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Those who'll be in the know...

We are just a few weeks from the 85th TML Annual Conference and Expo. Chattanooga will proudly host hundreds of officials and private services providers August 2-5, at the Chattanooga Conference

This year's conference has a great lineup of speakers on leadership, how AI and Quantum Computing are transforming city management, and Tennessee's economic outlook that affects every city's revenue. That's not to mention the many workshops, roundtable discussions, product vendors and approved utility training courses. And then there's networking and collaborations. It's hard to put a value on the information gleaned from interactions with other officials from cities of all sizes across

The TML Annual Conference is where Tennessee's Municipal Leaders - mayors, councils, city managers and employees - all come together for knowledge, collaboration and partnership in advancing Tennessee's towns and cities.

Simply put, those that attend our conferences are "in the know!" Will you be one of Tennessee's public officials or employees that will be "in the know?" New challenges and opportunities are facing cities at an unprecedented rate. Attending the TML Annual Conference and Expo will put you "in the know," and will will move your community ahead of others. See you in Chattanooga!



Monterey sees healthcare savings through TML, FMIG Health partnership

By KATE COIL TT&C Assistant Editor

A new partnership program between TML, and FMIG Health is working with municipalities to find the best and most affordable healthcare coverage for their employees.

Like many small municipalities, Monterey Mayor Alex Garcia said the town was facing both rising costs for its healthcare plan and concerns the plan wasn't doing all it should for their 27 employees.

"I thought the amount we were paying for insurance was pretty high for a city of our size," Garcia said. "We sought quotes from a few other insurance companies, but everyone was showing us plans for 1,000 employees. We'll never have a 1,000 employees. Then TML reached out to us to see if they and FMIG could give us quote. The quote that came back to See MONTEREY on Page 9



Facing increasing charges and a need for easier-to-use benefits, officials with the town of Monterey worked with TML and FMIG Health to provide better healthcare options for the town's 27 employees.

NLC highlights efforts to determine future of FEMA, disaster mitigation and recovery



Tornadoes ripped through Tennessee on April 3, 2025 left five Tennesseans dead and municipalities like Selmer devastated. President Donald Trump approved the major disaster declaration for the area on June 20 with the first major disaster recovery centers for the nine-county disaster area opened on June 30.

TML Conference panel to explore how Quantum Al will reshape our world

As technology continues to evolve, a groundbreaking frontier is taking shape—Quantum AI, the powerful convergence of quantum computing and artificial intelligence. This emerging field is capturing attention across industries, from finance to healthcare, for its transformative potential. With the ability to process and analyze complex problems at speeds far beyond today's most advanced classical computers, Quantum AI could redefine what's possible in science, business, and beyond.

As part of TML's Annual Conference in Chattanooga, an expert panel will explore how Quantum AI is being used to tackle complex problems at unprecedented speeds. During the Second General Session on Monday, Aug. 4, we'll hear from Evann Freeman, EPB's Vice President of Government and Communitv Relations, about how the Electric Power Board is leading the way by integrating a quantum computer into its existing quantum infrastructure.

Google will also share how it's making quantum computing more accessible by offering it as a service—enabling businesses and researchers to harness the power of quantum technology without the need to develop their own hardware. This breakthrough is opening the door for organizations of all sizes to explore the possibilities of Quantum AI.

The Second Session will also feature a timely and insightful update on the economic landscape from UT Dean Marianne Wanamaker. This session will explore current trends and forecasts at the state, national, and global levels, helping local leaders better understand the factors shaping their revenue outlooks and economic planning.



Evann Freeman



Marianne Wanamaker

Dr. Wanamaker is the dean of the University of Tennessee Howard H. Baker Jr. School of Public Policy and Public Affairs and a professor of economics and public policy. Her expertise is in labor economics, education, and workforce development and previously served as the former chief domestic economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisors, where she also served as the senior labor economist.

Don't miss your opportunity to be part of the premier event designed exclusively for Tennessee's municipal leaders. For more information about the conference and how to register, go to www.tml1. org/85th-annual-conference-expo

By KATE COIL

Leadership with the National League of Cities (NLC) are working with the White House and other officials in Washington on proposed reforms to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), especially as municipalities across Tennessee are still working to recover from events like Hurricane Helene and the April tornadoes and flooding.

Yucel Ors, NLC Legislative Director for Public Safety, detailed in a quarterly memo both administration goals and currently proposed legislation aimed at the federal government's role in disaster recovery and mitigation.

NLC is actively engaging with Congress to ensure these reforms reflect local government needs," Ors said. "We are advocating for flexibility, funding support, and required local input in disaster classification, housing programs, and infrastructure recovery. While some proposals offer welcome efficiency and modernization, others risk increasing burdens on municipalities without the tools to meet new responsibilities. We will continue to monitor developments and provide updates as the legislative process moves forward."

While only Congress can fully eliminate FEMA, the executive branch can restructure and reduce the agency in size. Both the White House and Congress have suggested different methods for accomplishing this.

ADMINISTRATION GOALS

According to Ors, the FEMA Review Council held its first May

meeting in the White House to assess the agency's effectiveness as well as proposed reforms under Executive Order 14180. He said Discussions were led by DHS Secretary Kristi Noem and included federal officials, governors, and one local representative—Mayor Jane Castor of Tampa.

The group is expected to make recommendations to the president by mid-November with the goal of either eliminating or restructuring the agency between the 2025 and 2026 hurricane seasons.

The May meeting emphasized decentralizing FEMA by:

- transitioning disaster responsibilities to states and localities,
 - replacing long-term federal recovery efforts with a block grant model,

See FEMA on Page 3

Goodlettsville launches Project '072 to improve city operations, services

By KATE COIL

Utilizing community feedback and participation to improve city services and programs is the goal of a new initiative by the city of Goodlettsville.

Dubbed Project '072 after the city's zip code, the new initiative is "designed to elevate our community from good to truly exceptional" and was unanimously supported by the city's Board of Commissioners. Goodlettsville City Manager Tim Ellis said the initiative is motivated by the desire to enhance what the city offers based on community

"By evaluating and enhancing services, programs, and community engagement, this project will make a lasting impact on the Goodlettsville community," Ellis said. "Project '072 has or will engage elected officials, staff, residents and busi-

nesses in achieving each goal. The project includes 12 specific groups of improvements, as well as 50 sub-groups. Each subgroup has an assigned intradepartmental working teams to lead and achieve the specific subgroup is achieved."

Ellis said city staff and members of the Goodlettsville Board of Commission worked together to identify the 12 key areas of community improvement the project will address, which include:

- Education
- Communications
- Parks, Recreation, and Public **Facilities**
- Arts and Culture **Public Safety**
- Customer Service
- Public Engagement Economic Development and
- Tourism

See PROJECT on Page 8

GOODLETTSVILLE CITY HALL The yearlong Project '072 initiative is aimed at improving efficiency and city services in Goodlettsville.

Several new programs are being launched and others being revived as a result.

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



CHATTANOOGA

The Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport (CHA) now has nonstop flights available to Newark, N.J.; Orlando, Fla.; and Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; via Spirit Airlines. Flights to Newark and Orlando will take place four times weekly while flights to Ft. Lauderdale will take place three times weekly. This is the third airport in the state where Spirit Airlines has expanded its presence and marks the first new air carrier to enter the Chattanooga market since 2016.

CHATTANOOGA

The city of Chattanooga has received a donation of 13 acres of land on Missionary Ridge, including the historic Billy Goat Hill. The land includes former Civil War battlefield terrain, mature hardwood forests, and numerous wild, native plants. The plot was transferred to the city by the Trust for Public Land to be used for passive recreation use and park management. The site of the Battle of Missionary Ridge, the transfer of the property to part of Chattanooga's Urban Ecology Preserve System will help preserve the area's history and natural character. The donation also helps further the city's goals as the newest National Park City.

DYERSBURG

Newly Weds Foods, LLC, officials announced the company's plans to expand statewide by locating in and investing in an existing facility in Dyersburg. Newly Weds Foods will create 50 new jobs and invest \$30 million following its recent acquisition of the manufacturing facility of Develey Mustard and Condiments Corp. The former Develey operations will be the company's second Tennessee manufacturing facility, joining its Cleveland operations, and will produce under the affiliate, Newly Weds Condiments & Sauces, LLC. Newly Weds Foods started in 1932 in Chicago, where the company produced America's first specialty ice cream dessert the Newly Weds Ice Cream Cake Roll. Since then, the company has seen significant growth, and today, operates 31 manufacturing facilities across Asia, Australia, Europe and North America.

KINGSPORT

Officials cut the ribbon on the Kingsport Public Library's new, temporary location in the Fort Henry Mall on June 6, officially opening the space to the public. The library is utilizing 15,500 square feet of space in the mall for the next 18 months while a contractor works to renovate the entirety of its main branch in downtown Kingsport. Items available at the mall location will include books, computers, copier/ printer, program space, teen area, kids play area, reference services, seed library, things library and the inter-library loan and courier service. A book return drop-off box will also be located beside the mall entrance near the former Piccadilly restaurant. The City of Kingsport earmarked \$7 million last year towards the project while also securing a \$2 million state grant to help make the project a reality.

