nashville, and breadcrumbs in Johnson City. Tennessee really, in so many ways, is kind of the crucible center of American music, even though in more modern times it's been more prominent in other cities. We're just bringing it back home."

Several artists with connections to Tennessee are highlighted by the museum.

"One artist is that is prominently featured in the museum is gospel legend Bobby Jones," Dinkins said. "One of the museum's

interactive displays allows guests to sing and virtually be a part of Bobby Jones legendary choir. Other artists include the Fisk Jubilee Singers and Aretha Franklin."

When the museum opened to the public this year, Dinkins said it already had a wealth of artifacts for display.

"Our curatorial team has collected more than 1,500 artifacts thus far, with additional artifacts still being added to the collection almost weekly," he said. "The collection process has spanned close to a decade, from the very early stages to now. Artifacts are acquired through a myriad of ways including donations from artists. While we'll have rotating exhibits and artifacts, the majority of our exhibits will contain pieces that we own. That means these pieces are not sitting in someone's private home or for sale online. They're preserved for future generations right here."

While the museum focuses on African-American contributions to music, Dinkins said it really tells an American story.

"Music is the catalyst for inclusion, where people of different colors play each other's songs," he

said. "This is a foundation of the untold story of how our music came to be. That's the story we want to tell. We're developing more than 25 interactive touch points and seven galleries that chronicle the history of African-American music from the 1600s to the present day. Our galleries will take visitors on a chronological path through the history of American music."

The museum features five permanent galleries each examining a different time period:

- **Wade in The Water:** A gallery documenting the African-American religious experience from the early 1600s to the present and the styles that emerged from these experiences.
- **Crossroads:** Focusing on the history and influence of the blues starting in the early 1900s.
- **A Love Supreme:** Focusing on the Harlem Renaissance and the emergence of jazz music and its dominance in the mid-20th century.
- **One Nation Under A Groove:** Documenting the history and influence of R&B, which emerged following World War II.
- **The Message:** Exploring the origins of hip hop and rap in the urban decay of New York's South Bronx inner city from the 1970s to the present.

Visitors to the museum will get an experience that immerses them in the music.

"Each tour at the museum will start off at the museum's Roots Theater, which will show an introductory film," he said. "Then, while touring through the exhibits, guests will go through the Rivers of Rhythm Corridor, the central spine of the museum's experience, which features touch panel interactives and an animated timeline that links historical events with American music history. With a high-definition sound system and wall-length panoramic screens, the corridor will also periodically showcase immersive-film experiences that place visitors in the midst of iconic music moments, like famous concerts of the past."

For more information on the museum, visit <https://nmaam.org>.

Knoxville task force seeks reinvestment in community affected by urban removal

KNOXVILLE from Page 1 through the destruction of these neighborhoods.

"We haven't talked about this in years," she said. "A lot of people didn't realize this had happened. For others, it's like pulling a scab off a wound. A lot of the older people, especially in the black community, still feel so much hurt from that time period. There are some who actually lost a home. How my heart got put on this was two years ago, there was a lady who came here and talked about Knoxville's black poverty rate. I just started thinking that we didn't get here over night. When I started looking back at history, it really went back to this urban renewal, which a lot of people call urban removal."

The Federal Housing Act of 1949 granted assistance and loans to local governments to eliminate slums, urban blight, and substandard housing, yet programs intended to help urban residents who were most in need were often used to destroy already disenfranchised communities nationwide. As a result, 70% of the Knoxville's African-American population were displaced, some leaving the city for good.

"A lot of people left Knoxville because they couldn't get fair market value for their properties," McKenzie said. "The only business operating at that time that is still operating today is Jarnigan and Son Mortuary. The poverty created then is generational. If even half of those businesses had been able to stay or rebuild, they could have been passed down to that next generation. That is what generational wealth building looks like, and we, in the black community, have just not had that. In talking with people who experienced this, there was a spirit of hopelessness that set in."

According to Knoxville's Beck Cultural Exchange Center, which has documented this period in the city's history, the urban removal project also to the

closure of 107 primarily black-owned businesses, including local landmarks like the Gem Theatre and the neighborhood's Carnegie Library. More than 2,500 churches were also closed or forced to relocate. Monuments erected in these neighborhoods to honor local leaders were torn down.

Due to federal practices like redlining, African-American residents were also unable to qualify for mortgages, loans, and other financial aid that would have aided them in finding new housing or restarting businesses.

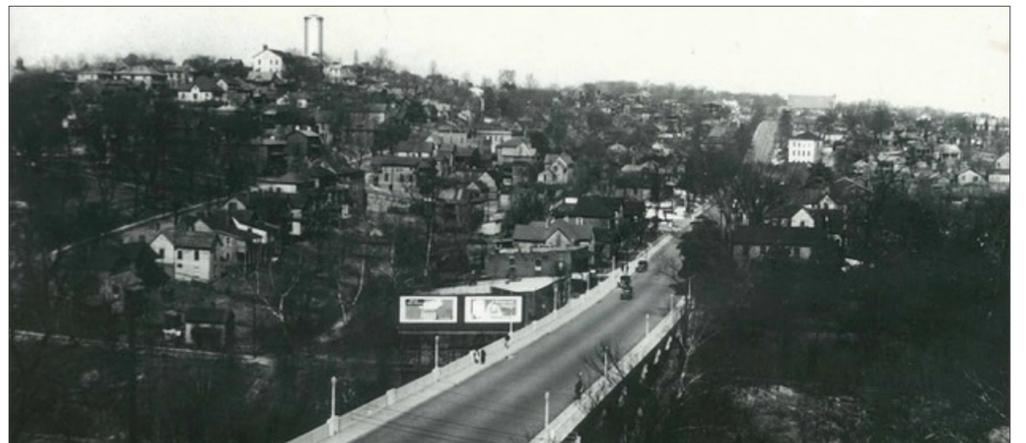
The ramifications of these policies can still be seen in the city's black poverty rate – 31.4% of the city's African-American residents live in poverty despite being only 17% of the city's population. Knoxville still has significant racial disparities in homeownership and business ownership.

McKenzie said the projects fostered by the resolution are intended to be a hand up, not a hand out.

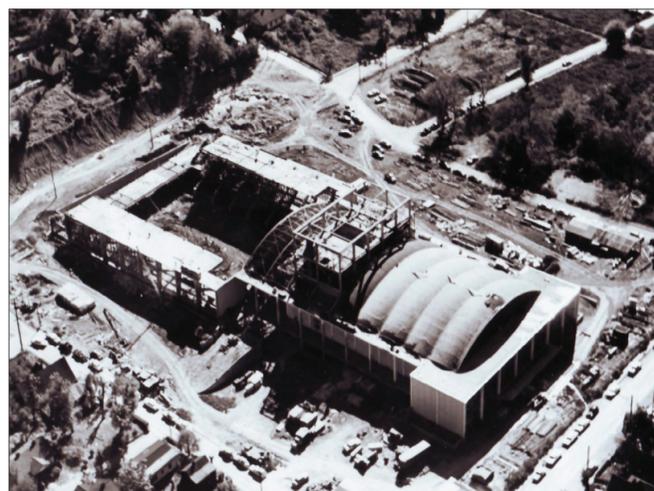
"The whole point of my resolution was to break that cycle of poverty and provide opportunity and access for generational wealth building," McKenzie said. "We have some families in my district and here in Knoxville who have never had a family member go to college, buy a new car, or buy a new house. The first thing we needed to do was to make a sincere apology for that restoration and reconciliation to take place within the community. That pain and that hurt is still there."