MANCHESTER

Little Leaf Farms announced the company is establishing its first Tennessee greenhouse in Manchester. Little Leaf Farms will create 318 new jobs over five years and invest nearly \$75 million at the Manchester Industrial Park, a Select Tennessee Certified Site. The company's operations will be state-of-the art with new growing and manufacturing facilities that have the capacity to produce and distribute packaged leafy greens throughout the Midwest and Southeast U.S. Additionally, the project benefits from Tennessee's AgTrack Cost Share Fund, an incentive program to promote and encourage agricultural development in Tennessee. Little Leaf Farms is recognized as the country's No. 1 brand of packaged lettuce sustainably grown through controlled environment agriculture. The company developed its first greenhouse in Massachusetts in 2015 and has since grown to include facilities in Pennsylvania, which is the largest indoor leafy greens campus in North America.

MORRISTOWN

Howmet Aerospace Inc. officials announced the company's plans to expand in Morristown. The announcement marks the company's second expansion in less than a year, which will create an additional 217 new jobs on top of the 50 positions announced in Morristown last July 2024. Howmet Aerospace Inc. is a leading global provider of advanced engineered solutions for the aerospace and transportation industries, creating jet engine and turbine components, fastening systems, aerospace structures, forged aluminum wheels and more. The company employs more than 1,000 people in Morristown and is one of the largest employers in the region.

MORRISTOWN

Officials with the city of Morristown have broken ground on the city's New Fire Station No. 3 and a training facility on Thompson Creek Road. The 9,755-squarefoot facility includes full living quarters, three engine bays, and study areas. The new station replaces an older station that no longer had the capacity the department required. The original 1893 fire bell originally housed as the previous Fire Station No. 3 has been moved to the new location and is being housed in the station tower, fully operable and ringing on the hour. A comprehensive fire training center that includes a large training classroom and a fire training tower were also constructed on the site. The tower contains a burn room, a reconfigurable maze, and a repelling wall, all of which allow firefighters across the region to get hands-on training, learning valuable life-saving skills. The training center has been named in memory of long-time Morristown Fire Fighter Timothy J. Greene who served as a training officer and deputy fire chief.

WHITE HOUSE

Advanex Americas, Inc. officials announced the company is expanding, investing \$11.4 million in the company's U.S. headquarters in White House and creating 56 new jobs. The project comprises the addition of 60,000 square feet of space dedicated to manufacturing and warehouse as well as additional square footage to support the company's business operations. Advanex Americas originally relocated its U.S. headquarters to Tennessee from California in 2021. Its parent company, Advanex, was founded in Tokyo in 1930 and is still headquartered there today. The company manufactures precision springs, wire form, pins, stampings, plastics and assemblies for companies across the automotive, aerospace, medical and agriculture industries.

WHITE HOUSE

Tate Ornamental, Inc. officials announced the company is expanding manufacturing operations in White House, creating 50 new jobs and investing a total of \$12 million through the project. The additional staff and investment will increase the company's millwork production capacity by allowing for the construction of a state-of-the-art facility in close proximity to its existing metal and stone plants. Construction is anticipated to start this month with operations targeted to begin in January of 2027. Tate Ornamental was founded in White House, Tennessee in 1988. The family-owned and operated company offers a one-stop shop for design, fabrication, installation and freight. Upon completion of the expansion, Tate Ornamental will employ approximately 250 Tennesseans in White House.

Harriman cuts ribbon on inclusive playground



The city of Harriman has opened its new inclusive and digitally connected playground and learning center at the Michael Dunn Center. The space offers both inclusive, outdoor play and space for digital learning opportunities through the use of fiber internet, accessible desktops, and iPad tablets for guest use. The project was funded through a Connected Community Facilities Grant in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, FunMakers Outdoor Play Systems, and the city of Harriman. The new playground is located adjacent to the city's splash pad.

Franklin cuts ribbon on Bicentennial Park



Leaders in Franklin celebrated the opening of a 14-acre park on the former site of the Georgia Boot Factory, providing residents with recreation opportunities along the Harpeth River. The new park features an open-air pavilion, a public plaza detailing the city's history as a railroad hub, shaded picnic areas, a stage for performances, and space for as many as 5,000 individuals to attend community events. The park is located on Franklin's greenway and provides access to fishing on the Harpeth.

Columbia purchases new recycling truck with TDEC grant



The city of Columbia has been awarded a Waste Reduction Grant from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) for the purchase of a new recycling truck, enhancing the city's waste management and sustainability initiatives. The \$425,200 purchase of the truck includes the grant funds and a 30% match from the city. The acquisition of this new recycling truck is a pivotal step in increasing the city's capacity to handle larger recycling volumes and directly supports Columbia's broader vision for a more sustainable community.

Hohenwald Elephant Sanctuary celebrates 30 years



The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee, located in Hohenwald, has celebrated 30 years of ongoing impact in animal welfare, conservation, and education. The anniversary was marked by House Joint Resolution 508, introduced by State Rep. Jody Barrett, R-Dickson, and cosponsored by State Sen. Joey Hensley, R-Hohenwald, was officially passed by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Lee. State Rep. Barrett and Sen. Joey presented the resolution at The Elephant Discovery Center along with Dr. Steven Scott (Director of Veterinary Care), Steve Shurter (COO) and Janice Zeitlin (CEO).

/AUJEOR

J. R. Wauford & Company, Consulting Engineers, Inc.

NLC highlights efforts to determine future of FEMA, disaster mitigation and recovery

FEMA. from Page 1

- adopting private sector tools and AI systems.
- shifting the agency to a support
- reducing bureaucracy, and
- streamlining funding

President Donald Trump in June stated he would like to eliminate FEMA by December during an Oval Office briefing.

"We want to wean off of FEMA, and we want to bring it down to the state level," President Trump said. "A governor should be able to handle it, and frankly, if they can't handle it, the aftermath, then maybe they shouldn't be governor."

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem also stated she intends to review all FEMA grants above \$100,000.

"The president and I have had many, many discussions about this agency," Noem said in May. "I want to be very clear. The President wants it eliminated as it currently exists. He wants a new agency."

Disaster declarations have taken longer to arrive since the new administration took office. For example, major disaster declarations for areas of Tennessee impacted by tornadoes from April 2-7, 2025 were forwarded to the White House by Gov. Bill Lee on April 22, 2025, but not approved by President Donald Trump until June 20. The first FEMA recovery centers were not opened in the state for these areas until June 30. The administration also denied disaster requests in Washington, Arkansas, and West Virginia earlier this year as well as did not extend coverage for areas of North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helene.

According to Pro Publica, May is the month FEMA typically opens applications for a variety of grants – including numerous programs many states rely on to both fund their own emergency management agencies as well as pass on funds to their most rural and low-income communities. However, these grants were not opened by the agency in May as typically scheduled.

In April, the agency also abruptly rescinded the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, drawing back hundreds of millions already pledged to local governments for disaster mitigation as well as withdrew a notice for states to apply for \$600 million in flood mitigation grants. Additionally, the agency has lost some 2,000 permanent national and regional employees—about a third of its workforce—since the beginning of the year.

CONGRESSIONAL BILL

Also in May, the bipartisan staff from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee discussed with NLC membership draft of the FEMA Act of 2025.



Emergency officials brave floodwaters to rescue patients and employees of the Unicoi County Hospital in Erwin, trapped on the roof due to rising waters caused by Hurricane Helene. In May, an extension of disaster relief for areas of North Carolina impacted by the Hurricane was denied.

Ors said the bill would restructure FEMA and many of its core programs, re-establishing it as a cabinet-level agency under the Department of Homeland Security, and replacing the present reimbursement model with project-based, fixed-cost grants for disaster recovery. States would be incentivized to invest more in disaster preparedness with how prepared an area was for a disaster tied into federal aid.

Under the new framework, FEMA would be required to disburse funds within 120 days of a disaster declaration. The bill also introduces a sliding federal cost-share ranging from 65 to 85%, tied to the implementation of local mitigation measures.

"While this could accelerate recovery and offer flexibility, provisions like raising the threshold for 'small disasters' would shift more responsibility—and risk—to local governments," Ors said. "Localities would be expected to manage recovery under simplified federal procedures, often without adequate resources or oversight. Other provisions streamline permitting and environmental reviews, expand eligibility for hazard mitigation funding, and create a universal individual assistance application, among other changes. However, many reforms could strain local capacity, especially in housing, data sharing, crisis response, and program implementation."

Proposed improvements to individual assistance in the bill including implement a single, universal application for disaster assistance, mandate plain-language notices for survivors, allow greater flexibility for states to provide emergency housing, and remove restrictions discouraging private, charitable contributions.

Mitigation efforts proposed by



Downtown Newport underwater following Hurricane Helene. As part of new administration objectives for FEMA, states and local governments may have to prove they took steps to anticipate and mitigate natural disasters before receiving funding for recovery. Other goals include shifting responsibility for disaster recovery away from the federal government and to states and localities as well other modernization and efficiency measures.

the bill include allowing the preapproval of state mitigation projects through a peer-review process, clarifying building code flexibility, and supporting homeowner investment and resilience.

Other goals toward oversight and transparency including prohibiting political bias in disaster assistance, creating a public dashboard to track disaster funding, reviewing outdated rules and redundancies, and mandating federal reviews of disaster fraud risk, insurance coverage, public alert systems, and cost savings from the Act's provisions. The bill would also create a Recovery Task Force to close out unresolved disaster declarations, including those dating back to Hurricane Katrina.

OTHER ADVISORIES

In the meantime, FEMA has

announced updates to several tools state and local emergency management agencies can use for disaster planning.

The Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT), a free, webbased GIS resource designed to help emergency managers and community stakeholders assess local resilience to threats and hazards, was updated to include recent U.S. Census data and enhanced features including more than 100 pre-loaded data layers and a new County Overview dashboard for at-a-glance local insights.

The State Mitigation Planning Policy Guide was also updated to align with recent executive orders, notably removing requirements related to climate change and equity, reflecting the current Administration's policy direction under Secretary Noem. These changes take

effect immediately. The advisory also provides contact information for FEMA's external affairs offices and links to mitigation planning resources.

There have also been updates to three National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) guidance documents: the Flood Insurance Manual, the NFIP Claims Manual, and the Standard Flood Insurance Policy (SFIP) Commentary.

The revised manuals are designed to be clearer and easier to understand, enhancing customer service and support for insurance professionals. Importantly, the updates do not alter flood insurance coverage or the legal terms of the SFIP. The updated guidance applies to policies and claims starting with the 2025 hurricane season and will take effect Oct. 1, 2025.

No loan is too large or too small



The Town has used TMBF programs 7 times, the most recent loan was a \$2,200,000 public building authority draw loan to finance water and sewer system improvements. Pictured are: Chuck Vest, Mayor; Janet Jennings, Finance Director/Town Recorder; and TMBF Marketing Representative Steve Queener.



The City of Trenton has used Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund programs 13 times beginning in 1997. The latest loan is a public building authority loan in the amount of \$2,200,000 to finance electric system improvements for Trenton Light & Water Department. Pictured are: Joe Wamble, Utilities Manager; Bridgette Hill, Office Manager/Accountant; Ricky Graves, Alderman; Leigh Ann Reynolds, City Recorder; Tony Burris, Mayor; and TMBF Marketing Representative Justin Hanson.





PEOPLE

Jennifer Johnson Allen has been selected as the new director of the Germantown Engineering Department, having served



Jennifer Allen

as assistant director of the department for the past two years. Prior to coming to the city of Germantown, Allen spent more than a dozen years as a project engineer in the private sector. She holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University.

Jason Bellamy has been selected as the new chief of the Kingsport Police Department, succeeding Dale Phipps who retired at the



Jason Bellamy

end of June after nearly 37 years of service. Bellamy most recently served the department as deputy chief, a role he took in April 2021. He joined the department in 1998, working his way up from patrol officer to detective, corporal, training sergeant, watch commander, captain of operations, and commander. He has also served in several specialized assignments including Honor Guard, Hostage Negotiator, and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force Officer. Bellamy holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in education from ETSU and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy in Quantico and the National Forensic Academy in Knoxville.

Anji Deaton has been selected as a finance and accounting consultant for UT-MTAS and will be based in the Jackson office.



Anji Deaton

Prior to coming to MTAS, Deaton served as the accounting manager for both the city of Adamsville and the Selmer Utility District. She holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from UT Martin, a master's in business administration from Tennessee Tech University, and is a certified municipal finance officer.

Kevin Hackler has been promoted to public works director for the town of Spring City. Hackler has been with the department since



2017, starting as a laborer and quickly demonstrating exceptional skills and leadership. In 2022, he was promoted to public works supervisor where he managed many day-to-day operations of the department. He also serves as the fire chief of the Spring City Volunteer Fire Department.

Phil Hyman, chief of the Chattanooga Fire Department, has announced his retirement after nearly 30 years with the department



Phil Hyman

and more than seven as chief. Hyman worked his way up through the ranks, serving as a lieutenant, captain and battalion chief before serving as training chief and ultimately chief. During his tenure as chief, Hyman has made improvements and advancements on every level of the department, including facilities, equipment, technology and the health & safety of firefighters. He also helped the department retain its ISO Class 1 rating.

Brenda Imel has retired as finance director for the city of Cookeville after nearly two decades in public service. Imel began working



with the city in 2003 as assistant

finance director and was promoted to finance director in 2015. She has more than 25 years of experience in public accounting, including work in audit and financial reporting. In her time with the city, she played a key role in numerous financial milestones and guided the city through budget development, longterm planning, and financial analysis. A C.P.A., Imel holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and is an active member of the Tennessee Society of Certified Public Accountants, the Tennessee Government Finance Officers Association, and the Government Finance Officers Association.

Patrick Jaynes has been appointed the new state director of Tennessee Rural Development by the USDA. As senior consultant



Patrick Jaynes

for Nashville-based Jigsaw Consulting, Jaynes engaged in local, state, and federal government relations. Prior to his work with Jigsaw, he served for 18 years as deputy chief of staff and state director with U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander.

Matthew Lupo has been selected as the new chief of Nolensville Fire and Rescue, bringing more than 26 years of fire service experience to the position. Lupo most



Matthew Lupo

recently served as assistant fire chief of the department and joined Nolensville in March 2021 as a captain on the C Shift. He was the second full-time hire following the transition of the department from volunteer to paid and was promoted to fire marshal and assistant chief in 2022. Lupo was instrumental in shaping the operational direction and administrative initiatives as the department made the transition. He remains actively involved in emergency management statewide as a member of the Tennessee All Hazards Incident Management Team and Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association. He holds a master's in public administration with a concentration in fire administration from Liberty University, is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program and was recently designated as a chief fire officer by the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Kellye Murphy, director of tourism and marketing for the city of Columbia, has been named one of the Top 50 Women Leaders in the



Greater Nashville Area for 2025 by The Women We Admire. This prestigious honor highlights Murphy's impactful leadership, longstanding commitment to the tourism industry, and her passion for mentoring others in her field and community. Murphy has more than two decades of experience in marketing and the hospitality industry, including building the city of Columbia's marketing and tourism department from the ground up. She is a graduate of Leadership Maury, currently serves on its board, and holds a Professional in Destination Management (PDM) certification.

David Wear has been selected as the first new city manager for Pigeon Forge in 45 years. Wear has been appointed to take over the



David Wear

role from longtime City Manager Earlene Teaster, who has retired after serving in the role since 1980. Wear presently served both as the city's mayor and as the vice president of operations at The Island. He also previously served as assistant director of the Sevier County Economic Development Council. Wear holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and law enforcement administration from Middle Tennessee State University.

TMBF selects new chair, member

Portland Mayor Mike Callis has been selected as the new chairman of the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund after Morristown Councilwoman Kay Senter's term as chairman ended June 30.

Callis was first elected to the Portland Board of Mayor and Aldermen in 2016, serving as vice mayor. He was then elected mayor of the city in 2018.

The Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund also recognized Kay Senter as she chaired her final board meeting. Kay has served on the TMBF Board since 2011.

"We are deeply thankful for her steady leadership, thoughtful guidance, and many years of dedicated service," said TMBF President and CEO Wade Morrell

Whiteville Mayor Gene Bowden was selected as vice chairman of the TMBF board. Bowden has served as mayor of Whiteville since 2020.

Athens Vice Mayor Jordan Curtis was selected to fill the East Tennessee board seat previously held by Kay Senter. Curtis was first elected to the Athens City Council in 2020.

Created in 1985, TMBF, began making loans in 1986. Since its inception, programs administered by TMBF have resulted in total borrowings by local governments in Tennessee of nearly \$5 billion. Many borrowers have multiple loans through one or more programs. Loan sizes range from \$4,500 to \$68 million. More than 280 local governments have utilized the services of TMBF resulting in tremendous cost savings for these borrowers.



TMBF President and CEO Wade Morrell, left, presents a plaque honoring her service to outgoing TMBF Chair and Morristown Councilwoman Kay Senter, right, at the board's recent meeting in Nashville.



Mike Callis, TMBF Chair and Portland Mayor



Gene Bowden, TMBF Vice Chair and Whiteville Mayor



Jordan Curtis, TMBF Member and Athens Vice Mayor

Yager, Brooks re-elected to TACIR roles

The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) has re-elected State Sen. Ken Yager, R-Kingston, as its chairman, and Cleveland City Mayor Kevin Brooks as its vice-chair.

The 25-member group is made up of public officials from state, county and municipal governments as well as two private citizens and two members of the executive

"I appreciate the confidence that the members have placed in me to serve in this leadership role," said Sen. Yager. "I look forward to continuing to build strong relationships between state, municipal and county governments to work on solutions to substantive issues that we face together as Tennesseans. Our work will continue to improve the effectiveness and the intergovernmental system to better serve our citizens."

Since 1978, TACIR has served as a forum for the discussion and resolution of intergovernmental problems. The organization provides high quality research support to state and local government officials in order to improve government effectiveness in Tennessee.



Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks, left, and State Sen. Ken Yager, R-Kingston, right.