So far, McKenzie said the city has received more than 50 applications from citizens interested in participating in the task force to guide the reinvestment in the city. Those chosen for the task force will be announced at the end of February.

The new task force will work with agencies already active in the city to address gaps and barriers as well as meet certain benchmarks including reducing the poverty



The Mountain View neighborhood was once home to a thriving neighborhood of middle class homes, businesses, and churches. It was one of three majority black-owned neighborhoods that was lost to urban removal. Photos from Knoxville's Beck Cultural Exchange Center document how these areas looked both before and after urban removal projects.



The Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum, seen under construction here, was built on the land that had once been the Mountain View neighborhood. The auditorium was opened in 1961. While touted as a project that would provide urban renewal, the demolition of homes and businesses to make way for the auditorium fostered generations of poverty in families who had once been residents of the neighborhood where it was built.

rate, black unemployment rate, and increasing homeownership.

"When we look back, services and programs designed to help black people help all poor people. They're inclusive," McKenzie

said. "Anything supported out of these funds will support all people living in poverty. The task force is going to have a lot of work ahead of them, but the great thing is we have some great nonprofit

agencies already in these lanes. It is a matter of the task force identifying what additional assistance or expansion of programs has to happen. I don't envision that we will have to create a lot of new programs."

McKenzie said her biggest goal for the project is that it inspires hope in Knoxville residents who haven't had a chance to dream big before.

"What I want to see is a more thriving Knoxville, a Knoxville that has closed the wealth gap in black and brown communities," she said. "I want to see Knoxville encourage and grow entrepreneurs, creators, inventors, and artists. I want this to help people who hunger and thirst for greatness, to be more. When people live in poverty, they can't always dream big. Sometimes their dream is just getting through the day or getting through the week. The support for this task force has been overwhelming and diverse."

McKenzie said anyone with questions regarding the initiative or starting similar projects in their own communities can contact her at gwenmckenzie@knoxville.tn.gov.



PEOPLE

Seth Bruton has been selected as the new athletic superintendent for Cookeville Leisure Services. A Cookeville native, Bruton holds a degree in interdisciplinary studies from Tennessee Tech and a master's in sport administration from Belmont University. Prior to coming to work for the city of Cookeville, he has served as program coordinator for Putnam County Parks and Recreation as well as at Tennessee Tech as a facilities and events coordinator and as a senior external coordinator.



Seth Bruton

Steve Corder has been designated as the new chief information officer for the city of Cookeville's newly established Information Technology and Telecommunications Division. The ITT Division will oversee the city's computer systems, networks, cyber security, and telecommunications operations. Corder previously headed the city's computer operations division as operations manager, which will be folded into the new ITT Division. Corder holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Tennessee Tech University and is a member of the Middle Tennessee Chapter of InfraGard.



Steve Corder

Jimmy Hill, former mayor of Three Way, died Feb. 4, 2021, at the age of 88. Hill was active in his community for several years as a farmer and owner of a local construction company, serving as captain of the Madison County Fire Department's Station No. 3 located in Three Way. He became instrumental in the effort to have Three Way incorporated and was elected the city's first mayor in 1998 after citizens voted to do so. He would go on to be re-elected to four more terms, serving as the city's mayor until 2014. During his time as mayor, the city of Three Way began plans for its municipal complex and Hill was invited to attend the groundbreaking in 2019. He is survived by his three children.



Jimmy Hill

Nichole Mosley has been appointed the new chief of police for the city of McMinnville. The first female police chief to serve with the McMinnville Police Department, she began her career with the department in 1994 as a patrol officer. Mosley has risen through



Nichole Mosley

the ranks to serve as captain of the criminal investigations, the title she held until being appointed police chief in January. Mosley holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Middle Tennessee State University and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy. She is a member of the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police and the FBI National Alumni Association.

Tony Parker, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC), has been sworn-in as president of the American Correctional Association (ACA). Parker is the first TDOC commissioner to head the national organization in its 151-year history. The ACA is the oldest association developed specifically for practitioners in the correctional profession. Parker will serve as the organization's president for the next two years. He has more than 37 years' experience in the field of corrections, beginning his career as a correctional officer and rising through the ranks to serve as warden, assistant commissioner, and finally commissioner in 2016. He holds an associate's degree in criminal justice from Dyersburg State Community College, a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Tennessee at Martin, and a master's degree in security studies with an emphasis in homeland security from the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, Calif.



Tony Parker

Eric Rackard has been named the new fire marshal for the city of Oak Ridge. Rackard most recently served as a battalion chief with the Oak Ridge Fire Department and will take over the fire marshal position following the promotion of Travis Solomon to fire chief last month. Rackard has been with the Oak Ridge Fire Department since 2007. Rackard has also served as a captain and firefighter/paramedic with the Oak Ridge Fire Department. Prior to coming to Oak Ridge, he served with the Harriman Fire Department and Kingston Fire Department as a firefighter and EMT. He also served in security forces within the U.S. Air Force between 2002 and 2005. Rackard holds a bachelor's degree in emergency management from Waldorf University as well as dozens of certifications including International Code Council (ICC) Fire Code Specialist and ICC Certified Fire Marshal.



Eric Rackard

Joshua Ray has been selected as the new city manager for Shelbyville. Prior to coming to the city, Ray served as the city manager of Lago Vista, Texas, since 2017, and before that was the city manager of Aztec, N.M.,

TML partners meet, set goals to advance interests of Tennessee municipalities



The staff leadership of the TML, Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund, Public Entity Partners and UT MTAS held a historic, strategic partnership summit to forge a new commitment to advance the interests of Tennessee's towns and cities, and all who depend upon the many services municipalities provide. Pictured are Michael G. Fann, Public Entity Partners president and CEO; Anthony Haynes, TML executive director; Margaret Norris, MTAS executive director; and Wade Morrell, Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund president and CEO.

from 2010 until 2017. He also served as city manager of Whiteville, N.C., and as town manager of Biscoe, N.C. He holds a master's degree in public affairs from Western Carolina University as well as a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of North Carolina.



Joshua Ray

David Shephard, former state representative and Dickson County politician, died Feb. 4, 2021, at the age of 73 after a battle with cancer and then COVID-19. Shephard represented Tennessee House District 69 serving portions of Dickson, Hickman, and Maury counties for 16 years. After leaving the state House, Shephard served as a Dickson County commissioner until his death. He also served on the Dickson City Council for 12 years, including more than a decade as the city's vice mayor. Shephard earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee at Martin and his doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's College of Pharmacy. A decorated Vietnam war veteran, Shephard served as a clinical pharmacy specialist in psychiatry at the Veterans Administration Medical Center for 22 years.



David Shephard

Right: Treasurer David H. Lillard, Jr. and State Rep. Ron Travis present the \$5,000 TNStars Holiday Scholarship to Ashlyn Gunter. The fifth grader from Dayton was one of 2,400 entrants into the department's college scholarship giveaway. She plans to be an engineer when she grows up.