"Thanks to my colleagues at TACIR for their confidence in allowing me to continue serving as Vice Chairman and to continue to represent the city of Cleveland on Capitol Hill in Nashville," said Mayor Kevin Brooks "It's an honor to serve under the Chairmanship of Senator Ken Yager, and an honor to serve with

such distinguished leaders from the General Assembly, the Cabinet, and fellow Mayors and Appointees. It is no secret that TACIR employs the greatest team of researchers and analysts in Nashville. Their research and work help shape public policy all across our great state. It is a privilege to be a part of the TACIR team."

Eley to step down from Lee Administration

Deputy Governor and Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) Butch Eley will leave his role in the third quarter of 2025 after seven years in Governor Bill Lee's cabinet.

Eley has been a key figure in advancing statewide infrastructure, financial stewardship, and

government modernization. The announcement of a successor will be made at a later date. Eley will remain fully engaged during the transition to ensure continuity and maintain momentum across key initiatives.

Eley described the decision not as a retirement, but as a deliberate and thoughtful transition at the right time to step away from gov-



Deputy Governor and TDOT Commissioner Butch Eley

ernment service and spend more

time with family.

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve Governor Lee and the people of Tennessee," said Eley. "From building long-term systems that better serve Tennesseans, to navigating some of our state's toughest challenges, I'm deeply proud of what we've accomplished. This moment marks not an end, but a pause—a chance to ensure a smooth transition and reflect on how I can continue to make an impact in new ways."

Eley began his service in the Lee administration as Chief Operating Officer, overseeing 23 state departments and 35,000 employees, where he led the implementation of Tennessee's first four-year strategic planning process.

Former longtime lawmaker Niceley dies

Former longtime lawmaker Frank Niceley died at the age of 78 in Knoxville on June 19, 2025, following a heart attack while working on his farm in the Strawberry Plains area.

Niceley served in the Tennessee State Senate from 2013 until 2025 and as a member of the Tennessee House of Representatives, first representing the 35th District from 1988 to 1992 and then representing the 17th District from 2005 to 2012. In total, Niceley spent 24 years in the Tennessee General Assembly.

A native of the Strawberry Plains community, Niceley earned a bachelor's degree in soil



Frank Nicelev

science from the University of Tennessee and worked as a dairy farmer and businessman.

"The unofficial historian of the Senate, Frank Niceley was

a Tennessee original in every possible sense," said Lt. Gov. Randy McNally in a statement. "Fiercely independent, deeply rooted in his community and unwavering in his convictions, he brought a farmer's wisdom and a statesman's heart to public service. "A passionate fighter for rural Tennessee and the values he held dear, his passing is a loss to our state and to all who knew and served with him. My prayers are with his family during this difficult time."

He is survived by Cyndie, his wife of 53 years, his daughters Jennifer and Anna, son Will, and five grandchildren.

www.TML1.org 5-TENNESSEE TOWN & CITY / JULY 2025

TML congratulates 2025 Achievement Award winners

Excellence in Economic and Community Development - Cleveland



As part of the Inman Street Corridor project, the city of Cleveland restored Johnston Memorial Park, the oldest park in the city, to its original glory. More than 1,000 new plants were planted in the park.

Part of an overarching downtown redevelopment project, the city of Cleveland set to work renovating one of its most historic and well-traveled downtown roadways into a refreshed streetscape that better connected residents and visitors to a revamped local park.

Discussions on the best way to improve downtown Cleveland have been ongoing in the past 20 years with renovations to the Inman Street Corridor proposed as part of the city's 2004 MainStreet Cleveland Masterplan, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, and the 2019 Downtown Revitalization Plan. To accomplish this, work needed to be done for buy-in among local residents and downtown businessowners.

From the beginning of the project, regular communications with stakeholders, city departments, and property owners was maintained to both educate about the project and ensure smooth coordination during the construction process – which required portions of the street to be closed at various times. The city received positive feedback from how effective this communication was in keeping residents and property owners proactively aware of the project's phases.

The project reduced the four-lane road to a two-lane road with a turn queue. Sidewalks were increased from four feet to 10 feet wide, creating a new model plan for streetscaping in downtown. The greenery and sidewalk improvements made the streetscape more pedestrian-friendly, encouraging more foot traffic downtown. The sidewalks are now safer with enhanced accessibility and mobility for residents and visitors, safer traffic patterns, and multi-modal transportation

options.

Likewise, the city worked to refresh the downtown Johnston Park connected to the corridor with restored gardens, pathways, and a gazebo to serve as a gathering spot and showcase for downtown. The oldest park in the city, Johnston Memorial Park was built on land donated to the city in 1933. More than 1,100 new plants were put into the park as part of its refresh, bringing a leisurely greenspace to the commercial core of the city.

Outside of the visible makeover, the project has had numerous other benefits for the city and residents. The project has increased efficiency in local government administration, improved service delivery to citizens, and cost savings for the community through innovative design and strategic implementation.

By using its own staff and funding to design and develop the new infrastructure, the city was able to save both time and money. Existing infrastructure was repurposed and modern streetscaping techniques were used to capture downtown's historic feel.

The revitalized corridor is also driving economic development and the opening of new businesses in underutilized buildings. Many property owners took the phased closures of the street as a time to schedule their own building renovations, increasing their consumer appeal. This resulted in increased tax revenue without imposing additional financial burdens on current residents. Through effective planning, community collaboration, and optimizing resources, the city was able to work with local stakeholders to realize a long-awaited project.

Excellence in Economic and Community Development - Kingsport



Kingsport's \$20 million Main Street Rebuild Project is replacing aging utilities lines with underground lines to make the local downtown area more inviting and accessible. New streetscaping is also being put in place.

A dramatic overhaul of Kingsport's Main Street has seen the improvement of critical utilities and roadways, revitalized downtown business and economic development, and has drawn new pedestrian traffic through increased safety and accessibility.

The city of Kingsport's \$20 million Main Street Rebuild project began in November 2022 with a comprehensive plan to replace aging water, sewer, and stormwater systems; place overhead utilities underground; and stabilize the roadway foundation.

In addition to these critical infrastructure upgrades, city officials felt this would be an ideal time to incorporate streetscape enhancements to make downtown more inviting and accessible. The project began with local business owners, property owners, and residents to solicit feedback about what they would like to see in the corridor as well as how to minimize disruption during construction

Supported by 80% funding from state and federal sources, the project has improved utility services as well as aesthetics in the form of new landscaping, decorative brick crosswalks, and pedestrian-friendly features to make the environment more inviting and accessible.

By updating the roadway, utilities, and streetscaping in one, comprehensive project, the city improved efficiency of the project, saved taxpayer funds, and enhanced the delivery and reliability of vital utility services to the Main Street community. The utility modernization also prevents expensive emergency repairs and minimizes the need for future maintenance.

The city ensured sustainable practices were integrated into the project, focusing on environmental responsibility and cost-effective upgrades. This efficient use of resources also saves costs to the city and property owners in the long run. Streamlined construction minimized negative impacts to businesses, with city officials keeping open communication between downtown stakeholders as the project advanced.

Public safety has been improved through new ADA-compliant sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, traffic-calming design features, and upgraded lighting, which contribute to a safer and more enjoyable pedestrian experience. These enhancements also raise property values and have made the area more appealing to investors, increasing foot traffic to businesses and economic development in the community overall.

Excellence in Energy Efficiency and Conservation - Chattanooga

Several departments within the city of Chattanooga have worked together to improve the city's storm water system, resulting in decreased flooding risks, improving water quality, and becoming a national model for tackling stormwater issues.

As trees and native plants are important to stormwater management, the Chattanooga Public Works Department has partnered with the city's Forestry Department and the Natural Resources Division of the Parks and Outdoors Department to pass a new

tree ordinance.

The city, public works department, Chattanooga EPB, and Reflection Riding also worked together to receive a \$6 million grant to increase tree canopy in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This will also bring down core neighborhood temperatures and improve health care outcomes as well as decrease energy usage in the community.

The public works department also started an anti-litter campaign to remove trash and debris from local waterways. The floating litter booms on Chattanooga Creek have kept more than 2.6 tons of trash out of the Tennessee River since May 2023.

To get citizens involved, the city of Chattanooga has created two programs that provide both residents and businesses owners with the opportunity to aid in stormwater mitigation. Educational resources and financial incentives for the use of native plants, rain gardens, rain barrels, and other eco-friendly practices are available to homeowners through the RainSmart Yards and Rewards program and non-residential landowners through the Green Grants program.

Technology has also been employed to allow both public works and emergency responders to arrive on scenes more quickly and protect cit-



Chattanooga Public Works employees work to remove debris after recent flooding. The Public Works Department has been instrumental in projects that ensure the city is both flood aware and that protect residents from flooding dangers. Citizens have also been involved in these projects to reduce flooding risk and beautify their community.

izens. With flash flooding being the deadliest type of flooding, the city's new Automated Flood Warning System instantly closes flood-prone streets to traffic, preventing people from crossing dangerous roadways.

The automated gate system includes flashing lights on either

side of the high-water area and allows real-time data collection, analysis and management as well as alarm and notification that gates have been closed. Prior to this system, public works employees were often put at risk having to manually put in barriers, often in the dark or

after hours.

Data gathered at the site is also helping the city better understand issues related to flooding as well as forecasting where responses may need to be concentrated during flood events.

d events.

Beyond amazing work on

stormwater and water quality, the Chattanooga Public Works Department has renewed its American Public Works Association (APWA) accreditation, one of only two in the state and 147 in the country to receive this national designation.

TML congratulates 2025 Achievement Award winners

Excellence in Municipal Governance - Gatlinburg

With a permanent population of around 4,000 but an average of 13 million yearly visitors, Gatlinburg's municipal government must always strike a delicate balance between entertaining the masses, coming to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and providing essential services to year-round residents.

Like many municipalities who border national parks, Gatlinburg is often faced with unique challenges – particularly in the form of the 1,500 black bears who also call the area home. Both a symbol of the region and a safety and environmental concern, Gatlinburg officials have undertaken several unique programs to minimize human-wildlife interactions and ensure that residents, visitors, and wild animals are protected.

While often the source of viral moments, Gatlinburg officials knew bear encounters were often the result of unsecured waste, posed significant public safety concerns and can negatively impact visitor experience. In 2024, the city recognized that removing trash as a food source for bears would reduce human-bear conflict and aligned policy, infrastructure, and public education to achieve this goal. A \$3 million investment to replace all previously private dumpsters with approximately 460 bear-resistant containers allowed for centralized control and maintenance.

A new maintenance position was created within the Sanitation Department with plans underway for a dedicated maintenance garage to support the sustainability of the program. The city also coordinated a phased rollout of the dumpster program with local businesses to help transition, offering to dispose of old dumpsters in the process. Afterwards, only city-owned animal resistant dumpsters received service, ensuring city-wide compliance and long-term effectiveness through both policy and practice.



Gatlinburg employees erect new signage reminding visitors and residents to keep wildlife safe by keeping their garbage secure. The messages and new dumpsters provided to businesses throughout the community are helping protect people and animals.

Beyond infrastructure, the program also built on existing partnerships designed to aid in coexistence between humans and wildlife. Gatlinburg is an active member of the Smokies BearWise Task Force and has maintained a 25-year partnership with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA). This partnership includes the co-funding of a dedicated TWRA Bear Officer who serves Gatlinburg and has led specialized bear-response training for the Gatlinburg Police Department. Ordinances supporting the dumpster program were enacted alongside public education efforts, ensuring community

awareness and engagement.

Additionally, the city expanded its educational outreach to engage the community in being part of the solution and deployed members of the Gatlinburg Police and Fire Departments for door-to-door visits to inform residents and business owners about the importance of compliance. Local businesses were also encouraged to use artificial produce in their fall displays to prevent attracting wildlife into public areas. Educating the public and businessowners has empowered the community to play an active role in minimizing wildlife conflicts.

The new dumpsters have also contributed to the overall cleanliness of the city. Prior to the program's implementation, bears and other wildlife frequently accessed traditional dumpsters, leading to scattered trash, property damage, and increased staff hours devoted to cleanup and response. With the new dumpsters preventing this from happening, valuable staff time and resources have been freed up to focus on more proactive city services. The city has also seen long-term operational savings from minimizing property damage, reduced overtime costs, and extending the lifespan of

sanitation infrastructure.

Through strategic investment, collaboration with other agencies, regulation, and public education, Gatlinburg's program not only balanced public safety, environmental stewardship, and tourism sustainability but has also been recognized as a model program for other municipalities that deal with similar issues. TWRA and BearWise have both used Gatlinburg's strategy as a model of how communities can collaboratively, sustainably, and proactively protect both the public and wildlife.

Excellence in Police Services - Jackson



Officers with the Jackson Police Department work with local youth as part of community outreach programming

Through collaborative and constitutional community policing, the Jackson Police Department works to enhance public safety by fostering strong relationships with citizens.

Under the leadership of Chief Thom Corley, the Jackson Police Department has made what it calls the Three C's foundational to operations: community, collaboration, and constitutionality.

The community-approach to policing focuses on building relationships with both individuals and organizations, including non-profits, houses of worship, businesses, school officials, and others in the communities they serve. JPD also hosts an annual Youth Police Academy each summer to build positive experiences between police and youth.

The team-oriented approach to address crime allows for collaboration with local, state, and federal authorities to leverage all resources for effective community protection. Internal collaboration between various divisions and officers also helps solve crime and keeps the lines of communication open on community issues. One notable example is the Blue Impact initiative, which apprehended some of West Tennessee's most violent offenders through collaboration with multiple law enforcement

An emphasis on constitutional policing trains officers to be the first defenders of the Constitutional rights of those they interact with, whether they are a victim, witness, or

suspect. By focusing on these subjects, officers understand the principles and high expectations of them for community interactions and service delivery, putting the rights of individuals into the heart of each exchange.

Technology is also an important aspect of JPD's mission. The department harnesses Flock technology and ShotSpotter to respond to incidents more quickly and save lives in critical movements. The department also utilizes the ATC's National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to analyze data.

Accredited by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation Program, the department has partnered with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development to create the first police officer apprenticeship program in the state. Individuals aged 18 to 20 can participate in training and job shadowing to learn more about careers in law enforcement and streamline their process to become a sworn-in officer at age 21.

The department has also undertaken facility and comprehensive staffing studies to ensure employee needs are being met and officers have a focus on the public they serve. On the horizon, JPD is replacing its 50-yearold Public Safety Building with a new, state-ofthe-art facility that will consolidate operations from five buildings to a single campus with new training spaces to enhance the ability to serve and protect.

Excellence in Fire Services -Franklin



Members of the Franklin Fire Department's Peer Support team help their fellow firefighters as part of an overall behavioral health program started within the de-

Recognizing the dangerous and stressful nature of the job, the city of Franklin and the Franklin Fire Department have worked together to develop a comprehensive, department-lead initiative designed to address not just the physical but mental, emotional, spiritual, and financial toll the job can take on firefighters.

The daily job of a first responder often means encountering people on the worst day of their lives and at the scenes of unmitigated tragedy. While Franklin's firefighters work to keep their community safe, the city and department implemented the Behavioral Health Program to help address the needs of firefighters who often experience both physical and mental stress as a result of their efforts on behalf of others.

Recent studies have found that firefighters have an elevated rate of suicide risk and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with firefighters twice as likely to complete a suicide attempt as the general population and 57% of firefighters experiencing some kind of PTSD.

The program takes a holistic approach to wellness, recognizing how mental, spiritual, financial, and physical health are often intercommoned. It puts an emphasis on engaging the family of firefighters, who provide critical support networks, as well as the development of a robust peer support network, encouraging trust and open communication between firefighters.

Online resources and a comprehensive referral network have been developed to ensure firefighters have access to necessary support services while the program fosters interdepartmental collaboration with the Franklin Police Department and Mayor Ken Moore's city-wide mental health initiative. The program also works to help firefighters set goals in all aspects of their lives.

Addressing mental and financial concerns has both reduced stress and improved morale, helping firefighters be more focused and effective in their work. Addressing these issues ahead of time can also create cost-savings for long-term healthcare costs and has created a more positive work environment. Program offerings are also adjusted based on evolving needs with individual and small group assessments helping to determine where gaps in services are.

Just like with the companion program for the police department, the program is designed to meet the specific needs of firefighters but is based on a similar program that is applied to all city departments. By changing the way the department approaches mental health and wellness, firefighters are having more open conversations, utilizing the peer support team, and involving community resources to aid in both issues related to work and home.

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Innovation Award -**Farragut**



The intersection of Campbell Station Road and Kingston Pike is one of the busiest in Farragut. New traffic management has significantly

With a growing population and amenities that attract visitors from surrounding areas, the town of Farragut utilized technology to solve traffic congestion and related pollution issues.

Farragut's population has averaged an increase of around 20% each decade since the 1990s, with many commuters passing through the town on their way to and from Knoxville. This commuter traffic often coincides with drop-off times at the town's four public schools, all within 1.4 miles of the town

Additionally, the town's primary east-west artery, Kingston Pike - runs parallel to the most congested segment of interstate in Tennessee with many commuters using Kingston Pike as a detour to avoid the interstate. In a domino effect, the four traffic signals on Kingston Pike have become focal points for congestion in the com-

Town leaders knew by managing traffic signals they could better control congestion and the resulting air quality issues from idling vehicles. This process began in 2016 with Farragut's engineering department applied for and received a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant through the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT).

Funding from the grant program was used to install an Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) on all 26 traffic signals in the town. Town Engineer Darryl Smith had never used an ATMS

before, but he learned about the opportunity through consultants and thought such a system would serve Farragut well. TDOT approved the project, which covered 100% of installation cost, in April of 2017.

Extensive research into traffic patterns at each intersection and how they could be improved was turned into timing plans at each signal, allowing for the most efficient traffic flow during the day. Multiple timing plans also allow for situations such as interstate closures, traffic accidents, and other anomalies that may impact traffic.

The system also allows centralized control over each signal, meaning the town's engineering department can override a scheduled plan if needed. These overrides can be done from the comfort of Farragut Town Hall rather than having to visit signal boxes in person. Major intersections are also monitored from cameras at town hall, allowing problems to be quickly spotted and corrected.

"Our ability to be notified of issues with intersections happens much more quickly than before," Assistant Town Engineer Eric Schindler said. "The system increases the chance to catch issues early and fix them before motorists notice them."