Dyersburg Police celebrate recent officer promotions



The Dyersburg Police Department recently celebrated the promotion of several officers. From left to right: Capt. Thomas Langford, Sgt. Garrett Grady, Lt. Brandon Funderburk, Sgt. Patrick Leake, and Chief Steve Isbell. Leake has been assigned to the patrol division to supervise D Shift while Grady will supervise the patrol division's C Shift. Funderburk will oversee several specialized functions of the patrol division.

Treasury Department awards scholarship to Dayton student



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STATE BRIEFS

The Tennessee Regional eBook and Audiobook Download System (R.E.A.D.S.) achieved a record-breaking 4,957,038 digital e-book, audiobook, magazine and video checkouts in 2020. Tennessee R.E.A.D.S. was once again one of OverDrive's most used digital library services. OverDrive is the world's leading digital reading platform for libraries and schools. Last year, R.E.A.D.S. had the fourth-highest number of checkouts worldwide and was the southeast's number one library system. The record number of checkouts is a milestone for the top five Tennessee libraries for digital checkouts through R.E.A.D.S. Williamson County Public Library, Linebaugh Public Library in Rutherford County, Blount County Public Library, Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library, and Johnson City Public Library, along with all of the Tennessee Regional Library System members across the state. Tennessee R.E.A.D.S. provides any Tennessean with an active library card from a public library in the Tennessee Regional Library System 24/7 access to free digital content.

Airports across the state of Tennessee generate \$40 billion in total economic activity to the state, according to a new study conducted by the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The Statewide Aviation System Plan and Aviation Economic Impact Study of Tennessee found that in 2019, airports across Tennessee generated billions in economic value, including tax revenues of \$1.1 billion. These airports also support 220,936 jobs across the state. The state's airports brought in an estimated 7 billion visitors to Tennessee and help support businesses who ship freight and cargo worldwide. For the full-

report, go to <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/aeronautics/TASP-Economic%20Impact%20Brochure%20FINAL.pdf>.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation are partnering to develop a statewide electric vehicle fast charging network to power the growth of EVs across Tennessee and reduce barriers to transportation electrification. TDEC and TVA signed an agreement to collaborate and fund a network of fast charging stations every 50 miles along Tennessee's interstates and major highways. This initiative would add approximately 50 new charging locations, doubling the existing fast charging network. There are only 24 fast charging locations currently operating in Tennessee that are open to all consumers and support both charging standards common to EVs. The announcement comes after major auto manufacturers including General Motors, Toyota, Volkswagen, and BMW announced they intended to phase out gas-powered cars in the next decade.

The Tennessee Department of Education has been awarded \$7 million in grants to strengthen computer science pathways and STEM education and help more students be prepared for success after high school. With local, state, and national partners, Tennessee has been awarded the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) early phase grant for \$4 million and was one of only four states to be awarded the Out-of-School Time Career Pathway Program grant for \$2.9 million. For more information, visit <https://www.tn.gov/education/career-and-technical-education.html>

January revenues \$380.1 million more than budgeted

Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration Commissioner Butch Eley announced that overall January state tax revenues exceeded budgeted estimates. Revenues for January totaled \$1.67 billion, which is \$380.1 million more than budgeted and 7.66% greater than revenues received in January 2020.

"January sales tax revenues, reflecting consumer spending during the December 2020 Christmas shopping season, were incredibly strong," Eley said. "Notably, taxable sales in the second quarter of the current fiscal year increased 7.85% compared to the same quarter last year. Consumers continue to focus spending growth on items such as building materials, auto sales and groceries, but a large part of the state's sales tax growth can be credited to the impact of the state's marketplace facilitator law. As much as 3.4% of January's sales tax growth can be attributed to this newly expanded tax base which is a reflection of internet sales, and nearly 2.4% of all sales tax growth for the year is due to the law change. Corporate tax revenues also had solid growth compared to last January, while all other taxes, taken as a whole, were near even.

"At this time, the economic growth we have experienced in these first six months puts the state in a good fiscal position to fund the

current and upcoming fiscal year budgets. Nevertheless, we will continue to closely monitor our monthly receipts, being mindful there are still uncertainties and that economic conditions could change."

On an accrual basis, January is the sixth month in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

General fund revenues were greater than the budgeted estimates in the amount of \$361.7 million while the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$18.4 million more than the estimates.

Sales tax revenues were \$297.8 million more than the estimate for January and the growth rate was 9.43%. For six months, revenues are \$733.2 million higher than estimated. The year-to-date growth rate for six months is 5.88%.

Franchise and excise tax revenues were \$74.2 million more than the January budgeted estimate. The growth rate compared to January 2020 was 8.07%. Year-to-date franchise and excise tax revenues for the first six months of this year are 4.25% higher than this same time last year and \$333.8 million more than estimated.

Gasoline and motor fuel revenues for January were mostly flat compared to January 2020 and were \$500,000 less than the budgeted estimate of \$104.5 million. For six months, revenues are less than estimates by \$13 million.

Chattanooga public fiber network generates \$2.69B in local benefits

EPB from Page 1

in-plan study model had been used to look at modernizing an electric system or building a fiber optic communications system. I think the big surprise was the difference in the forecast versus the actual value. We have documented almost \$2.75 billion in value, and we are pretty sure we haven't documented all the value."

EPB has a 600-square-mile service area providing electric and fiber optic service to seven counties: three in North Georgia and four in Tennessee. Ingraham said the study has shown that municipal utility services can be among the best and provide added value to their communities.

"EPB is a municipal electric distribution company and a broadband company," Ingraham said. "We are publicly owned by the community. The other thing we have seen is that you can focus on people — our customers, our community — to make a capital investment and the benefits derive to the community and the people we serve as opposed to investors who may not even live here. Since 1996, we have been consistently ranked by JD Power and *Consumer Reports* as among the country's very best distributors of electricity and internet service. We have been able to show that a public entity can be a success for the people we serve, and we take a lot of pride in that success."

The COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the value of municipal fiber optic networks and how they serve their communities. Ingraham said EPB has seen its service usage rise 40% since last March when many Chattanooga residents began working from home.

"We actually built the EPB public network with a capacity to serve 8 million people, which is



BY THE NUMBERS

22.6	million dollars in savings each year EPB has created for customers by helping them avoid spoilage, lost productivity, and other negative impacts through its electric smart grid network.
55.9	million dollars paid to local governments by EPB from 2011 to 2020 in support of local schools and other public services. EPB is the largest contributor to local public tax coffers.
75	the percent EPB has seen total bandwidth usage increase since the start of the pandemic.
7,900	in tons, the reduction in carbon emissions EPB's smart grid has created.
9,516	jobs created during the study period that were retained as a direct result of EPB's fiber optic infrastructure.
12,000	the approximate number of students provided with at-home internet access through EPB.

Source: "Ten Years of Fiber Optic and Smart Grid Infrastructure" by Dr. Bento Lobo

about the size of New York City," he said. "We overbuilt it on purpose so it would be future proof and it would have the capacity to handle growth. When a lot of people needed to start working from home, we were able to support them with internet service just like they would get at their businesses. The good news for our community is that we have good, solid, affordable internet service that was available to everyone and everyone could keep working.