The entire project was completed in 2025 with residents and commuters noticing a difference. Officials have received positive feedback from motorists and data proves that travel times have improved at peak hours in both east and westbound lanes.

Small City Progress - Pulaski



Working with partners like UT Southern and the Giles County Chamber of Commerce, the city of Pulaski is finding new and innovative ways to bring residents, students, and visitors downtown.

Through working with local educational institutions, civic groups, and private partners, the city of Pulaski has made significant improvements in areas of infrastructure, housing, community engagement, tourism, and economic development.

To help with ongoing revitalization of its downtown area, the city of Pulaski has upgraded water lines and enhanced streetscapes with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The city also introduced the seasonal "Skating on the Square" event in the winter that boosted local business activity, and fostered family-friendly community engagement downtown. Tourism and business downtown are further promoted through collaboration with the Visit Pulaski tourism initiative and Main Street Pulaski program.

The city has also made notable investments in parks and recreation, including new tennis and pickleball courts at Magazine Road Park in partnership with the University of Tennessee Southern. Following the decline of a decades-old swimming pool, the city decided to recreate the area's first splash park on the site.

To enhance local public safety, the city of Pulaski collaborated with the Giles County Sheriff's Department to install Flock Safety cameras at four key intersections in the city. License plate recognition technology helps identify stolen vehicles, track criminals, and deter criminal activity with real-time data. The city has also worked with Pulaski Electric and Sain Associates to implement new traffic signals with pedestrian prompts and equipment to improve pedestrian safety in key

The city has collaborated with the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) to break ground on the new TCAT Pulaski, which will bring expanded cultivate a dynamic entrepreneurial

programs in the transportation, cosmetology, health services, and technical fields to the area. This \$30 million project will bring more students to the area and enhance local workforce development. The University of Tennessee Southern is entering its fifth year of development in Pulaski and is also collaborating with the city to encourage growth of its student body through local amenities, businesses, and support.

In 2022, Pulaski secured a \$640,000 grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to construct a new water boosting station supporting the Dan Speer Industrial Park South. This project, matched with \$160,000 in local funds, is projected to create 81 jobs, retain 13, and attract \$8.5 million in private investment, enhancing the city's industrial growth potential.

The following year, Pulaski secured \$1,751,841in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds through the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation for water infrastructure improvements. This vital investment will support much-needed upgrades to ensure safe, reliable water service.

Many of these projects are the result of the city's forward-thinking and comprehensive economic development strategy created in the city's annual review process. Designed to foster sustainable growth and enhance community vitality, city leaders systematically analyze and assess goals, objectives, and budgetary requirements to ensure alignment with long-term success metrics. Anticipating community growth, the city has also undertaken a detailed housing study to better understand where to invest and attract developers that will meet diverse housing needs.

The city is also working to

ecosystem, working with the local chamber of commerce to implement innovative strategies aimed at both attracting new businesses and strengthening existing enterprises. This includes the development of the MakeShift coworking and entrepreneur center, the launch of a local e-commerce marketplace, and the provision of professional business consulting services—all aimed at nurturing local talent and driving economic resilience.

Understanding that regional collaboration is key to modern economic development, the city has worked with the Giles County Economic Development Commission to develop industrial parks as well as with regional internet providers to enhance local broadband infrastructure and high-speed internet access in underserved areas.

Giles County Chamber of Commerce CEO Jessie Parker lauded Pulaski and its municipal officials for the work being done to not only uplift the city but the region

"Pulaski is redefining what small town progress looks like," Parker said. "Through strategic partnerships with education, industry, regional agencies, and civic groups, the city has cultivated a model of community-driven growth that balances economic development with quality of life. From forward-thinking infrastructure projects and public safety innovation to inclusive entrepreneurship and placemaking that attracts both visitors and residents alike, Pulaski demonstrates that with vision and unity, even the smallest communities can set bold examples. The city's leadership is committed, its people are engaged, and its results are undeniable. Pulaski isn't just growing-it's thriving with pur-

Excellence in Parks and Recreation - Greeneville

Leveraging growing local interest in a sport and the opportunity to redevelop an area of the town's largest park, officials with the town of Greeneville were able to develop a new volleyball complex that is both encouraging youth sports and attracting sports tourism revenue.

Greeneville's 55-acre Hardin Park is the largest of the town's parks, and already featured an Olympic-size outdoor swimming pool, picnic areas, six pavilions, a large fishing pond, five ball fields, a skatepark, basketball courts, tennis courts, and two playgrounds.

Volleyball has become one of the fastest growing sports in the country with Greeneville officials noticing more interest in the sport locally. The town saw a surge in participation in youth volleyball leagues in the past four years with more than 300 participants in fall leagues, 350 in spring leagues, and 250 in the summer beach league, the only such program in Northeast Tennessee. Participants come from five surrounding counties to participate in Greeneville's volleyball programs.

With a softball field at Hardin Park needing repurposing, Greeneville leaders opted to turn the field into six volleyball fields - four of which are NCCA regulation beach volleyball courts - with netting, fencing, windscreens, and drainage systems. The town secured a \$42,000 Tennessee Tourism Enhancement Grant (TEG) with a \$4,200 local match.

The town's parks and recre-



Participants at the NAIA Women's National Beach Volleyball Championship in Greeneville celebrate. The new sand volleyball courts the town built at its Hardin Park are attracting players both locally and from around the country for pick-up games and tournament play.

ation department worked hand-inhand with contractors to repurpose the field into the new courts. The resulting six-court facility includes LED lighting, an electric scoreboard, pavilions, restrooms, and concession stands. The new facility caters both to town-sponsored leagues as well as residents who want to try out a new sport or play a pick-up game.

The new volleyball complex has helped build on the strength of the town's recreational volleyball programs and brought in a new element of sports tourism to the region. The town recently hosted the NAIA Women's National Beach Volleyball Championship with teams from Oregon, California, Arizona, Alabama, Missouri and Florida coming to Greeneville to

compete. Family and supporters of tournament players also came to stay in the town for the tournament's duration. The event also gave local volleyball fans a chance to enjoy championship play, which included 20 matches on the first day of play.

Greeneville is also working with nearby Tusculum University to host their volleyball tournament

and other volleyball related events. Ongoing efforts between the town, Greeneville Sports Council, Greeneville Tourism Department, Greeneville Parks and Recreation Department, and the Greene County Partnership all work together to recruit, coordinate, and host loal, regional, state, and national tournaments at the site.

STATE BRIEFS

Tennessee's unemployment rate held steady in May at 3.5% and continues to track well below the national rate, according to the latest data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD). The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in May was unchanged from the previous month but down from 3.2% in May 2024. Tennessee's unemployment rate remains below the U.S. rate, which was 4.2% in May and 4% in May 2024. Over the past year, Tennessee employers added 16,900 nonfarm jobs. The biggest increases were in the Leisure and Hospitality, Government, and Education and Health Services sectors. Between April and May, total nonfarm employment decreased by 1,800 jobs, with the largest declines in the Professional and Business Services sector, followed by the Financial Activities sector and the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities sector.

Tennessee has signed on to a \$7.4 billion settlement with Purdue Pharma and its owners, the Sackler Family, which would resolve litigation between the company and the family for their roles in creating and worsening the opioid crisis nationwide. Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti is one of 55 attorneys general, representing all eligible states and U.S. territories, who agreed to sign on to the case. Now that the state sign-on period has concluded, local governments across the country will be asked to join the settlement contingent on

bankruptcy court proceedings. Most of the settlement funds will be distributed in the first three years. The Sacklers will pay \$1.5 billion, and Purdue will pay roughly \$900 million in the first payment, followed by \$500 million after one year, an additional \$500 million after two years, and \$400 million after three years. Like prior opioid settlements, the settlement with Purdue and the Sacklers will involve the resolution of legal claims by state and local governments. The local government sign-on and voting solicitation process for this settlement will be contingent on bankruptcy court approval. A hearing is scheduled on that matter in the coming days. Including this new settlement, Tennessee has obtained settlements committing nearly \$1.3 billion in funds from companies that helped fuel the opioid epidemic.

The iconic "See Rock City" barns are among 10 locations in municipalities across Tennessee added to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the "See Rock City" barns in Crossville and other locations, new additions to the register include: Alamo's Central High School, Chattanooga's Pleasant Garden Cemetery, Knoxville's Barber Cottage and Emory Place Historic District boundary, Lynchburg's Hurdlow School, Memphis' First National Bank Operations Center, Morristown's Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Building, and Sweetwater's James M. Pardue

Tenessee sets record \$31.7B in tourism spending for 2024

TENNESSEE CY 2024 Economic Impact

IN 2024

Tennessee's tourism industry set a new record in 2024, generating \$31.7 billion in direct visitor spending and welcoming 147 million visits, according to newly released data from Tourism Economics and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development.

Tourism is a powerful economic driver across all 95 counties, generating \$3.3 billion in state and local tax revenue — saving each Tennessee household \$1,170 annually on average.

By the Numbers: 2024 Economic Impact of Travel in Tennessee

- Record \$31.7 billion in direct visitor spending, a 3.3% year-over-year increase
- 35.5% growth since 2018, more than double the national average of 16.7%
- Visitors spent \$87 million per day in 2024
 \$3.3 billion in state and local
- \$3.3 billion in state and local tax revenue in 2024, saving residents \$1,170 in taxes each year
- International Travel Surged in 2024
- 12.0% year-over-year increase in international visitor spending
- Each international visitor spent \$1,278 on average nearly six times more than a domestic visitor

These figures do not reflect the 2025 launch of new direct flights from Iceland and Ireland, which

open new doors for European visitation

DIRECT SPEND

IN 2024

The data underscores the resilience of Tennessee's tourism industry, which sustained growth despite a challenging year with major weather events, including Hurricane Helene.

In 2024, Tennessee awarded more tourism funding than ever before - investing \$1.5 million in marketing grants, \$2 million in Tourism Enhancement Grants and \$13.75 million in ARPA funds. These investments support marketing and destination development at both the state and local level, help drive year-round visitation in all 95 counties and open new opportunities for rural communities to grow their tourism economies.

With new air service between Memphis and Knoxville; expanded routes into Nashville, Chattanooga and several regional airports; and luxury coach options like Vonlane and Gray Line, Tennessee is primed to attract even more visitors in 2025, with milestones like B.B. King's 100th birthday in Memphis, Grand Ole Opry's 100th anniversary in Nashville and Dollywood's 40th anniversary. Events like MLB Speedway Classic at Bristol and IBMA in Chattanooga are also aimed to draw visitors. Programs like the upcoming MICHELIN Guide to the American South will continue to elevate Tennessee's culinary brand.

The full 2024 Economic Impact on Travel Report and direct visitor spending data for all 95 counties will be released in September. The statewide report, including methodology, can be found here. All data is sourced from the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development and Tourism Economics, with national benchmarks provided by U.S. Travel Association.

Goodlettsville launches Project '072 to improve city operations, services

PROJECT, from Page 1

- Government Efficiency
- Community Identity
- Community Development
- Community Engagement and Volunteerism

Each of the 12 intradepartmental teams working on the project has four to five members working on the goals of that item. Subgoals on major components of the plan range from creating community education programs on health and personal finance to developing new parks to streetscape enhancements to overviews of city zoning and design guidelines to streaming municipal meetings and even painting a new mural in the city each year.

As a result, Ellis said staff members will have specific responsibilities to ensure those goals are maintained.

"The goal in creating the 50 subgroups was to identify items that would transform our city in a manner that would have both long-term and short-term impacts," Ellis said. "In determining the primary work groups, we identified the primary areas of service and areas of weakness and from there the list of 50 goals were created that collaboratively we felt would make a major impact on our community."

As part of the overview, the city has also restructured several departments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of city services for residents and businesses. The city's parks and recreation and public works departments have been combined into a single Department of Public Services while the city's wastewater division has been made into its own department.



Goodlettsville intern Maggie Howard, far left back ground, and members of the Artists on Main Painting Society after setting up the display in the lobby of Goodlettsville City Hall for the first art exhibit. The new program will showcase the work of local artists.

Ellis said the initiative is also launching both new programs as well as reviving old ones that have fallen by the wayside.

"There will be numerous new programs that have been created as a result of Project '072 such as accreditation from Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence, expanded use of the CRM Program (City Fix), adopt-a-landscaped area, and monthly community education programs to mention just a few," Ellis said. "Then there are programs such as the City Ambassador, youth council, CPR training programs that are being resurrected, for they were suspended during COVID epidemic or for other

reasons and had never restarted."

One such new program is an art exhibit space in Goodlettsville City Hall to promote local artists. The first exhibit was unveiled July 7, 2025, and will feature regularly rotating exhibits as a way of both promoting the arts and fostering community engagement. The program coordinator, Maggie Howard, is presently serving as a summer intern for the city.

"We are excited to open city hall to the arts, and we hope this will be the first of many opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy and celebrate local creativity," Howard said.

Ongoing community engage-

ment and collaboration are key to the project as it moves forward. Ellis said working together will benefit city employees as much as

it benefits the community at large.

"Community engagement is the lifeblood for any thriving municipality," Ellis said. "Programs such as Project '072 encourages and offers the opportunity for collaboration between residents, elected officials, other organizations, and city staff. Project '072 assists in creating a shared sense of purpose and strengthens community bond between all stakeholders. The residents will first and foremost see an enhanced level of services provided to them.

They will also take a more engaged approach to receiving these improvements for, in many ways, the citizens themselves were a part of the process in which made Project '072 successful."

When the program ends in 12 months, Ellis said city officials look forward to seeing what Goodlettsville has achieved.

"The city of Goodlettsville and its employees are simply wanting to provide the greatest services possible to our citizens and businesses, and if Project '072 assists in achieving this goal it is well worth the time an effort in carrying it forward to fruition," Ellis said.

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Jessica Salamida Vice Mayor, Nolensville (District 6) Joe Pitts Mayor, Clarksville

Blake Walley City Manager, Savannah (District 7) Ron Williams Mayor, Farragut Paul Young

Mayor, Memphis AFFILIATE DIRECTOR Kay Senter, City Council, Morristown (TMBF) JayEvans, Asst. CityManager, Brentwood (TCMA)

TML AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS TN Assn. of Air Carrier Airports

TN Building Officials Assn. TN Assn. of Chiefs of Police TN Assn. Municipal Clerks & Recorders

TN Government Finance Officers Assn. TN Fire Chiefs Assn. TN Fire Safety Inspectors

TN Assn. of Floodplain Management TN Assn. Housing & Redevel. Auth. TN Municipal Attorneys Assn. TN Municipal Judges Conference

TN Chapter, American Public Works TN Recreation and Parks Assn. TN Chapter, American Planning TN Personnel Management Assn.

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Monterey sees healthcare savings through TML, FMIG Health partnership programs

MONTEREY, from Page 1 us was about the same, but our insurance was also about to go up about 15%. It kept us at the same price before the raise, and, in my opinion, we got a much better plan. Our employees are paying less money out of pocket. They don't have to do claims forms any more. The plan takes care of it up front."

Kevin Krushenski, marketing representative with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund (TMBF) and the staff member assigned by the TML Board to determine the feasibility of a membership employee benefits program, said these concerns have been echoed by other cities across the state.

"In late 2022, TML members voiced concerns about the rising cost of providing health insurance coverage for employees and the crowding out effect it was having on employee raises and other investments into the community," Krushenski said. "The most heavily impacted were our smaller cities and towns with 50 or fewer employees. As more than two-thirds of TML's cities and towns have fewer than 50 employees, the challenge was finding the right partner that not only was willing to help our smaller communities, but also a partner that had a track record of success in this niche."

After evaluating numerous partnerships, TML ultimately partnered with FMIG Health.

"Their health insurance-only focus enables them to think creatively and come up with solutions that can not only reduce the cost of health insurance but also improve the benefits," Krushenski said. "Our partnership gives the program the TML brand name, years of experience and data on employee benefits, and the buying power to approach carriers about offering specific products geared for TML's member cities."

Derrick Jenkins, president of FMIG Health, said the company operates in 39 states and provides healthcare solutions to both the private and public

"FMIG felt that challenges the municipalities face are compounded even more when trying to provide comprehen-

Inflation increased in May

has higher prices for grocer-

ies and imported goods were

offset by cheaper gas, travel

services, and rents. The Con-

sumer Price Index rose 2.4%,

according to the U.S. Labor

Department, up from 2.3% in

April. Excluding more vola-

tile food and energy prices, the

core index rose 2.8% for the

third straight month. Econo-

mists said the rise of these core

prices generally provide a bet-

ter sense of where inflation is

NATIONAL BRIEFS



sive benefits to employees," Jenkins said. "I have deep relationships in the market, and I knew that we could take the membership strength of TML to the top supplemental carriers in the market to design exclusive solutions for Tennessee cities. Our foundation in the benefit program is to continue to offer only the best primary medical coverage through all the top carriers but use secondary insurance to achieve the most comprehensive coverage for employees. This approach provides savings and improved coverage with a benefit package instead of trying to hold down deductibles on the primary coverage alone."

Jenkins said FMIG has designed exclusive products that are only available to TML members and particularly benefit smaller cities and towns, who often have the biggest challenges in securing group health care.

"We have two strategies that can provide a solution," he said. "The first is traditional group with a higher deductible and secondary coverage provided by the TML exclusive plan. The second is a federally legislated option that allows employees to choose from multiple top-rated carriers. This option allows the employer to provide an allowance to the employee to shop the carrier and plan design that makes the most sense for their family. In many cases, the options on this program can be less than a group option on a smaller city. This option also has a TML exclusive product that layers on top of the medical that provides 100% protection against deductibles on accidents and illnesses. Both strategies are illustrated for the city and our team will provide a comprehensive comparison to help see the best option."

One of the goals is to work with cities to find options that best benefit their employees.

"The benefit will be an option for cities that are currently facing double-digit increases in the 15% range," Jenkins said. "Our team can also allow for cities that have given up on trying to find an afford-

headed and said the increase costs

of groceries, toys, games, and large

appliances are likely a reflection of

tariff policies. Many economists

believe companies are absorbing

costs for now but are expecting

more increases to inflation in the

second half of the year, especially

as numerous companies have indi-

cated they will raise prices to offset

tariff impacts. Core inflation still

remains stubbornly above the 2%

rate at which the Federal Reserve

target, making it unlikely key rates

will be changed.



able option a chance to provide an allowance to employees that better suits their budget. In many cases, tax credits may be available for dependents if the city is unable to include a share of those costs inside the city budget."