J.Ed. Marston, vice president of marketing for EPB, said the municipal utility was able to quickly make upgrades and changes for companies who had to change their services to better accommodate remote work because they already had this network in place.

"One of our major employers called us and said they needed to go to a 3-gig circuit because they were sending their workers home and those workers would need to access their server at their site," Marston said. "We were able to make that change in their gig service within a few hours that same day. That is pretty extraordinary in most parts of the country. That is just one example."

With more students going online to learn, Ingraham said EPB worked with Hamilton County Schools as well as public and private partners to provide free 100-megabit-per-second fiber optic internet service to all free-and-reduced lunch students. At present, 8,000 households and a little more than 12,000 students who now have access to high-quality internet service to do their school work.

"We don't want to do something that will solve this issue for the next six months," Ingraham said. "This service will be in place for at least the next 10 years, and we are doing fundraising to make it permanent. Before the pandemic, we made sure all our schools were connected with state-of-the-art internet. We have done some pretty innovative things in the internet world. I think it helps

give Chattanooga the moniker of Gig City. We have gained a lot of community energy from that."

Ingraham said the study shows cases a lot of the ways EPB has changed.

"I think 20 years ago, people here would have told you our goal was to do things as cheap as possible while keeping the lights on," Ingraham said. "It was a least cost kind of business model, and it worked, but it didn't set us apart. We have had some pretty visionary and courageous leadership not only here at EPB but on our board of directors and among our local elected leaders who have supported the idea that this community deserves to have modern infrastructure. We had to change our culture. I think the thing we have really learned is that when you pay attention to people and give them something that is a better value, it creates a new energy in the community."

The result has been investment by a new start-up community, new venture capital operations, and the investment by major corporations like Volkswagen, Amazon, and McKee Foods. The convergence of fiber optic internet and smart city infrastructure has increased opportunities in the community. Marston said what Chattanooga has demonstrated is that public internet service can be sustainable and beneficial to all involved.

"There is an absolute ability to operate for community benefit and still have a very successful and sustainable business model," Marston said. "One of the big things we have done at EPB is be very open to partnerships with our university, our public sector, our entrepreneurs, and our nonprofits. As a result of that, we have been able to use this infrastructure as a platform for innovation. We ended up creating a platform where people can collaborate and use our infrastructure in a variety of different ways that has a multiplier effect beyond what we have been able to do with it."



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ACCOUNTANT, SENIOR

HENDERSONVILLE. This position is responsible for assisting with the day-to-day operations of the finance department. This position is under the general supervision of the finance director and assistant director and is responsible for the direct supervision over the accounts payable division and, in the absence of the director and assistant director, assists by serving as department manager. Bachelor's degree in accounting or related field including or supplemented by a minimum of 12 semester hours in accounting. CPA or CMFO preferred. At least two years of experience in professional accounting. Previous governmental accounting and supervisory experience desired. Strong proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite programs. Ability to be bonded. Annual Salary: \$63,289 or DOQ To apply go to www.hvilletn.org and visit the 'Job Openings' page and read through the information. Open until the position is filled. EOE.

BUILDING INSPECTORS (2)

MT. JULIET. The city of Mt. Juliet is seeking candidates for two building inspectors. The two full-time positions require experience with certifications from International Code Council (ICC) for residential and commercial building. Pay range/ \$18.25 top out in 3 years \$26.35. Excellent benefits and pension. Selected candidates will be required to complete pre-employment testing as deemed necessary for position. Valid TN driver license required. Detailed job description and requirements are available online. Applications must be filed electronically and are available online at the city's website, www.mtjuliet-tn.gov. Open until filled. The city of Mt. Juliet reserves the right to stop accepting applications at any time. For questions, regarding the electronic application process, please call (615) 754-2552. EOE/Drug-free Workplace.

BUILDING CODE INSPECTOR III

GALLATIN. The city of Gallatin is seeking applications for a building codes inspector III. The purpose of this position is to perform intermediate technical work in the inspection of residential, commercial, industrial, and public facilities for compliance with building, plumbing, mechanical, gas piping and electrical codes, and other ordinances. May be assigned specific inspection areas, and other duties per position. Performs field inspections of residential, commercial, industrial, and public facilities for compliance with building, plumbing, mechanical, gas piping and electrical codes, and other ordinances. Conducts building and related inspections. Prepares and maintains inspection records and files. Receives and investigates complaints regarding non-compliant construction and inspects existing buildings for hazardous conditions or systems failure. Receives and resolves complaints regarding defective construction and handles enforcement issues. Researches manufacturing specs for compliance with standards. Communicates findings. Inspects existing building for hazardous conditions, structural failure. Reports hazardous or life-threatening conditions to the building official and assists with the complaint as assigned. High school

diploma/equivalent. Must have 5 years recent construction related experience. Valid driver's license. IAE/or equivalent Electrical Certifications required. Must have six (6) or more I.C.C. certifications as identified by and beneficial to the City Must meet TN requirements for plumbing, mechanical, and/or building. To apply: go to www.gallatintn.gov or <https://cogselfserve.gallatin-tn.gov/MSS/employmentopportunities/default.aspx>. Position open until filled. EOE / Drug-free workplace.

CHIEF BUILDING INSPECTOR

PIPERTON. The city of Piperton has an opening for a full-time chief building inspector. Duties will include residential and commercial construction inspections (building, plumbing, and mechanical), plan review, responding to public requests for service and resident's concerns, enforcing city ordinances, and assisting the building official as necessary. At least one ICC commercial certification is required. Remaining ICC commercial certifications must be obtained and maintained within one year (building, plumbing, and mechanical inspector) of hire. Must have five years code enforcement/inspection experience, including two years supervisory experience. Valid driver's license is required. Background check will be conducted. Salary is commensurate with experience. Medical and retirement benefit package is provided. Applications may be obtained at the Piperton Administrative Office at 3725 Hwy 196 Suite B, or at www.pipertontn.com/jobs. Return application and resume to tjohnson@pipertontn.com. EOE

DEPUTY CLERK / MUNICIPAL CODES OFFICER

WARTRACE. The town of Wartrace is seeking to hire a deputy clerk / municipal codes officer to help manage day-to-day administrative operations. This position is a full-time training position for succession planning. Responsible for scheduling, advertising, and support of meetings and public hearings, and maintain records of same for safekeeping. Additional responsibilities include writing resolutions and ordinances, grant management, oversee all aspects of municipal codes inspections, train for and get licensed to perform building inspections, permit issuance within three years of employment, train in the management of the annual budget, banking services, financial obligations, debt obligations, annual audit, tax preparation (1099s), cross-train with town clerk, and all other responsibilities, as assigned. College degree preferred, but not required depending on experience. Finalist must pass a background check and drug test prior to employment. Work hours are typically Monday through Friday, 7:30 am. - 4:00 p.m., but will vary several days each month for meetings. Employment applications available online at www.townofwartrace.com, mail resume to Town of Wartrace, P.O. Box 158, Wartrace, TN 37183, or email to admin@townofwartrace.com.

ENGINEER - DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SPECIALIST

BRENTWOOD. The city engineer - development projects specialist is responsible for ensuring new developments, both residential and commercial comply with city standards and commonly accepted industry practices of municipal engineering. The city engineer is the primary technical liaison to the planning department

and the planning commission during the review and approval process for rezonings, site plans, subdivisions, and other public and private projects. Duties and responsibilities include ensuring that plans submitted comply with city code regarding areas such as site grading, floodplain management, roadway design, site drainage, roadway signage and lighting, and construction. The city engineer reports to the director of engineering working with a high degree of independence. The job requires a PE license and strong civil engineering technical skills as well as good interpersonal skills. The city engineer interacts daily with internal staff, engineers, builders, developers, residents, elected officials and government agencies. For a complete job description and to apply please visit the city of Brentwood web site here, <https://www.brentwoodtn.gov/departments/human-resources/current-job-openings>.

ENGINEER - WASTEWATER

COLUMBIA. The city of Columbia (population 37,540) is seeking applications for a staff wastewater engineer. Columbia a full service city with an annual budget of approximately \$54M, employs approximately 400 people and is known for its quality of life and historic preservation. Requirements include: Provides advanced technical and paraprofessional engineering support. Answers technical questions and uses specialized software applications to produce maps, construction plans, and other graphical exhibits for a variety of internal and external customers preparing and completing plan reviews, conducting field surveys, coordinating work with other staff, project managers and departments, assisting the public, performing research, and coordinating asset data. Inspects workmanship and materials used in a variety of projects and ensures compliance with plans, specifications and regulations. Candidates must demonstrate skill using GIS software to produce quality maps and geospatial analysis. Bachelor's degree in civil, environmental, Bio systems or related engineering field from an accredited school; or any combination of education, successful completion of the E.I.T. examination, training, and/or experience which provides the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities will be considered. Must possess and maintain a valid Tennessee driver's license. To apply: Submit a resume, and cover letter to www.columbiatn.com Position open until filled, first review of applications will be March 1, 2021. EOE.

FIREMAN/EMT ADVANCED

SOMERVILLE. The Town of Somerville is accepting applications for a full-time position in our Fire Department. The applicant must be EMT-Advanced Certified. Special consideration will be given to individuals who have Firefighter experience and can operate firefighting vehicles and equipment. If you are interested in applying for this position, come to Somerville Town Hall, 13085 N. Main Street, Somerville, TN 38068, to fill out an application by Feb. 26, 2021. Interviews will be held the following week. Full-time position. Pay: \$39,000.00 - \$40,000.00 per year. EOE / Drug-free workplace.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

EAST RIDGE. The city of East Ridge is seeking a qualified human resources manager. Duties include but not limited to managing/maintaining personnel/medical files, employee orientation; recommends, plans, and implements changes in personnel policies and procedures. Must be familiar with gov-

ernmental requirements and reporting. Manages workers compensation claims and annual audit, responsible for all government reporting. Manages entire benefit program and serves as liaison with insurance company. Responsible and oversees payroll administration and prepares documentation for budget review. Clerical duties are also part of this job function. Qualified applicants should have five years experience in Human Resources management; or three years experience in Human Resources management with a bachelor's degree in human resources management, business management, or related field. Salary DOQ. Open until filled. EOE/ Drug free workplace.

PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

FAYETTEVILLE. The city of Fayetteville, TN., is seeking a visionary parks and recreation director with proven experience in building long-lasting partnerships and producing innovative services, programs, and events for all ages. This is a unique, department director position that requires someone who can be bold when crafting successful solutions while being innovative, creative, and collaborative. The city is looking for a unique and enthusiastic individual to serve as not only director but also as advocate and teammate. The city has an excellent group of experienced department leaders and a strong support team that will work in conjunction with this position to help produce results and reach goals. This position requires someone with a heart for public service and a sincere passion for community programming, sports, parks, and recreation services. The ideal candidate understands their role in a public environment and has the ability to work closely with the board of mayor and aldermen, city administrator, parks and recreation standing committee, local organizations, employees, donors, volunteers, and the general public. The city's parks and recreation director must have a tenacious spirit with the capacity to listen and empathize. They must have the ability to see the "big picture" while successfully managing day-to-day details. Other key attributes include strong verbal and written communication skills, open-mindedness, and the aptitude to make tough decisions while considering all viewpoints. This leader must be able to merge seamlessly with a variety of teams and effectively serve as a liaison between the city government and the public. Applications and job descriptions may be picked up at the City of Fayetteville Municipal Building, 110 Elk Ave S. Fayetteville, TN 37334 or online at www.fayettevilletn.com. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Initial review of the applications will occur on Feb. 23, 2021. EOE.

POLICE OFFICER

SOMERVILLE. The Somerville Police Department will be accepting applications for CERTIFIED ONLY Police Officer candidates for current openings. Eligible applicants must be certified as a police officer by the Tennessee Police Officer Standards and Training Commission (P.O.S.T.), be at least 21 years of age, possess a valid driver's license, have a high school diploma/GED a U.S. citizen, have no felony convictions and be able to successfully pass psychological, physical, and polygraph exams as well as a drug screen. Officers who are P.O.S.T. certified through another state and can be certified in Tennessee by an abbreviated class at the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy will be considered. One-year experience preferred. The schedule is a 14 day a

month rotating shift with nights and weekend work required. The employee would be off every other weekend, under normal schedule conditions. Starting salary is based upon experience (\$40,000.00 to \$42,000 per year). State retirement TCRS with match by the town of Somerville. An optional retirement plan is also available with matching funds. Excellent medical benefits for employee and family. After first full year of employment you may be eligible for college tuition reimbursement for a degree program relating to the field of law. Somerville Town Hall, 13085 N. Main Street, Somerville, TN 38068. EOE /Drug-free workplace.

PUBLIC WORKS SUPERINTENDENT

GALLATIN. The city of Gallatin is seeking qualified applicants for the open position of superintendent of public works to plan, direct, manage, and oversee the activities, projects, and operations of the public works department including environmental services (sanitation and stormwater), facilities and vehicle maintenance, recycling collection, and street maintenance and construction. Gallatin Public Works provides excellent environmental services, facility and vehicle maintenance, and street and construction maintenance at competitive rates, and in a safe, environmentally clean and efficient manner. This position supports a department of approximately 70 employees. Minimum qualifications include bachelor's degree in civil engineering or closely related field with a minimum of 10 years recent work experience of an increasingly responsible nature in the public works management, construction, or related field; or an equivalent combination of education, experience, and training. Master's degree and P.E. preferred. Must have five years of supervisory experience. Must have a valid driver's license. To apply, please submit an online application, cover letter, and resume at the city of Gallatin website: <https://cogselfserve.gallatin-tn.gov/MSS/employmentopportunities/default.aspx> Current starting pay: \$ 89,134.86 with excellent benefits. Open until position is filled. EOE / Drug-free workplace.

UTILITY AND PUBLIC WORKS SUPERINTENDENT

WARTRACE. The town of Wartrace is accepting applications for a utility and public works Superintendent to supervise the overall operations of Wartrace Waterworks and Sewer Systems and public works duties. Responsible for proper operation, maintenance, reporting, collection, treatment, distribution and/or disposal of water and wastewater. Maintenance of city fleet, equipment, streets, storm water drains, city-owned buildings, and parks. Supervises three employees. Prefer four or more years of experience and State of Tennessee Grade 1 Water Distribution, Grade 1 Wastewater Treatment and Grade 1 Wastewater Collection Certifications. Valid Tennessee driver's license and valid Tennessee CDL or ability to obtain within 6 months. All licenses will be verified. Experience with Telemetry and SCADA Systems, administrative and supervisory skills, experience with operation of heavy equipment: Backhoe, Skid Loader, etc. Knowledge of safety requirements and precautions. Finalist must pass a background check and drug test prior to employment. Work hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 am. - 4:00 p.m. (subject to change). Some overtime required (on call hours), some weekends. Applications available online at www.townofwartrace.com or mail resume to Town of Wartrace, P.O. Box 158, Wartrace, TN 37183.

No loan is too large or too small



The city of Milan recently closed on a \$1.5 million fixed-rate loan with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund (TMBF) issued to finance electric system improvements. Seated L to R: Jason Griggs, superintendent of public utilities; Milan Mayor B.W. Beasley; and Autumn Stewart, city recorder. Standing is Tommy Green, TMBF marketing representative.



The city of McKenzie has used the TMBF programs since 1987. McKenzie recently closed on three refunding issues in order to lower the rate of interest on the debt. The General Obligation Refunding Bond is in the amount of \$2,648,995 and was placed with a local bank in McKenzie. From L to R Jennifer Waldrup, city recorder; McKenzie Mayor Jill Holland; and Tommy Green, TMBF marketing representative.

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Jill Holland (2019) Mayor, McKenzie
Wallace Cartwright (2018) Mayor, Shelbyville
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John Holden (2016) Mayor, Dyersburg
Curtis Hayes (2015) Mayor, Livingston
Dale Kelley (2013) Mayor, Huntingdon
Kay Senter (2011) Morristown Vice Mayor
Sam Tharpe (2010) Commissioner, Paris
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Covid-19's lasting mark on remote work in state, local governments

Telework practices in many workplaces will outlast pandemic

By **BILL LUCIA**
Route Fifty

Like many state and local government employees with desk jobs, Melissa Bridges, performance and innovation coordinator for Little Rock, Ark., hasn't been into her office much since the Covid-19 outbreak hit last spring.

"I've literally been into city hall, I think, three times," Bridges told *Route Fifty*.

Instead, like legions of other public and private sector workers, she's been logging on for nearly a year now to do her job from home. The transition wasn't too bad, Bridges said, partly because she had been involved in purchasing some of the technology Little Rock has used to enable telework. And when she went remote, she was already set up with a city laptop and VPN access to her office computer.

"It really wasn't painful for me," she said. "I know it was for a lot of other people."

Almost a year into the pandemic, the pros and cons of remote work for state and local governments and their employees continue to come into focus, as do clues about the extent to which remote work practices will endure once the coronavirus outbreak subsides.

Jason Grant, director of advocacy for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), noted how prior to the pandemic many public sector managers were wary of allowing employees to work remotely, thinking it could disrupt workflow or create other problems. "What this year has given us is the ability in each city, county and town to look at data and say, 'Has the remote work been effective? What's worked? What hasn't?'"

What's generally become clear, he said, is that, in many areas of government, remote work didn't hurt productivity and many employees preferred having the option available to them.

"There are some jobs that may not ever go back to working in an office," Grant said. But the calculus about whether a change like that makes sense will vary widely for different positions and agencies.

Going forward, Grant expects local leaders to weigh the costs and benefits of remote work.

For example: Is offering such a job arrangement a perk that could help with recruiting talent? Or, now that people are more comfortable with Zoom and other video platforms, do virtual meetings yield efficiencies that are worth giving up in-person face time for? Is paying for the technology required for remote work worth the cost? How about when compared to potential savings from office downsizing?

It's these sorts of questions that managers will need to think about as they plan for post-pandemic workplaces.

Another issue is that residents increasingly expect to access government services online, rather than making a trip to city hall or municipal offices for something like a construction permit or license renewal. In some cases, the shift to virtual services could lessen the need for as many workers to report to offices, or allow employees to stagger their schedules to spend some of their days in the office and some at home.

But, it's also important to remember that millions of Americans don't have reliable internet access and still need in-person options to interact with their local government. Especially in rural areas, public employees, too, might lack fast connections for working at home. And remote work is not a good fit for every employee—even if their jobs allow for it. Some might prefer to spend the workday at their office desk, rather than on their couch or hunched over a kitchen table.

Lastly, there are public employees who simply can't do their work remotely, such as firefighters, bus mechanics, custodians, and groundskeepers.

"It's impossible to maintain a field if you're home," Grant said. "We're always going to have an element of in-person," he added. "The question is: What is the scope?"

Bridges said parts of working from home over the past 10 to 11 months have been less than ideal.

Lost are "hallway collaborations," or popping into someone's office to work through a minor issue on a project. These days, those kinds of exchanges can require scheduling a virtual meeting, getting a co-worker on the phone, or messaging back and forth online.

"It's a lot harder just to have those spontaneous, quick conversations, which were a lot of how I moved things forward," she said.

There have also been challenges as work has collided with home life. Bridges' husband, also a city employee, has been working from home, too. And they have 10- and 13-year-old children attending school online.

"I've been their IT help desk while trying to get my job done, too," she said. At times, bandwidth has run short in their household when online school and work activity is going full steam. Internet hotspots the city provided have come in handy.

It's definitely put a lot of stress on the family," she said, adding that she's heard the same from colleagues with school-age kids.

Still, Bridges considers it a privilege to get to work from home. And, on the upside, she believes the past year helped to dispel the notion that employees might be more prone to slacking off if they work outside the office.

"I think people have realized, 'Oh my gosh, you're actually working more when you're at home,'" she said. "There is this sense that remote working is OK in local government now."

Bridges also thinks remote meeting technology is here to stay

NATIONAL BRIEFS

A new study has found that the majority of those receiving federal jobless benefits have seen repeat layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Economists at the University of Chicago and JPMorgan Chase Institute found that nearly two-thirds of workers who started getting jobless benefits in October had also collected jobless benefits earlier in the pandemic. Long-term unemployment is categorized as a person who has not held a job in at least six months. However, many of those claiming unemployment during the pandemic were laid off, rehired, and then laid off again. This signals unstable work prospects for a broad group of Americans and that the overall labor market may be more unstable than pre-

viously thought. Industries hardest hit by these repeat layoffs include hospitality and food service, arts, entertainment, and recreation.

Retail sales rose in January after three months of decline, largely thanks to recent \$600 federal stimulus checks. The U.S. Commerce Department reported that January retail sales rose to a seasonally-adjusted 5.3% from the previous month, the biggest increase reported since June and much higher than the 1% increase predicted by economists. Furniture and appliances were among the biggest retail purchases resulting from the stimulus funds. Retail sales slumped in the last three months of 2020 as money from the previous stimulus checks dried up, no new job growth was reported, and surges in virus cases kept people away from shopping during the holidays. December's retail sales drop was re-evaluated

to be larger than initially reported down to 1% over the initial 0.7% the Commerce Department announced. Economists said another economic stimulus may be needed to keep up the momentum set in January.

New mortgages hit a record high in the fourth quarter of 2020, according to new information from the Federal Reserve. The new boom is the result of historically-low interest rates by refinancing or buying new homes and tops a previous record high set in 2003. While the high set in 2003 was largely part of the subprime mortgage crisis, economists say this recent surge in mortgages is more secure with more than 70% of new mortgages going to those with credit scores of 760 or higher. Officials hope this means the new boom will be more stable than the previous boom whose subsequent bust was a major contributor to the Great Recession.

for Little Rock. She recalled how before the pandemic, department heads would travel from their offices into downtown for a weekly meeting, burning up time and vehicle gas to get there. City leaders, she said, have realized there are "some efficiencies in using the tech."

Cara Woodson Welch, executive director for the International Public Management Association for Human Resources, said her organization surveyed their membership, which includes mostly local government HR officials, but also people working at the state and federal levels, and found only about a third reported that their agencies had telework programs established around the time that the virus struck.

Getting the right technology in place, ensuring data and information is secure and coming up with consistent policies to guide telework have been some of the key challenges agencies have encountered with their remote work programs. Meanwhile, IPMA-HR found that about 60% of those surveyed plan to keep some sort of remote work options beyond the end of the pandemic.

Welch said she hasn't heard people fret too much over the idea that employees will not do as much work from home.

"It's more about making sure that folks are available and that they're perceived as being as available as they were in the office," she said.

Along similar lines, ICMA's Grant pointed out that remote work isn't just about where people are physically working.

"It's how they're delivering the programs and services," he said. "That's where remote work, at the end of the day, becomes important. Is this a way that we provide better programs and services to the people? Are we more effective and more efficient? That's what the city managers are going to consider as they look to the future of it."



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Briggs brings military, medical experience to state, local committee

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

Recently appointed as chairman of the Tennessee State and Local Government Committee, State Sen. Richard Briggs, R-Knoxville, is no stranger to finding solutions to challenges.

A heart and lung surgeon as well as retired U.S. Army colonel, Briggs' leadership experience runs the gamut from the operating theatre to military command. He earned his bachelor's degree from Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky., followed by his doctorate from the University College of Medicine in 1978.

Briggs served in the U.S. Army from 1974 until 2012, including stints in Korea, Egypt, Ecuador, Colombia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He received the Bronze Star for his service during Operation Desert Storm and served as a combat trauma surgeon in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Back stateside, Briggs has practiced heart and lung surgery for more than 22 years at St. Mary's-Tennova Medical Center in Knoxville as well as held academic appointments at the University of Texas-San Antonio, the University of Louisville, and the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

He began his political career in 2008 when he was elected to the Knox County Commission and was again elected to a full six-year term in 2010. He was then elected in 2014 to represent State Senate District 7 located within Knox County.

Lt. Gov. Randy McNally said Briggs was a given choice to chair the State and Local committee, which hears all matters pertaining to state and local governments in general, including utility districts, employees, ordinances, boundary lines, veterans' affairs, penal and correctional institutions, alcoholic beverages, and election laws.

"As a long-time leader in local government, Richard Briggs has the experience and insight to serve this committee well," Lt. Gov. McNally said. "A proven and effective chairman, I am confident he will take on this new task and excel. I am proud to appoint him."

Briggs married his college sweetheart Stephanie. They have been married 48 years.

TT&C: What first interested you in politics? Was there a particular cause or issue that made you decide to run for office?

RB: I had just gotten back from my last tour in Iraq in 2006. I had known [former U.S. Senate Majority Leader] Bill Frist for a long time, and I had worked in his and U.S. Sen. Fred Thompson's campaigns. The main reason I got into those campaigns was because of Bill Frist. He's a heart surgeon like me, so we had crossed paths before. If you had asked me in 2005 on a scale of one to 10 what is your interest in politics, I would have said a zero or maybe a one if something had caught my interest.

At that time in Knox County, they had what was called Black Wednesday. Eight county commissioners were expelled from office and four of the county officers were as well in January 2007 by the Tennessee Supreme Court. Then the county commission was appointed to fill all of those offices, but the newspaper and nine citizens filed suit because it was done in secret, contrary to the public meetings act. In September 2007, all of those seats were vacated by the courts. There was a group in town called the Public Trust Pact who felt we needed to do something about our local county government. I was in the Leadership Knoxville group at the time. I was one of those folks who felt someone had to do something.

TT&C: Congratulations on your recent appointment as the new chair of the Senate State and Local Government Committee. What are your goals as the new chair? What are some of the issues you expect the committee to tackle this year?

RB: We have asked the Secretary of State and the state director of elections to give us a briefing on the election situation in Tennessee. As an extension of that, we want to be sure that Tennessee doesn't have some of the election problems that have come up in other states. It never has, and I think part of the reason it hasn't is because my predecessors on my committee, as well as officials in state and local government, have done a good job of having secure elections.

There are also accusations of voter suppression. I want to make it very clear, at least from my committee, that voter suppression will not be tolerated. One of the things we are looking into are voting centers. Two years ago, in Rutherford County, we did the first pilot project for voting centers, which was very successful. In November 2020, we had similar programs in three counties and it was very successful. Monroe County is one of the smaller counties that doesn't have the IT infrastructure that some of the urban and suburban counties do, so if they can do it, anyone can.

Another issue is a 1.12% handling fee the state charges counties and municipalities on all sales tax revenues. I had a bill a few years ago that would have eliminated that entirely. That fee may have been reasonable back when the state treasury and comptroller's office had to hire people to calculate that by hand. Today, you push a button on a computer and there it goes. I have a bill this year to drop that fee to 0.5%, which about cuts it in half. That will bring more revenue to municipalities in the entire state. It's about an \$18 million fiscal note that will benefit everyone. We are phasing out the Hall Tax, and this bill would help make up some of that lost revenue. As far as public



Recently appointed chairman of the Senate State and Local Government Committee, State Sen. Richard Briggs has served in the General Assembly since 2014.

services, you aren't cutting anything. You are just redistributing sales tax revenue and pushing it down to local governments.

We have another bill we're working on that will change how local property tax is accessed. Right now, building owners of big box stores can appeal to the board of equalization their assessment if they aren't happy with the way the local property assessor accessed their building. Fairly often, it gets changed to a lower amount. We have a bill that is going to change that whole mechanism.

TT&C: How would you describe your relationship with municipal officials in your district?

RB: There are two incorporated areas in my district and the county government. I have Farragut and the city of Knoxville. I have known so many of those people for so long. I have known Farragut Mayor Ron Williams before he became mayor. We are on a first-name basis. We talk just about every day. Mayor Indya Kincannon was chair of the school board many years ago when I was on the Knox County Commission. And with the COVID epidemic, she and I talk two or three times a day and text each other often.

TT&C: What is your stance on pre-emption and local control?

RB: I really do believe the saying that the government that is the best government is the one that is closest to the people. My favorite bills that I have carried – and there have been quite a few of these – are the bills that include a local option. Instead of mandating a specific law, it gives the local government the option of doing it whether it's a county commission, board of mayor and alderman, or city council.

I have carried several bills that deal with local smoking regulations. There were several smoking pre-emption bills that would not let universities, colleges, and TCATs set their own policies; it had to be what the state policy mandated. A few years ago, the city of Knoxville came to me and wanted to put up "no smoking" signs at a playground in city parks. They couldn't do that without a state exemption. It started as a local bill for the city of Knoxville. Then Knox County wanted to sign on, and we ended up with more than 40 counties that wanted to come on that bill as an amendment. We finally rewrote the bill and made it an option for the whole state.

TT&C: There are a couple of bills that have been filed that if passed would reduce local control of the six independent health departments in Tennessee, and one that prohibits businesses from refusing to serve a customer if not wearing a mask. What is your opinion on these measures?

RB: I'll start with the most egregious, which is the mask mandate bill. It's one thing for a government to issue a mandate, but I don't like government telling businesses what they can and can't do. If you have a business that is concerned about their customers and employees while we're in the throes of this pandemic, and they say customers can't come in without wearing a mask so they can protect other customers and their employees, I think a business has the right to do that. And I'll fight that to the mat.

People think I'm either for the mayor or against the mayor or for the health board or against the health board. We have had these health boards for 200 years in this country. They have boards all over the world like this. What I would really like to do next fall is take a Blue-Ribbon panel of experts – and include legislators in that – and decide what we really want to do and what we don't want to do. House Bill 007 gives absolute power to the mayor. Under that bill, the mayor has more power than the president of the U.S., than the governor, and more power than the legislature. There is no accountability, and I think that is wrong.

You will hear people say that health panels



Briggs with an Iraqi boy he treated while on a tour of duty. He served for 38 years in the U.S. Army, using his skills as a combat surgeon to treat soldiers, civilians, and even ABC reporter Bob Woodruff when he was injured while on assignment in Baghdad.



State Sen. Richard Briggs has practiced heart and lung surgery for more than 22 years in Knoxville. It was through his career that he met former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist.

are an unelected, unaccountable board, and I call that the internet lie. Every member of those boards could be removed within 48 hours, except the mayor. All of them are either appointed by the mayor, the county commission, or the metro government. The other ex-officio member is the superintendent of schools, who could be removed by the school board. People complain about it being an unelected board.

The FAA grounded the 737 that has cost this country and Boeing hundreds of billions of dollars. That is an unelected board. The FDA can decide which vaccines will be approved, what drugs will be approved, and can pull drugs off the market. They're an unelected board. Right here in Tennessee you have the board of medical examiners who could take away my medical license and absolutely kill my business. They're an unelected board. I could go through the boards we have in Tennessee for architects, nurses, dentists, and pharmacists. These boards are accountable even though they aren't elected because the governor can remove people from those boards. I would rather aeronautical engineers decide if aircrafts are worthy to fly and not an elected politician.

TT&C: You are a doctor by profession. What do you think the state's priorities should be for handling the ongoing coronavirus pandemic? Do you think we will return to a pre-COVID state of normal?

RB: The knowledge we have today is totally different than what we knew 10 months ago. No one knew where this was going to go. A month ago, Tennessee was the worst state in the nation and Knoxville was the worst mid-sized city in the nation for the number of COVID cases. But when you close businesses and put people out of work and close schools, there are consequences. So, you have to weigh it against the severity of the pandemic.

I don't know if we return to a pre-COVID normal. A lot depends on the effectiveness of the vaccine and if we have mutated viruses that don't respond to the vaccine. If we can get 80 to 85% of the population vaccinated and the vaccination is effective, it could be like measles or small pox. You can control some of these diseases if you have effective vaccines and the virus doesn't mutate. We will have to wait and see on that.

But I think the biggest mistake we could make is to prepare for the past. We have got to think into the future, what could be next, and what is the best way to handle that. COVID is the fourth major epidemic we have had in the past 20 years. We don't know what the next one is going to be.

TT&C: Tennessee has seen the closure of a dozen rural hospitals in the decade between 2010 and 2020. What needs to be done to ensure that rural residents have access to quality healthcare?

RB: We need to expand to Medicaid. I have sponsored Medicaid expansion every year. I actually have one this year, and we started a

serious group. We met with CEO leaders of hospital groups in the state. We assumed that the block grant would fail, but it didn't. There may be opportunities to expand some under the block grants as additional funds become available, but we don't know that for sure yet. We could still go back to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services with a separate Medicaid expansion waiver.

There are several reasons why rural hospitals are failing, and Medicaid expansion is one. They have such a higher rate of uninsured patients in rural areas, but hospitals still have to treat them. In Tennessee, we have also had a real problem with the wage index. The Medicaid National average is 1.0, and in Knox County we were getting paid 0.74. The more efficient you are, the more you get penalized. This is a bigger issue than just healthcare. Often times, the best paying jobs in these communities are the health care jobs. It can also be part of the economic engine that brings other businesses to an area. Businesses aren't going to come there if the closest hospital is an hour away.

TT&C: What sort of progress do you think the state has made in addressing the ongoing opioid epidemic? What further steps need to be taken?

RB: We have literally led the nation in addressing the opioid crisis. We had a bill a couple of years ago that closed about two-thirds of the pill mills in the state, and we did it in a very clever manner by saying the medical director had to have proper qualifications. They also needed one or two years of additional training in pain management.

Where we are lagging is in our rehabilitation. If you close the pill mills, they are going to find drugs some place. Once the people are hooked on drugs, they may need the drugs just to stop the withdrawal symptoms. The problem is heroin, methadone, and some of those can be lethal, especially if they're tainted with fentanyl. Suboxone is available in some of the rehab clinics, but not every doctor can prescribe it. Federal law limits how many patients one doctor can have on suboxone. We passed a bill last year amid this COVID crisis that allows physician's assistants and nurse practitioners to prescribe suboxone under close supervision so they can treat more patients. It is impossible for these folks to stop cold turkey. They have to have help.

TT&C: What piece of legislation have you worked on that you are proudest of?

RB: I think the two bills with the biggest impact are the ones that closed the pill mills and one that never got any attention. We called it the Gift Card Bill. Organized crime groups were coming into Tennessee and would shoplift \$2,000 or \$3,000 worth of merchandise. Someone else would bring it back with the tags still on it. The store wouldn't give them the cash because they didn't have receipts, but would give them gift cards. They would then take those gift cards to the pawn shops and get 50 or 60 cents on the dollar. A lot of that money was being used to fund drugs. We put a stop to that. We had attorney generals from about 12 different states used our legislation as a model.

TT&C: I understand you have an interesting hobby in world-class sailing. How did all of that start?

RB: In the early 80s when I was in the military, I was in Washington, D.C., on temporary duty. I started sailing on the Chesapeake then. I'm not a professional by any means. They hire professional sailors to race. After the race, those professional guys fly off somewhere else, and they get guys like me to sail the boat to the next race. It's fun to get to sail their boats, but it's not always comfortable. The boats are super light, and it's like the difference between having a nice ride on a quarter horse versus getting on some young, wild derby horse.

I've sailed the Atlantic from east to west and west to east. I've sailed from Hawaii back to San Francisco, from Fiji stopping at islands along the way to New Zealand, and from Northern Scotland to Norway. I've been all through French Polynesia and the Caribbean island hopping. My wife and I go every year up to the Pacific Northwest into British Columbia. This past summer, I finally bought a large oceangoing sailboat. My brother and I are trying to decide where we want to go in it.