By choosing this program, Monterey was able to save more than 12% of their insurance, reduced co-pays and deductibles, and improved their dental and vision coverages. Garcia said coverage is also easier for employees to implement.

"In the previous plan, we had gap coverage, but employees had to go to the doctor, pay out of pocket, fill out a claims form, and then get reimbursed," Garcia said. "If an employee forgot or didn't fill out that claims form, they didn't get reimbursed. Now, with this plan, employees don't have to pay out of pocket or remember to send in claims forms. We are also spending the taxpayers money. It's under scrutiny all the time, so we're always looking to see what kind of deal we can get. If you have an opportunity to get quoted the program we did that only TML can offer, I would say you should really look at it. It was a major benefit for us."

Garcia said working with TML and FMIG Health also took a lot of stress out of the process.

"Derrick, Tim Lankford [TML's health insurance program marketing representative], Kevin and everyone at FMIG and TML were amazing. Those guys were great through the whole process. We really put their feet to the fire because not only did we want new insurance but we wanted it to start in July to coincide with our fiscal year rather than August like we normally do. They got it done. We had open enrollment, and they did a great job with them. Hats off to those guys. They're all amazing."

The U.S. economy added 147,000

jobs in June while the unemploy-

ment rate ticked down to 4.1%,

according to the U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics. The gains were

above expectations and up from

May's total of 144,000 though down

from April. The vast majority of new

jobs created were in the healthcare,

leisure and hospitality, and state

and local government sectors. The

private sector only added 74,000

jobs in June, the smallest gain for the

sector since October. The labor force

participation rate also decreased.



July 18: Adams

<u>Tennessee-Kentucy Threshermans</u> <u>Annual Show</u>

Come see the oldest steam threshing show in the South.

July 18: Ripley

<u>32nd Annual Tomato Festival</u>

Organized in 1992 to promote our world-famous tomatoes. Our mission is to promote all of our local agricultural products.

July 19: Cumberland Gap **Tri-State Outdoors Fest**

Enjoy everything the outdoors has to offer. Immerse yourself in a day filled with outdoor excitement, featuring activities such as kayaking, caving, backpacking, boating, ziplining, and off-roading.

July 25-26: Franklin

Bluegrass Along the Harpeth Fid-<u>dlers Jamboree</u>

This weekend of music honors Franklin's own Grand Ole Opry stars Sam and Kirk McGee.

July 25-26: Pittman Center

Greenbrier Mountain Festival Join us in promoting a strong sense of community and supporting local businesses at the Greenbrier Mountain Festival.

July 26: Gruetli-Laager

Swiss Heritage Celebration

The Swiss Heritage Celebration in Gruetli-Laager honors the region's rich Swiss history with a day of cultural festivities at the historic Stoker-Stampfli Farm Museum.

July 26-27: Monteagle

66th Annual Mountain Market This event will feature over 100 artisans and crafters displaying their handmade creations

Aug. 8-16: Memphis

Elvis Week 2025

Graceland will be the heart of the world's biggest Elvis celebration, and you're invited!

Aug. 9-10: Tusculum Crockett Days

Enjoy a fantastic weekend full of history and fun in support of the rebuilding efforts at David Crockett Birthplace State Park.

Aug. 15-16: Johnson City Meet the Mountains Festival

Gain the confidence of an experienced outdoor enthusiast through the numerous activities found at the Meet the Mountains Festival.

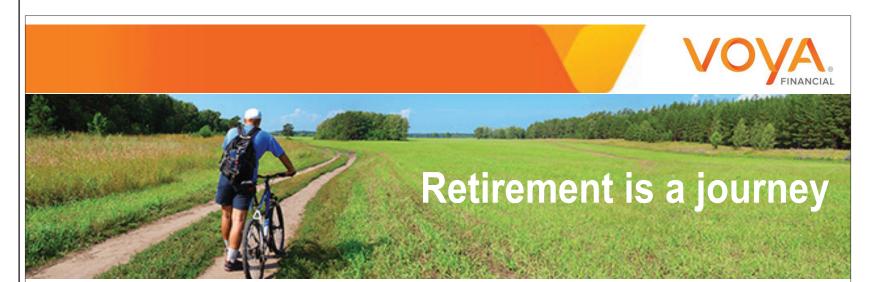
Aug. 15-17: Farragut

Dog Daze at Village Green The fastest-growing sport on four

legs, come see these canines run, jump and swim through this unique competition.

Aug. 16 - Ardmore

Ardmore Crape Myrtle Festival Everyone come out and join us for a fun family day of craft booths, music entertainment, great food, and Crape Myrtles.



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Ed Stewart, ChFC, CLU, CF **Financial Advisor**

The Tennessee Municipal League: Celebrating 85 Years of Local Leadership

Since its founding in 1940, the Tennessee Municipal League has been driven by bold ideas and a shared commitment to better city government. When a group of 15 city officials gathered in Nashville to form the League, Tennessee's cities were grappling with the pressures of urbanization, limited revenue sources, and little state support.

The League's first legislative goal in 1941 opposing unfunded mandates-remains a priority today. Then and now, municipal leaders have focused on stable funding, efficient governance, public safety, and building strong relationships with the General Assembly.

From that first statewide conference of 30 cities to today's thriving membership, TML has remained a trusted hub for sharing ideas, advocating for cities, and promoting practical solutions. For over 85 years, the League has helped Tennessee's cities meet challenges head-on and work together to shape a stronger state.



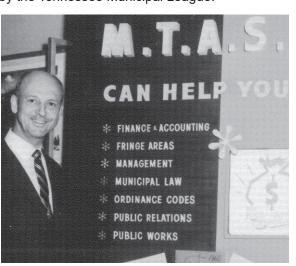
TML made history back in 1979, when it founded America's first statewide municipal liabiltiy pool, now called Public Entity Partners. Pictured L to R: Ed Young, TML assistant director oversaw daily operations in the early days of the Pool; Robert Sprouse, adminstrator and underwriter of TML pool operations; and Cleveland Mayor Harry Dethero, chair of the tort liability task force created by the TML Board to explore the idea of creating a municipal insurance pool.



Upon becoming governor in January 1953, Frank Clement kept his promise to sponsor legislation that gave municipalities the one-cent share of the state gasoline tax. Depite opposition from the counties, the bill passed and was signed into law, culminating a 12-year effort by the Tennessee Municipal League.



Some of the great municipal leaders of the 1950s and 60s: Metro Nashville Mayor Beverly Briley, Chattanooga Mayor Rudy Olgiati, and Nashville Mayor Ben West.



In 1949, TML introduced legislation to establish the Municipal Technical Advisory Service(MTAS) to provide technical consulting services to cities and towns in Tennessee. Pictured above is longtime MTAS Executive Director Vicotr Hobday.



Big 4 Mayors of the 1970s. Pictured (L to R):Metro Nashville Mayor Richard Fulton; Memphis Mayor Wyeth Chandler; Chattanooga Mayor Pat Rose and Knoxville Mayor Randy Tyree.



Longtime former TML Executive Directors Joe Sweat (1982-1998) and Herb Bingham (1946-1982).



Leaders of the 1980s (L to R): Murfreesboro Mayor Joe Jackson, Gov. Lamar Alexander, and Dyersburg Mayor Bill Revell.



In August 1985, the TML Board of Directors approved a new loan program for cities under the TML umbrella. Pictured are: (L to R) Charles "Bones" Seivers, Clinton administrator; John Morgan, director of finance in the state Comptroller's office; Kyle Testerman, Knoxville mayor; Gary Wade, Sevierville mayor; Joseph Sweat, TML executive director; and Ogden Stokes, TML counsel.



Margaret Mahery, former TML Executive Director (2002- 2020) and Sam Tharpe, Paris Councilman. Both served as TML presidents in the late 90s and early 2000s.



TN Municipal Bond Fund President Charles "Bones" Seiv-



ers, Murfreesboro Mayor Tommy Bragg and Clarksville Mayor Don Trotter. All three served as TML presidents.



Visiting Washington, D.C. during the late 1990s. Pictured are: (L to R) Millington Mayor George Harvell, Goodlettsville City Manager David Wilson, Jackson Mayor Charles Farmer, and U.S. Sen. Bill Frist.



Alamo Mayor Tommy Green and Cleveland Mayor Tom Rowland helped lead TML during the early 2000s.



Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon and State Sen. Richard Briggs.



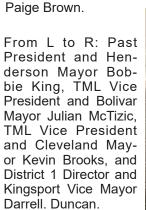
TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland, and TMBF President and CEO Wade Morrell.



Immediate Past President and Farragut Mayor Ron Williams, and TML President and Gallatin Mayor



Past President and Franklin Mayor Ken Moore and Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly.







Gov. Bill Lee signs into law a new measure that will deliver nearly \$19 million in annual savings to local governments by reducing administrative fees on locally collected taxes. Pictured are: (L to R) Sen. Ken Yager, TML Deputy Director Chad Jenkins. Gov. Lee, TCSA Executive Director David Connor, and Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson.