

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Thank you, Kingsport!

As I reflect on our 86th Annual TML Conference and Expo, I want to start by giving a heartfelt thank you to the city leaders, local businesses, and residents of Kingsport. I can honestly say I've never felt more welcomed as both a visitor and conference attendee.

The team at Visit Kingsport spent more than a decade working to bring a TML conference to their city, and their dedication certainly showed. If you haven't yet experienced Kingsport's attractions, restaurants, and outdoor activities, I highly recommend adding it to your bucket list.

Of course, no conference would be possible without the support of our sponsors, presenters, and attendees. Thank you for being part of this year's event. Your participation helps strengthen Tennessee's cities through

networking, educational opportunities, and the sharing of ideas and experiences.

This year's puzzle-themed nametags and signage were a fitting reminder that we are all connected. Like the pieces of a puzzle, each of us plays an important role, and the picture isn't complete when a piece is missing. So whether you joined us as a sponsor, presenter, or attendee, thank you for helping make this conference such a success. We look forward to seeing you again at TML #87, July 15-18, 2027, at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville.

Anthony C. Haynes

Anthony Haynes
TML Executive Director

TACIR outlines reports on major municipal issues

By KATE COIL
TT&C Assistant Editor

The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) has outlined proposals tied to key municipal issues including emergency services and public notices.

During TACIR's June meeting, members approved a draft report on ambulance services as well as research plans for law enforcement officer compensation, government public notices, and emergency communications systems.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

TACIR's research team has submitted a draft report on ambulance services, ultimately recommending that cities and counties continue to explore mutually beneficial avenues of cost-sharing and improvements but that the General Assembly not move forward with a legislative proposal related to these services.

The report was commissioned in response to Public Chapter 413, Acts of 2025 – which grew out of Senate Bill 160 by Sen. Joey Hensley, R-Hohenwald, and House Bill



83 by Rep. Kip Capley, R-Summertown, in the 114th General Assembly.

The issue initially arose when Maury County sought additional funding from the city of Columbia to alleviate costs associated with ambulance service. The bills introduced by Hensley and Capley would have required "a municipality that does not provide ambulance service to reimburse the county for such service in proportion to" the percentage of the county's population housed within the city or up to 50% service's total cost.

Municipal stakeholders argued they already paid county taxes that provided for ambulance See **TACIR** on Page 3

Winchester's Beth Rhoton named 2026 TCMA City Manager of the Year



TCMA President and Kingsport City Manager Chris McCartt, left, presents Winchester City Administrator Beth Rhoton, right, with the City Manager of the Year Award.

Since joining the city in 2002, Winchester City Administrator Beth Rhoton has shown a tireless commitment and unwavering work ethic that has proven transformational, exemplifying how the best leaders lead through service.

It is for this reason that the Ten-

nessee City Management Association (TCMA) has recognized Beth Rhoton as its City Manager of the Year for 2026. Rhoton was presented with the award July 12, 2026, at the 86th Annual Conference of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) held at the See **RHOTON** on Page 5

TML names 2026-27 board; Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks elected president

The Tennessee Municipal League (TML) elected its 2026-2027 board of directors during its general business meeting recently held in conjunction with the TML Annual Conference and Expo in Kingsport.

Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks was elected president. As president of the League, Mayor Brooks will lead the organization as it advocates for the interests of 345 cities and towns across the state of Tennessee, and the citizens they serve.

"For such a time as this, we mayors, city managers, and leaders have gathered to the table. Our steps are ordered," Brooks said following his swearing in. "Our voices will be heard, and together, I believe some of our greatest days are ahead."

Other board positions elected include 1st Vice President Lawrenceburg Mayor Blake Lay, and 2nd Vice President Millington Alderwoman Bethany Huffman. TML vice presidents are traditionally in line to ultimately serve as president.

Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic will remain on the board as immediate past president.

The TML board also includes mayors of Tennessee's four largest cities, four at-large directors, and eight district directors. The four urban mayors are: Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly, Knoxville Mayor Indya See **BOARD** on Page 4



TML President and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic, left, accepts a golden gavel as a recognition of his service to the League from incoming President and Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks during the TML Annual Conference and Expo in Kingsport. McTizic will continue to serve on the board as Immediate Past President.

Milan Mayor BW Beasley named 2026 TML Mayor of the Year

Milan Mayor BW Beasley was named the 2026 Mayor of the Year by the Tennessee Municipal League at their 86th Annual Conference at the MeadowView Conference Resort & Convention Center in Kingsport, Tenn.

Since taking office in January 2016, Mayor Beasley's leadership, vision, resourcefulness, and commitment to public service have transformed Milan into a thriving, financially stable, inclusive, and forward-looking municipality that serves as a model for cities across Tennessee.

At the time of his election, the city was in severe financial distress and facing numerous lawsuits. Since then, he has helped that general fund grow to its present \$12 million.

As part of his economic development focus, Mayor Beasley has worked to expand the tax base through new housing developments and then leveraged that growth to attract retail opportunities, including several national brands. When the former Milan See **MAYOR** on Page 5



Milan Mayor BW Beasley, left, and his wife Phyllis, right. Beasley was selected as the 2026 TML Mayor of the Year.

Newport's Louanna Ottinger receives TML's Robert Kirk Local Leadership Award

Since first being elected in 2018, Newport Alderwoman Louanna Ottinger has been described as someone who "naturally steps in, shows up, and looks for ways to make a difference in the lives of those around her" purely because she loves to serve.

In recognition of her dedication to public service, Ottinger was awarded the Bob Kirk Local Government Leadership Award during the 86th Annual Conference of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) held at the MeadowView Conference Resort & Convention Center in Kingsport, Tenn.

The Robert Kirk Local Government Leadership Award is presented to a council member, alderman, or commissioner who is at least in their second term of service to their municipality and has shown themselves to be an outstanding public servant to their community. The award is named for the late Dyersburg City Alderman and TML Past President Robert "Bob" Kirk who served his city for nearly 51 years as an elected official.

Nowhere was Ottinger's dedication to Newport more clearly on display than in the wake of Hurricane Helene. The storm swept across See **KIRK** on Page 5



Newport Alderwoman Louanna Ottinger was honored as the Robert Kirk Local Leadership Award recipient at the TML Annual Conference and Expo in Kingsport. (Photo by Newport).

NEWS
ACROSS
TENNESSEE

HARROGATE
Officials with the city of Harrogate, Claiborne County, and the Claiborne Economic Partnership joined local developers to break ground on a new Comfort Inn and Suites along U.S. Highway 25E. The hotel is expected to be ready to open in March 2027 with 72 rooms in the 40,000-square-foot structure. The hotel is the first phase of a project that will bring a 300-seat convention center and restaurant as well as a shopping center and private apartment building to the site. Harrogate Mayor Troy Poore said the property could bring as much as \$80,000 in revenue to the city each year through hotel/motel taxes with additional funds through sales tax. It is also a reflection on the growing outdoor tourism industry in the area.

HENDERSONVILLE
A new project will add more accessibility to Hendersonville’s Sanders Ferry Greenway. The project will focus on the area surrounding the parking lot at Spade Leaf Boulevard and Sanders Ferry Road, improving erosion issues by regrading a slope and reseeding. Curbing along the parking areas, ADA-accessible sidewalks from the crosswalk to the greenway, and additional sidewalks from the parking lot to the greenway will also be added. The parking area has become popular both for access to the greenway and local restaurants. Of the \$96,000 budgeted for the project, \$60,000 is being covered by public infrastructure funds created by a sales tax referendum. The city consulted with members of the running and biking community as well as the Hendersonville Lakeshore Committee to develop the project.

MOUNT PLEASANT
Hygrade Components will expand its operations through a strategic, long-term lease commitment in Mount Pleasant. The company will invest more than \$1.6 million to create more than 30 new jobs at its North Main Street location. The expansion will add 100,000 square feet to an existing plant that employs 100 people. The company manufactures an array of metal components primarily used in the fabrication of windows and doors. Founded in Long Island, N.Y., in 1938, the company now has operations in Tennessee, Arkansas, Oregon, and Texas.

OAK RIDGE
The Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) has unveiled the new 20 qubit IQM Pathfinder, a new quantum computer that outperforms even the most powerful supercomputers in the world. Able to multitask and perform multiple calculations at once, the computer will help researchers solve complex equations with greater efficiency. The computer is also the laboratory’s first commercially procured quantum computer and IQM’s first quantum computer installation in the U.S. ORNL is already home to Frontier, the world’s most powerful supercomputer for open science, and to one of the most consequential high-performance computing environments anywhere.

PIGEON FORGE
Pigeon Forge city officials recently unveiled plans to expand the multi-purpose [LeConte Center at Pigeon Forge](#). The project includes an additional 58,000 square feet, with 33,000 square feet specifically ear-

marked for exhibit space. The city-owned event center will remain open and host events during the two-year construction project. Improvements include an enhanced main entrance with increased capacity, more direct pedestrian walkway from the parking lot to the entrance, a dedicated tram pickup facility and separate vehicle pickup space, additional restrooms, and a take-away concessions market. Since the LeConte Center opened in 2013, the facility has generated direct economic impact on the city’s top industry—tourism. The \$45 million facility’s cumulative attendance is four million guests. Event attendees account for more than 1.6 million room nights in Pigeon Forge over the past 13 years.

SURGOINSVILLE
Homeland Vinyl Products will expand its Surgoinsville operations by purchasing an additional facility. The company will create 50 new jobs and invest \$5.5 million in the new plant on Industrial Drive. Once operational, the company will establish new grinding operations with plans to create additional production lines in the future. Homeland Vinyl creates a wide range of high quality residential and commercial vinyl products including vinyl fencing, vinyl decking, and vinyl railing. This marks the company’s third expansion since relocating to Tennessee in 2015.

THOMPSON’S STATION
The town of Thompson’s Station is one of the four recipients of the second round of grants under the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation’s (TDEC) Office of Energy Programs Fast Charge TN Network. Thompson’s Station has been awarded approximately \$234,000 to purchase and install two publicly-accessible electric vehicle (EV) direct current fast chargers (DCFCs) at Sarah Benson Park – a town-owned public park. DCFCs can quickly charge a vehicle while the driver and passengers are visiting the park, making this site both convenient and comfortable. The chargers will also enhance offerings at the park, which include an inclusive and accessible playground financed through both TDEC’s Office of Outdoor Recreation’s Local Parks and Recreation grant fund program and grant funding from the Office of Energy Programs. The funds are part of approximately \$2.7 million awarded in total that will bring 22 charging units to eight separate sites. The program is part of a partnership between TDEC and Tennessee Valley Authority to develop a [statewide EV fast-charging network](#) to power the growth of EVs across the state.

TOWNSEND
A new smartphone app will help Townsend residents report non-emergency issues, allowing the city to tackle issues such as potholes, broken streetlights, and missed garbage collection. Residents are able to include photo attachments to help better describe situations. Additionally, the calendar portion of the app will allow residents to keep up to date with city meetings, agendas, and community events. The city will also be able to push out information on emergencies, alerts, and other critical news for residents and visitors in the area via the app. A redesign of the city website is also presently underway to mirror the app in structure and functionality.

Four cities earn Main Street status

Four Tennessee municipalities have been accepted into the [Tennessee Main Street Program](#), joining 50 municipalities across the state. Crossville and Newport were officially approved in September 2025 while Springfield and Loudon joined in May 2026. Tennessee Main Street communities are designated through the program and Main Street America, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street Program provides training, support, and grant opportunities to assist in downtown revitalization efforts. The program will focus on adaptive reuse of historic commercial buildings for community events and economic vitality. The Tennessee Main Street Program requires communities to illustrate a commitment from local government and other local organizations, have an adequate organiza-

tional budget, hire a dedicated program manager, have a strong historic preservation ethic, and a collection of historic commercial buildings in a walkable district. Other Tennessee Main Street communities include Athens, Bolivar, Bristol, Brownsville, Centerville, Cleveland, Clifton, Clinton, Collierville, Columbia, Cookeville, Covington, Dayton, Dyersburg, Elizabethton, Etowah, Fayetteville, Franklin, Gallatin, Greeneville, Halls, Jackson, Johnson City, Jonesborough, Kingsport, Lawrenceburg, Lebanon, Lewisburg, Livingston, Madisonville, Maryville, McKenzie, McMinnville, Morristown, Mount Pleasant, Murfreesboro, Paris, Pulaski, Ripley, Rogersville, Savannah, Sevierville, Sweetwater, Tiptonville, Union City, and Winchester. To learn more, visit [the Tennessee Main Street program website](#).

Franklin named All-American City



Franklin has been named a 2026 All-American City by the National Civic League, one of only 10 cities to receive the annual honor. Franklin was selected by a jury of nationally recognized civic leaders. Franklin was selected for its efforts to strengthen civic health and build trust as well as its civic infrastructure, which provides a network of relationships, partnerships, and capacities driving effective decision-making and problem-solving. Finalist communities were awarded at an event in Denver. One of the fastest-growing cities in the nation, Franklin was awarded for a [series of programs and initiatives](#) designed to bring a growing community together and keep the city’s culture distinctive. Franklin previously also received the All-American City Designation in 2020. (Photo by the National Civic League)

Dolly Parton opens themed truck stop in Cornersville



Country music legend Dolly Parton joined local officials to open a renovated travel stop in Cornersville. Dolly’s Tennessean Travel Stop offers a coffee shop, barbecue, ice cream shop, full-service restaurant, general store, dog park, and fuel and electric vehicle charging areas with a Dolly Parton-theme. A lounge and other services will also be offered to truck drivers. The 24/7 stop at the Cornersville exit of Interstate 65 feature attractions connected to Parton’s music career and will feature live musical performances, murals, and an outdoor patio. (Photo by Nicole Hester/The Tennessean)

Dandridge cuts ribbon on new greenway



Officials in Dandridge recently cut the ribbon on a new half-mile greenway overlooking Douglas Lake. The \$118,530 project was partially financed through a \$82,971 Tourism Enhancement Grant. It is also part of more than \$1.4 million in parks and recreation projects currently in the works, including a new playground and pickleball courts at Field of Dreams Park. From left to right, Alderman Stephanie Churchwell, Alderman Jessica Elder, Public Works Superintendent Donald Whaley, Vice Mayor Todd Kesterson, Public Works employee Ronald Brooks, Public Works employee Chris Wise, Alderman Ellen Longmire, Parks and Recreation employee Jonah Morie, Town Administrator Chris Shockley, Parks and Recreation employee Aaron LeValley, Parks and Recreation Director James Baker, Public Works employee Cory Hawkins, and Public Works employee Jeremy Williams. (Photo by Steve Marion, The Standard Banner)

Pleasant View unveils park improvements



Officials with Pleasant View recently cut the ribbon on improvements to Pleasant View Community Park. New upgrades include a modern playground system, paved walking paths, picnic pavilions, restrooms, and combination pickleball and tennis courts. The improvements are part of the city’s park master plan, and the \$970,803 project was funded through a Tennessee Local Parks and Recreation Fund grant with a 50% match from the town, funded through the local hotel-motel tax. Additional improvements to the park are also in the works. (Photo by Pleasant View)

TACIR outlines reports on major municipal issues

TACIR, from Page 1
services, and this would create double taxation on municipal residents. Additionally, there were concerns cities would start their own ambulance services to avoid the payments, resulting in counties paying even more to provide service.

The commission was directed to study the economic impact of ambulance services on counties, which counties provide services directly versus those who franchise them, which municipalities provide ambulance services, and whether policy changes would benefit ambulance services.

Additionally, the commission was directed to study emergency and non-emergency transport from commercial payers, Medicare, and Medicaid, as well as how local governments fund the deficit at which these services operate.

The report found that, since a new state law designated ambulance services as essential for counties to provide, costs for these services have increased from \$1.8 million in Fiscal Year 2020-21 to \$2.7 million in Fiscal Year 2023-24. A recently proposed rule that caps TennCare payments may put further pressure on counties' ability to finance ambulance services.

Recommendations in the draft include:

- the General Assembly create a recurring fund for ambulance equipment grants, as is done for other state-required county services,
- increasing the amount of training centers for ambulance services from the current limit of 30 under state law, and
- contracting with third-party billing companies to increase collections, expand non-emergency transport, share medical directors, and fill revenue claims.

Both the [memo issued to the commission](#) and the [the full draft report](#) are available for public review online.

PUBLIC NOTICES

With public notices legally required for governments to promote transparency and allow citizen participation in government actions, astate law was passed in 2014 that amended the requirements for newspapers of record to publish public notices in both print editions as well as online. It also established a statewide public notice website maintained by the Tennessee Press Association.

The law was amended again



TACIR's research team has submitted a draft report on ambulance services, ultimately recommending that cities and counties continue to explore mutually beneficial avenues of cost-sharing and improvements but that the General Assembly not move forward with a legislative proposal related to these services. The issue initially arose when Maury County sought additional funding from the city of Columbia to alleviate costs associated with ambulance service. (Photo by Germantown)



During TACIR's June meeting, research plans were outlined for three issues directly impacting municipalities. Two of those issues relate to first responders. The first is studying law enforcement compensation and retention rates to determine how local governments - particularly smaller ones - can better recruit and retain officers. The other regards how emergency communications are funded. One avenue TACIR will research is the consolidation of emergency communication districts or call-sharing potential between rural districts. (Photo by Franklin)

in 2024 to require public notices to also be published on a separate news or information website if available. However, as newspaper consumption – particularly for print newspapers – has changed over time – many local governments have questioned if this requirement is still cost effective or uses public funds for an outdated method of communication.

In response, Sen. Bill Powers, R-Clarksville, and Rep. John Crawford, R-Bristol, introduced Senate Bill 2450 and House Bill 2114, respectively, in the General Assembly, which would allow local governments to post public notices on local government or third-party websites rather than in

newspapers. It was later amended to direct the commission to determine if newspapers are the most efficient and effective manner to provide public notices, becoming Public Chapter 1137, Acts of 2026.

TACIR will be conducting interviews and assembling evidence through December 2026 with intentions to contact local government leaders and TML members. The draft report to the commission for comments on the issue is expected to be presented at TACIR's Spring 2027 commission meeting with the final report to be submitted for approval at the Summer 2027 meeting.

TACIR has also published [a full research plan](#) for the report.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMPENSATION

With many local governments concerned about recruitment, staffing, and retention of law enforcement officers, TACIR has been commissioned to study how salaries and other benefits influence the ability to attract officers.

The study was commissioned based on Senate Bill 2177 sponsored by Sen. Ken Yager, R-Kingston, and House Bill 2204 sponsored by Rep. Ryan Williams, R-Cookeville, which ultimately became Public Chapter 1121, Acts of 2026. The bill directs TACIR to study how:

- current salaries and benefits paid to state and local enforcement officers affect recruitment, staffing, and retention, particularly in smaller city and county departments, and evaluate potential alternatives for improvement, and
- state salary increases and adjustments for state law enforcement officers affect recruitment, staffing, and retention of local law enforcement officers.

In addition to how these issues are impacting local departments, the study will also look into similar efforts made for recruitment and retention by the Tennessee Department of Correction. The outline notes that “smaller cities and counties often have more limited tax bases and budgets, which can restrict funding for personnel and make it difficult to offer competitive compensation packages.”

TACIR assembled evidence for the report through June 2026 with research ongoing until Sep-

tember 2026. A draft report is expected to the commission for comments at the Fall 2026 TACIR meeting with a final report projected for the January 2027 meeting.

TACIR has also published [a full research plan](#) for the report.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

In 2015, Tennessee became one of the first states in the nation to switch to a digital 911 system known as Next Generation 911, allowing for new types of data exchange and wireless communication, like texting. Operated by the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board, the system also provides redundancy in case any other 911 districts go offline.

At present, Tennessee has 100 emergency communications districts (ECDs) serving local jurisdictions to provide 911 services, each governed by a local board of directors. These ECDs cannot levy or collect taxes and have previously relied on telephone service fees to fund 911 services. This was changed in 2015 when a flat \$1.16 fee was implemented on all telecommunications devices, and the rate was increased to \$1.50 in 2021.

While the 114th General Assembly passed Senate Joint Resolution 48 to increase the fee to \$1.86, the bill was vetoed by Gov. Bill Lee. As a result, TACIR has been commissioned to study the state's emergency communications system, focusing on:

- an analysis of the current funding model for emergency communications systems in Tennessee and comparable funding models in other states,
- operating structures and organizational charts of all ECDs,
- methods to increase operational and financial consistency and uniformity of all ECDs,
- the consolidation of ECDs and ECD call sharing, particularly in rural areas,
- potential benefits of a uniform, statewide ECD system, and
- an analysis of requiring direct dispatch protocols.

TACIR will engage evidence gathering on the issue until August 2026 with research projected to end in September 2026. A draft report is expected to be provided to the commission at the Fall 2026 meeting with a final report to the commission at the January 2027 meeting. TACIR has also published [a full research plan](#) for the report.

No loan is too large or too small



The city of Jasper has used TMBF programs nine times since 1997. The latest is for a note issue, which closed in May, to finance a new pavilion in the town's park. From left to right: Jasper Mayor Jason Turner, TMBF Representative Steve Queener, and Jasper City Recorder Paula Turney.



The city of Humboldt has used TMBF programs eight times since 1990. The latest was for a school system refunding bond issue which closed in May. Pictured are Humboldt Mayor Arthur Boykin (seated), Humboldt CFO/Treasurer Alicia Pigue, left, and TMBF Marketing Representative Justin Hanson.



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PEOPLE

Bill Cowan, former Winchester city councilman, died Monday, June 8, 2026, at the age of 81. A U.S. Army National Guard veteran, Cowan retired after 30 years at Bell-South. He was first elected to the Winchester City Council in 1989, serving two terms. He continued to be involved in numerous city boards and commissions and ultimately became the first executive director of the Winchester Downtown Program Corp. In that role, he helped oversee the renovations to Winchester’s downtown area.



Bill Cowan

Julie High has been selected as the new city manager of Goodlettsville following the retirement of City Manager Tim Ellis on Sept. 30. High has served as Goodlettsville’s assistant city manager since 2021 and joined the city’s staff in 2004 as director of finance and administration. Prior to her work with Goodlettsville, High served as director of finance for the city of White House from 2000 to 2004. A graduate of Western Kentucky University, High has taken on various other leadership roles in Goodlettsville and across the state. She was also named the Tennessee City Manager Association’s Assistant City Manager of the Year in 2024.



Julie High

Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo will step down from the role in December, announcing he does not intend to seek re-election. Palazzolo first served as an alderman from 2004 to 2014, during which time he also served as vice mayor. After his election as mayor in 2014, he oversaw numerous milestones in the city’s history, including the presentation of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award to the city. He was selected as TML’s Mayor of the Year in 2023. A resident of Germantown in 1977, served as an economics and government teacher in the former Memphis City Schools, spent 23 years in commercial and corporate banking, and a decade as a senior development officer. He has also served on boards with the Germantown Area of Commerce, Mid-South Development District Board, West Tennessee Mayor’s Association, Mid-South Council of Mayors, Shelby County Suburban Mayors Council, Shelby County Joint Economic and Community Development Board, and on the Tennessee Municipal League’s Board of Directors.



Mike Palazzolo

Dick Phebus will retire as finance director for the city of Bartlett after 15 years with the city. Phebus joined Bartlett in 2011 as the assistant finance director and assumed the



Dick Phebus

role of finance director the following year. Prior to joining the city, he had more than 30 years’ experience in local government and finance, serving as a finance and accounting specialist for the University of Tennessee’s Institute for Public Service. He also worked with both county and city finance officials through the County Technical Assistance Service and Municipal Technical Advisory Service. In 2006, he helped design and implement the certified municipal finance officer program. He holds a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree both from Vanderbilt University and is a certified public accountant, in addition to holding numerous other certifications.

Joshua Pierce has been selected as the new chief of police for the town of Greeneville. Pierce was selected from a national pool of candidates and has more than 18 years in law enforcement experience with the Greeneville Police Department. He has served in a variety of leadership roles in his career, including as captain of the uniformed and specialized services divisions. A graduate of the FBI National Academy, he holds a master’s degree in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati and a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from East Tennessee State University



Joshua Pierce

Matt Slagle has been selected as the new city manager of Bristol from a pool of 52 applicants from across the country. Slagle has been serving as a councilmember since October 2025 when he was appointed to the east district seat vacated by the departure of former mayor Mark Hutton. His appointment was intended to run through November of this year. A Bristol native who has spent three years on the Sullivan County Commission, Slagle has also served on the city’s planning commission, beer board, and health and educational facilities board. He studied logistics and supply chain management at Tennessee Technological University and served as the president of Flextech Solutions, LLC.



Matt Slagle

Tyler Williams has been selected as the acting town manager of Mount Carmel after Town Manager Jim Stables accepted the position of fire rescue chief for Brevard County, Fla. Williams has served as Mount Carmel’s assistant town manager since 2024 and will oversee the town’s day-to-day operations while the Mount Carmel Board of Mayor and Aldermen evaluate next steps. Prior to joining the town, Williams served as a city recorder for Unicoi and in the private-sector in the banking industry. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Carson-Newman University and a law degree from the University Tennessee. Williams is also a certified municipal finance officer.



Tyler Williams

Brownsville, Maynardville hold municipal elections in June

June elections were held in two municipalities ahead of a busy slate of municipal elections in August and November.

A total of 63 municipalities will hold regular and special elections to coincide with the Aug. 6, 2026, state and federal primary elections while 205 will hold either regular or special elections to coincide with the Nov. 3, 2026, state and federal general elections.

BROWNSVILLE

Voters went to the polls in Brownsville on June 16, 2026.

Incumbent William “Bill” D. Rawls Jr. ran unopposed and was re-elected mayor of Brownsville with 489 complimentary votes.

Newcomer Randy D. Holloway defeated fellow challenger Connie Bond Taylor for the Ward 1 unexpired term. Holloway earned 78 votes to Taylor’s 47. The seat had previously been held by Antwan Taylor.

In the Ward 2 race, newcomer Glynn Hope McGhee defeated fellow challenger Johnnie Robert



Coleman 83-44. The seat was previously held by Carolyn Flagg, who did not seek re-election.

Karen Denise Jones ran unopposed and was elected with 87 complimentary votes to the Ward 4 seat previously held by Travis Pugh, who did not seek re-election.

MAYNARDVILLE

A municipal election was held on June 25, 2026, in Maynardville, featuring both a council election

and referendum.

Incumbent Jennifer Ford will be joined by newcomer Ed Williams after defeating challenges Rusty Carr and Danny Smith for the two open seats on Maynardville City Council. Williams led the vote count with 117 followed by Ford with 95, Smith with 60, and Carr with 53.

Additionally, residents voted 73-68 in favor of permitting retail package stores to sell alcoholic beverages within the city limits.

Memphis announces leadership team changes

Memphis Mayor Paul Young has announced three major leadership appointments.

Chris Winston has been selected as the city’s new chief operating officer. Winston comes to the city with 35 years of executive leadership experience, including roles at FedEx, Tesla, and Comcast.

He also presently serves on the board of directors of both the University of Memphis Foundation and Methodist Healthcare.

Winston holds a bachelor’s degree in management information systems and services from the University of Memphis and a master’s in business administration from Dowling College.

His background includes work in enterprise operations, organizational transformation, technology modernization, and workforce strategy.

Art Davis has been selected as the city’s new chief financial officer. He presently serves as the deputy chief financial officer of the city’s treasury, where he played a central role in strengthening and stabilizing the city’s financial operations.

Prior to joining the city, Davis served as chief operating officer and chief financial officer



Art Davis



Greg Dotson



Chris Winston

of the Memphis River Parks Partnership. He has also held several financial roles with the Children’s Museum of Memphis, Spectra Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium, and Memphis Redbirds Baseball Foundation. Davis holds a bachelor’s degree in accountancy from the University of Mississippi.

Greg Dotson has also been selected as the interim city engineer. A licensed professional engineer in six states, Dotson has more than 27 years of civil engineering and transportation infrastructure experience.

He comes to Memphis from serving as state transportation leader for West Tennessee at Gresham Smith. He has also

worked for Barge Design Solutions, Neel-Schaffer, and Gannett Fleming, working with local, state, and federal agencies on a wide variety of projects.

In his early career, Dotson played a vital role in deploying Memphis’ Intelligent Transportation Systems infrastructure.

As interim engineer, Dotson will oversee the city’s engineering division and help advance critical infrastructure and capital improvement projects that support Memphis’ continued growth.

Dotson holds a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from the University of Memphis. He also holds several engineering licenses and certifications.

TML names 2026-27 board; Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks elected president

BOARD, from Page 1
Kincannon, Memphis Mayor Paul Young, and Metro Nashville Mayor Freddie O’Connell.

The four at-large directors were nominated by a nominating committee composed of municipal officials statewide. They were then elected for a one-year term by a majority vote from members in attendance at the business meeting.

Those directors are Humboldt Mayor Arthur Boykin, Jackson Councilman Johnny Dodd, KingSport Mayor Paul Montgomery, and Franklin City Administrator Eric Stuckey,

The eight district directors, representing their section of the state, were nominated and elected during district caucuses. They are District 1: Michael Baker, Erwin Alderman;



District 2: Gary Chesney, Morristown Mayor; District 3: Stefanie Dalton, Red Bank Mayor; District 4: Jerry Lowery, Sparta Mayor; District 5: Rachel Nichols, Gallatin Finance Director; District 6: Jessica Salamida, Nolensville Vice Mayor; District 7: Kim Foster, Paris City Manager; and District 8: Kevin Quinn, Bartlett Alderman.

Affiliate representatives on the

board include Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund Chairman and Portland Mayor Mike Callis, Tennessee City Management Association Vice President and Belle Meade City Manager Jennifer Moody, and Public Entity Partners Representative and Fayetteville Mayor Donna Hartman.

The new members of the 2026-2027 TML Board of Directors will begin their duties on Sept. 1.

Morristown’s Larry Clark receives 2026 Assistant City Manager of the Year Award

With more than 30 years of service to Tennessee local governments, Morristown Assistant City Manager Larry Clark has demonstrated exceptional leadership, integrity, and dedication to the communities and citizens he has served.

It is for this reason that the Tennessee City Management Association (TCMA) has recognized Larry Clark as its Assistant City Manager of the Year for 2026. Clark was presented with the award July 12, 2026, at the 86th Annual Conference of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) held at the MeadowView Conference Resort & Convention Center in Kingsport.

Widely respected for his professionalism, knowledge, and commitment to excellence, Clark’s interest in public service began under the tutelage of his father, a long-standing county executive for Carter County. After earning his bachelor’s degree in accounting from East Tennessee State University, Clark took his first public service role as an accountant for Elizabethton City Schools. He then began working as an accountant for the city of Elizabethton in 2001 before being promoted to finance director in 2006.

In 2010, he was selected as the administrative services director for the city of Morristown to oversee the city’s finance, HR, IT, and purchasing departments and was later named assistant city manager. At the time Clark came to the city, Morristown needed to stabilize its finances, restore its standing with the Comptroller’s office, and better manage its sewer system.

Clark led efforts to improve financial procedures and accountability with the Comptroller’s



Morristown Assistant City Manager Larry Clark received the Assistant City Manager of the Year award from TCMA. From left to right, Morristown Assistant City Manager Emily Wood, City Manager Andrew Ellard, Clark, and Mayor Gary Chesney.

office, and he worked to address a major sewer system challenge, including regulatory oversight and litigation. Under a commissioner’s order and facing a federal lawsuit, he helped create a new utility partnership and associated operational standards and policies to ensure the success of the sewer system over the course of two years.

He also transformed the public works operations by modernizing fleet maintenance, strengthening risk management practices, establishing a horticulture program, implementing a comprehensive

stormwater program, and championing an enterprise asset management program. This helped address needs for equipment, personnel, training, and other operational procedures.

Under Clark’s leadership, major capital and infrastructure projects have been undertaken, including the realignment and improvement of Thompson Creek Road, construction of the 115,000-square-foot Morristown Landing recreation and event center, construction of a more advanced public works complex, co-

ordination with TDOT on numerous roadway and rail crossing improvement projects, and countless roadway and stormwater system upgrades and rehabilitations within the city limits. He also oversaw the renovation of the city center facility to address structural and functionality issues within the plaza and parking garage. This major rehabilitation and reconfiguration benefited municipal employees and the public.

He is recognized by his fellow city employees for building high-performing teams, improving

operations, positively changing organizational culture, and as a subject-matter expert on municipal governance. His proactive problem-solving, initiative, and follow-through have also earned him respect from outside stakeholders and partner agencies.

Morristown City Administrator Andrew Ellard said Clark always puts Morristown and its employees first in every decision he makes.

“Discussions with Larry and final decisions on virtually every topic are centered around what best provides for services to the public, what is equitable for city staff, and what is good for the city as an organization. His work ethic is unmatched,” Ellard said. “There is rarely an issue that comes up with which he is not already familiar – and usually we find he has already taken action to resolve. Larry has earned an incredible level of respect and admiration from his coworkers and the city’s outside stakeholders who all know him to be a person of integrity and a model of professionalism in local government management.”

A longstanding member of TCMA, TGFOA, and TN PRIMA, Clark regularly networks with colleagues at other municipalities to compare notes on policies, operations issues, and other concerns. He is involved in the local chamber of commerce’s leadership program and is a key partner in city-chamber economic development activities.

Clark’s personal and professional integrity, dedication to professional standards, and commitment to equity make him an example of what all municipal leaders should aspire to be.

Milan Mayor BW Beasley named 2026 TML Mayor of the Year

MAYOR, from Page 1
Army Ammunition Plant site closed in 2012, Mayor Beasley knew it would have negative repercussions for the local economy. After taking office, he led efforts to secure the site from the U.S. Department of Defense, providing approximately 292 acres of high-value commercial and industrial property along a major highway corridor.

Using his negotiation skills developed through years of business, Mayor Beasley worked with State Rep. Brock Martin to secure \$6.8 million from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development for the city to purchase the land. When the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers later appraised the land for \$4.2 million, the excess funds were returned to the state.

Mayor Beasley also led the development of a premier park

system featuring modern amenities like sports complexes, walking trails, disc golf, and inclusive playgrounds. He also helped secure grants to fund sidewalks and connectivity projects, enhancing access to these amenities.

Additionally, Mayor Beasley has fostered a culture of unity and cooperation through the creation of community-centered events such as Easter egg hunts, citywide festivals, holiday celebrations, and the creation of the Thanksgiving One Table Celebration, which brings citizens to Main Street to share a meal.

Mayor Beasley aims to ensure all voices are heard on municipal issues and that municipal progress benefits everyone. His emphasis on collaboration extends outside the city limits, working with regional, state, and federal partners to engage on important issues and find solutions.

Many other West Tennessee mayors have said Mayor Beasley is always eager to provide them with support, advice, and collaboration to solve regional problems. He has been a champion for municipal causes, rallying his fellow leaders in West Tennessee and statewide to have their voices heard.

In addition to his role as mayor of Milan, Mayor Beasley has served in several state and regional roles including as president of the West Tennessee Mayors Association and as a board member of the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund.

Each year since 1954, the Tennessee Municipal League has honored a city mayor that typifies the attributes of intelligence, effectiveness, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice.

Winchester's Beth Rhoton named 2026 TCMA City Manager of the Year

RHOTON, from Page 1
MeadowView Conference Resort & Convention Center in Kingsport.

Consistently going above and beyond her duties, Rhoton has been a tireless advocate for both the city and its residents. Her leadership is demonstrated through literal hands-on commitment with Rhoton working alongside the city’s public works crews to clear debris and restore road access in the wake of devastating tornadoes in the community.

When the federal U.S. 2020 Census reported Winchester’s population at 9,375, Rhoton had the foresight and determination to pursue a special census, resulting in a revised population county of 10,400. By crossing this key population threshold, Winchester has been able to recruit new businesses and secure additional resources.

Rhoton is also an economic development leader, constantly seeking to attract new businesses and economic growth to secure vital long-term prosperity for Winchester. In that realm, she has provided visionary leadership in a remarkable downtown revitalization project that has transformed a formerly underutilized area into a vibrant economic, cultural, and community hub.

By bringing together private and public stakeholders, she was able to secure funding and imple-

ment a strategic revitalization plan that balanced preserving the unique, historic character of downtown Winchester with the need for modern development.

Rhoton also spearheaded infrastructure improvements and beautification projects that enhanced walkability and accessibility, ultimately attracting new businesses. She has supported local entrepreneurs, championed festivals and events to increase foot traffic and community pride, and fostered collaboration across municipal departments to streamline zoning, permitting, and downtown planning processes. Now Winchester’s downtown revitalization is a model for other regional municipalities and has elevated the entire city.

Through her calm and composed demeanor, Rhoton serves not from behind a desk but from the heart of her community through listening, engaging, and adapting when necessary. She approaches both short- and long-term challenges with vision and resolve, from complex development projects to new business opportunities to addressing individual citizen concerns. In all of her contributions to Winchester’s success, Rhoton never seeks the spotlight, preferring instead to emphasize the value of teamwork and consistently crediting her staff and department heads for

the city’s success.

Rhoton also works to help others outside her role as city manager. She founded a school in Honduras dedicated to teaching children English and actively raises funds to provide essential school supplies and hygiene product that support the well-being and development of the students.

Newport's Louanna Ottinger receives TML's Robert Kirk Local Leadership Award

KIRK, from Page 1
the southern U.S. in September 2024, resulting in catastrophic flooding in East Tennessee, particularly in Newport. Ottinger served on a committee of city and county leaders tasked with navigating the aftermath, disbursing funds donated to disaster relief, and guiding the area’s recovery efforts.

In a time of great uncertainty, she approached this task with fairness, compassion, and a steady commitment to do what was in the best interest of Newport. Her leadership ensured the distribution of resources thoughtfully and responsibly to residents and local businesses – many of whom were receiving no other financial assistance at the time. She also ensured public trust and transparency were maintained throughout the process.

Upon hearing the city’s longest-running food pantry was holding a food drive to replace everything they had lost in the flooding, Ottinger stepped up to help. She leveraged her relationships to expand the reach of the effort and secured a no-cost opportunity to promote the food drive on a local morning radio show. Her support and advocacy grew awareness, prompting the community to respond. As a result, a vital resource was rebuilt to serve local families when they needed it most.

Ottinger doesn’t just wait for disaster to strike to employ her resourcefulness and collaborative spirit. She consistently uses her role as alderwoman to bring people together, strengthen partnerships,

and identify solutions that work for everyone. She balances strength and compassion, ensuring Newport continues to be held in high esteem because it prioritizes the well-being of its citizens.

“Through her service, Louanna has made a meaningful and lasting impact on the city of Newport,” Newport Administrative Assistant Molly Ealy said. “She embodies the qualities of an effective and inspiring leader, and her dedication to public service sets a standard for others to follow. Alderwoman Ottinger does not simply meet the criteria for this award, she defines it through her actions, her leadership, and her unwavering commitment to her community.”

Long before holding office, Ottinger learned the inner workings of local government both through her husband Mike – who dedicated more than 27 years to the Newport Fire Department – as well as through her active involvement in numerous community efforts and organizations, such as the Cocke County Business Women’s Club and Kiwanis Club.

Ottinger approaches her office not just as an elected official but as a responsibility to care for her community, to listen to concerns, and lead with integrity. She also actively supports the mission of TML, valuing the importance that strong municipal leadership, collaboration, and advocacy. She works tirelessly to ensure Newport remains engaged, informed, and forward-thinking.



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TML 86th Annual Conference, July 9-12 in Kingsport



From left to right, Atoka Fire Chief William Scott, Town Administrator Marc Woerner, Administrative and Communications Coordinator Anna Pond, and Police Chief Anthony Rudolph.



Algood Mayor Lisa Chapman-Fowler, left, and husband Dick Fowler, right.



Morristown Councilmember Tommy Pedigo, left, and TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, right.



From left to right, Loretto City Administrator Jesse Turner, Mayor Steve McMasteres, Court Clerk and Administrative Specialist Cierra Beckman, Alderman Chris Beckman, and Director of Utilities Ronnie Dial.



From left to right, Niota City Administrator Jeannie Anderson, Livingston Mayor Lori Burnett, and Fayetteville Mayor Donna Hartman.



From left to right, Jackson Councilman Richard Donnell, Gallatin Councilmember Steven Carter, and TML President and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic.



East Ridge Mayor Brian Williams, left, and Councilmember Jeff Ezell, right.



Kingsport Alderman Darrell Duncan, left, and District 3 Director and Red Bank Mayor Stefanie Dalton, right.



Alcoa Commissioner Tracey Cooper, left, and City Manager Bruce Applegate.



From left to right, Covington Chief of Staff Jason Fleming, TML Second Vice President and Millington Alderwoman Bethany Huffman, District 8 Director and Bartlett Alderman Kevin Quinn, and Covington Mayor Jason Hensley.

TML 86th Annual Conference, July 9-12 in Kingsport



Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon, left, and TML At-Large Director and Kingsport Mayor Paul Montgomery, right, at the Host City Reception.



From left to right: East Ridge Vice Mayor David Tyler, Finance Director/CMFO Diane Qualls, Councilmember Jeff Ezell, and City Manager Brian Koral.



From left to right, Winchester Mayor Sean Crabtree, Shelbyville Planning Director Thomas Batchelor, and Winchester City Administrator Beth Rhoton take a spin on the Kingsport Carousel during the Host City Reception.



Paris Commissioner Sam Tharpe, left, and wife Gayle, right, enjoy a ride on the Kingsport Carousel.



Morristown City Councilmember Kay Senter, left, and McKenzie Mayor Ryan Griffin, right.



From left to right, Visit Kingsport Vice President Lara Potter, Milan Mayor BW Beasley, and Phyllis Beasley.



Stilts walkers, acrobats, and jugglers added to the carnival feel of Kingsport's Host City Reception. TML members also had a chance to indulge in carnival foods like kettle corn, hot dogs, pizza, and ice cream as well as take rides on the refurbished Kingsport Carousel.

TML 86th Annual Conference, July 9-12 in Kingsport



From left to right, Trenton Alderman Kim Holt, Cece Jones, and Ricky Graves fit in together.



Keynote speaker Dr. Hannah Harvey discusses how cities can better tell their individual stories.



TML President and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic leads the First General Session.



From left to right, Madisonville Alderman Danny Long, Rhonda Cooley, and Nancy Franklin.



Paris Commissioner Vickey Roberts, left, and Mayor Kathy Ray, right.



Tullahoma Alderman Matthew Bird, left, and TML District 5 Director and Gallatin Finance Director Rachel Nichols, right.



Above: From left to right, Columbia Public Information Officer Hannah Miller, Parks and Recreation Director Mackel Reagan, City Attorney Jake Hubbell, Assistant Finance Director Jamey Owen, Councilmember Sheryl Secrest, City Manager Tony Massey, and UT-MTAS Technical Consulting Program Manager Steve Cross.

Left: City officials from Loretto make a video in the exhibit hall to take back home as a souvenir of their time at the conference.

TML 86th Annual Conference, July 9-12 in Kingsport



Clinton Councilmember Wendy Maness, left, and City Manager Roger Houck, right.



Comptroller Jason Mumpower returns umbrellas to TML Board members who had lost them following several days of rainy weather during the conference.



National League of Cities President and Louisville, Ky., Councilman Kevin Kramer invited TML members to attend the NLC City Summit in Nashville this fall.



From left to right, Monterey City Administrator Rafferty Cleary, Algood City Administrator Keith Morrison, and Cookeville City Manager James Mays.



Eastman Senior Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer Adrian J. Holt discusses the challenges city and business leaders face in the future during the keynote at the Second General Session.



Berry Hill Vice Mayor Dennis Sheffield, left, and UT-MTAS Municipal Management Consultant Margaret Norris, right.



Spring Hill Assistant City Administrators Chris Claus, left, and Dan Allen, right.



Shelbyville Planning Administrator Brandi Banks, left, and UT-MTAS Public Works Consultant Shelia Huffmire, right.



Ripley Alderman Nyrita Alston, left, and Henning Mayor Quenton Reed, right.



From left to right, Elizabethton Councilmember Wes Frazier, Councilmember Mike Simerly, and Mayor Bill Carter.

TML congratulates 2026 Achievement Award winners



Newport received the award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation. First row: Mayor Roland "Trey" Dykes III, left, and Executive Assistant Molly Ealy. Back Row: Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) Division of Forestry Technician Cliff King, Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator Ashley Kite-Rowland, Newport Parks and Recreation Director Timothy L. Dockery, Newport Community Development Director Gary Carver, and TDA Division of Forestry Community Engagement Specialist Alex Bremmer.



Clarksville Mayor Howell Todd accepts the city's award for Small City Progress.



McMinnville City Administrator Nolan Ming accepts the award for Excellence in Overall Municipal Governance.



From left to right, Paris Commissioner Sam Tharpe, Mayor Kathy Ray, City Manager Kim Foster, and Commissioner Vickey Roberts accept the award for Excellence in Economic and Community Development.



From left to right, Cookeville Councilman Chad Gilbert, Fire Chief Benton Young, and City Manager James Mills accept the award for Excellence in Fire Services.



From left to right, Gatlinburg Public Works Director Roger Sims, Mayor Mike Werner, City Manager Greg Patterson, and Public Information Officer Seth Butler accept the awards or Innovation and Excellence in Public Works.



Above: From left to right, Nolensville Commissioner Tyler Carpenter, Mayor Halie Gallik, Sgt. Kyle Neal, Police Chief Dale Armour, Police Sgt. Matt Neal, Vice Mayor Jessica Salamida, and City Administrator Victor Lay accept the award for Excellence in Police Services.

Left: Maryville City Administrator Greg McClain accepts the award for Excellence in Conservation and Energy Efficiency.

STATE BRIEFS

Tennessee’s May unemployment rate remained unchanged from 3.6% for the fourth consecutive month. Data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) indicates the rate was also above the 3.5% rate recorded in May 2025. Tennessee’s unemployment rate remains below the national rate, which has stayed at 4.3% in both April and May 2026. Between April and May 2026, the state added 5,700 nonfarm jobs with the largest increases coming in the leisure and hospitality sector, followed by durable goods manufacturing, and the government sector third. TDLWD has compiled an analysis of the [May 2026 unemployment data](#).

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) has released the [state-level overview](#) and the [full 2025-26 TCAP assessment data to the public](#). These results include English Language Arts, mathematics, and social studies but not science, which is in a standard-setting year. According to the results, 42.3% of Tennessee students are meeting grade level expectations in English, 41% are grade-level proficient in math, and 50% are grade-level proficient in social studies. TDOE officials notes that the results indicate achievement gaps have been closed since the pandemic. More information can be found on TDOE’s [assessment webpage](#).

Health officials are shining a light on heart disease with Tennessee ranking as the state with the sixth highest heart disease mortality rate. [New data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found heart disease is the leading contributing factor for death in most Americans and about 210 in every 100,000 Tennesseans dies from heart disease-related conditions. The CDC data shows states in the Southeastern U.S. are dispropor-

tionately affected by heart disease mortality when compared to the rest of the country, with eight of the top 10 states for heart disease mortality located in the region. Medical officials said these states also have higher risks of associated conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, poor cholesterol levels, obesity, physical inactivity, and stroke. CDC officials encourage reducing the risk of heart disease by consulting with medical professionals, consuming healthy food and drinks, maintaining a healthy weight, staying active, not smoking, and managing risk factors.

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) has consolidated the Division of Remediation and Division of Solid Waste Management into the new Division of Land Protection (. The Division of Remediation and Division of Solid Waste will now be referred to as the Division of Land Protection – Remediation Branch and Division of Land Protection – Solid Waste Branch. The [TDEC website](#) has also been updated to reflect these changes.

The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency has become the Tennessee Emergency Management Authority (TEMA) and has transitioned to a standalone cabinet-level department. TEMA was previously housed in the Department of Military. As a new standalone department, officials said TEMA will have better ability to support state agencies and local jurisdictions before, during, and after disasters. The new department will continue working closely with county emergency management agencies, first responders, state departments, federal partners, volunteer organizations, private-sector partners, and community leaders to strengthen statewide preparedness, resilience, and coordinated emergency response.

ATTAIN grant applications open

The Federal Highway Administration Tennessee Division is reminding potential applicants of upcoming deadlines for the ATTAIN Competitive Grant Program. The program funds the deployment, installation, and operation of advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, mobility, efficiency, system performance, intermodal connectivity, and infrastructure return on investment. Up to \$120 million is available with a

maximum award of \$12 million per recipient per fiscal year. A minimum non-federal 20% match to grants is required. Applicants must have fully active registration on [SAM.gov](#) in order to apply. Final applications must be submitted electronically and can be applied for directly through [Grants.gov](#) or [Simpler.grants.gov](#). The deadline to apply is **July 27, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. (EST)**.

Tennessee's May revenues \$227.2M above budgeted estimates

Tennessee revenues exceeded budgeted estimates for the month of May. Department of Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson reported that total May tax revenues were \$1.9 billion, \$227.2 million more than the budgeted estimate and \$244.7 million more than May 2025. The total tax growth rate for the month was 14.38%. General fund revenues were \$221.1 million more than the May estimate, while the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$6.1 million more than the estimates. On an accrual basis, May is the tenth month in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. “Tax revenue growth in May exceeded expectations,” Bryson

said. “An increase in corporate quarterly estimated tax payments and solid sales tax receipts, driven by April taxable sales activity, lifted overall monthly revenues. All other tax categories combined performed near budgeted expectations. With just two months left in the 2025–2026 fiscal year, we remain optimistic and will continue to monitor the year-end results.” On a year-to-date basis, August through May, total tax revenues are 2.60% greater than the budget estimate, or \$482.5 million above expectations. When compared to this same period last year, total tax revenues have grown 6.54% or \$1.2 billion. General fund revenues are 2.83% greater than the year-to-date budgeted estimate, or \$443.2 million higher. Likewise, general fund

First Certified Population Reports now available

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) has released the [2026 Certified Population of Tennessee Incorporated Municipalities and Counties](#). This annual report provides the official population counts used to determine the distribution of state-shared revenues to local governments across the state. The 2026 report provides certified population figures for:

- 345 incorporated municipalities and the Urban Services District population within the state’s three metropolitan counties.
- All 95 counties, including a breakdown of population in unincorporated areas and General Services Districts within Davidson, Moore, and Trousdale counties.
- The state’s aggregate population, which reached 7,317,201 on July 1, 2025.

Historically, Tennessee’s certified populations remained largely static between decennial enumerations conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau; they changed only if a municipality completed a [special census](#) to enumerate its growth. That changed with the passage of [Public Chapter 501](#) on May 21, 2025. [The new law](#), which became effective on Jan. 1, 2026, requires that population figures be revised and certified annually during the years between the federal decennial census. To meet this requirement, the [Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research](#), through the

Tennessee State Data Center, now compiles annual population estimates for review and certification by TNECD. The revised statutes also stipulate that revenues shared with counties and municipalities, including state sales tax and gasoline taxes, use the annual estimates when population serves as the basis for allocating funds. **Details of 2026 Population Estimate Development** The figures in the 2026 report are primarily based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Vintage 2025 Estimates](#), which reflect resident population as of July 1, 2025. Those estimates begin with 2020 Census counts and are updated annually using administrative records from federal, state and local sources – including birth and death events, federal tax returns, Medicare and Social Security files, and local building permit reports – rather than statistical modeling alone. For most parts of the state, the Bureau’s estimates are used directly. However, the Boyd Center made several specific adjustments to the standard Census Bureau release to ensure they were compliant with Tennessee statutes:

- **Special Census Overrides:** If a community conducted a special census that yielded a higher population count than the Census Bureau’s estimate at the time of enumeration, the higher figure was used. The Bureau’s population estimates were adjusted to reflect the results of

the special census, with the estimated net population change applied forward from the point of enumeration to arrive at the July 1, 2025, estimate.

- **Adjusted Aggregate State and County Populations:** In counties where a special census override occurred, the county population was calculated as the sum of the population of the special census community, the other municipalities and the unincorporated balance, resulting in a net increase to both the county and state populations.
- **Metropolitan County Services Districts:** In Tennessee’s three metropolitan counties, the populations of Urban Services Districts and General Services Districts were estimated separately, using the same subcounty estimate methodology as the Bureau, to ensure the data are compatible with state laws governing how municipal-shared revenues are allocated.

Population Estimates Program Going Forward Between now and July 1, 2030, population estimates will be produced each year using the latest available data until the next decennial census results are available in 2031. For the 2027 report, the Census Bureau’s estimates are expected to be supplemented with a Tennessee-specific estimate model that incorporates additional data from State of Tennessee agencies.

Three cities share in site development grants

State site grants were awarded to three municipalities as part of 10 development projects recently selected for funds by the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. **Lewisburg** received \$10,000 for due diligence on the Interstate 65 Commerce Park, **Sparta** received \$71,280 for due diligence on the Sparta/White County Industrial site, and **McMinnville** received a joint award of \$975,000 with Warren County for sewer infrastructure on the Mountain View Industrial Park North Site. More than \$13 million were spread among 10 total projects, which also included awards to the Industrial Development Board (IDB) of Montgomery County, the IDB of Roane County, the IDB of Robertson County, the IDB of Scott County, the Jackson Energy Authority, Morgan County Economic Development Board, and Nickajack



Funds for the program are designed to help communities develop sites for the Select Tennessee program. (Photo by TNECD) Port Authority. The funds are designed to help communities invest in infrastructure and engineering improvements to land economic development projects and achieve [Select Tennessee site certification](#). The SDG program is part of the Rural Economic Opportunity Act, which provides funding to improve the economies of Tennessee’s rural communities. Since 2016, TNECD has awarded 220 SDGs across the state, totaling over nearly \$150 million in assistance to local communities and generating 8,471 new jobs through projects that landed on sites improved through the program.

collections compared to this same period last year have increased 6.38% or \$966.0 million. **Individual tax performance compared to May 2026 Budgeted Estimates:**

- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 3.11% or \$39.2 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Above estimate by 185.19% or \$187.7 million
- Fuel Taxes: Below estimates by 0.47% or \$0.5 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 0.32% or \$0.8 million

Year-to-date performance compared to Budgeted Estimates:

- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 1.81% or \$224.6 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Above estimate by

5.35% or \$169.7 million

- Fuel Taxes: Below estimates by 0.11% or \$1.2 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 4.67% or \$89.4 million

Individual tax performance compared to May 2025:

- Sales Taxes: Up 3.55% or \$44.6 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Up 162.46% or \$178.9 million
- Fuel Taxes: Up 1.70% or \$1.8 million
- All other taxes: Up 8.48% or \$19.5 million

Individual tax performance compared to August 2024 through May 2025:

- Sales Taxes: Up 4.22% or

\$511.9 million

- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Up 18.38% or \$518.7 million
- Fuel Taxes: Down 0.13% or \$1.4 million
- All other taxes: Up 7.52% or \$140.1 million

In depth [revenue tables](#) are also available. The budgeted revenue estimates for 2025–2026 are based on the State Funding Board’s consensus recommendation from Nov. 25, 2024, which was adopted by the first session of the 114th General Assembly in May 2025. These estimates also incorporate any revenue changes enacted during the 2025 General Assembly session. Monthly estimates for fiscal year 2025–2026 [are available on the state’s website](#).

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FCC votes to review its E-Rate program amid screen time concerns

By CHRIS TEALE
Managing Editor
Route Fifty

The Federal Communications Commission voted last week to examine whether its E-Rate program should be amended, or even ended.

Commissioners [voted 2-1](#) to review the E-Rate program, which helps pay for discounted services, internet access, equipment and maintenance for schools and libraries. Agency officials said the review will determine actions it can take to ensure E-Rate is advancing educational outcomes and protecting children’s online safety, as well as ensuring funds from the program are being spent responsibly and for educational purposes.

The FCC is also seeking public comment on any legal or policy efforts for assessing children’s screen time and involving adults more in decisions around their access to networks and services funded by E-Rate. FCC Chair Brendan Carr said this review is part of a wider effort to examine the effects of children’s screen time on their performance in the classroom, and whether E-Rate’s use for various devices has been detrimental.

“[E-Rate] began with a clear focus — supporting basic internet access to schools and libraries for educational purposes,” Carr said during the FCC’s meeting. “Kids could experience digital opportunity for the first time in computer labs at school or at the library. Since then, however, the E-Rate program has expanded exponentially, supporting a much broader list of services. And the number of devices connecting to these E-Rate-supported networks has continued to grow as well. Gone are the days when

schools focused predominately on connecting computer labs.”

But the FCC’s own [rule-making documents](#) that are now open for public comment said the review could go even further.

“Nearly three decades after Congress established the E-Rate program to expand access to advanced telecommunications and information services for schools and libraries, broadband connectivity rates have expanded in these institutions,” the document says. “Accordingly, in this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, we seek comment not only on how to ensure E-Rate-funded services are advancing educational outcomes and protecting children online, but also on whether the program should be narrowed or otherwise reoriented to reflect the extent to which its connectivity objectives have been achieved.”

Federal agencies have taken an [increasing interest](#) in children’s screen time over the past few months. As well as this FCC action, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration [has floated](#) exploring the effects of screen time and determining whether its own spending on broadband and education technology has had a negative impact.

And earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Surgeon General [issued an advisory](#) warning of the links between excessive screen time and poor educational outcomes, urging families, young people, schools and health care providers to be more cognizant of how they can have negative impacts.

Carr cited that study and others in his speech at the FCC meeting, noting that more than half of students now use a computer for up to four hours a day, while a quarter of them spend more than four hours on screens. And, he said, children as young as 8 have been spending up to five and a half hours on

screens each day. By the eighth grade, he said more than half of kids report using computers in all or almost all classes, up from 30% in 2019.

Meanwhile, Carr also pointed to [findings](#) that show the decline of reading and math skills, as well as lower reading and math achievement on standardized tests in elementary school tied to screen time.

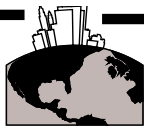
And he noted that various states and school districts have taken action to ban or limit screen time, including the Los Angeles Unified School District Board, which [adopted new rules](#) that prohibit screen time for kids before second grade, cap it at 60 minutes for kids between second and fifth grade, and allow middle-schoolers and high-schoolers a total of six hours and 10 hours weekly, respectively.

“Against this backdrop, it is appropriate for the FCC to look at its own programs,” Carr said.

FCC opponents of the plan said this effort to reexamine E-Rate is ill-advised, especially if the U.S. is to be a world leader in adopting and using artificial intelligence. Commissioner Anna Gomez said its effort to expand universal service to every school and library is not finished, arguing the proposal contains “speculative and unwarranted proposals” masked by concerns over children’s screen time.

“We cannot elevate national expectations for digital and AI literacy while simultaneously stripping away the digital tools required to meet them,” Gomez [said in a statement](#). “We cannot declare that AI leadership is a national priority while questioning whether schools should continue to receive the connectivity required to teach it. And we cannot champion innovation while pulling the ladder out from under the students who will build America’s future technologies. This contradiction has a cost, and it will be paid by America’s children.”

NATIONAL BRIEFS



The U.S. unemployment rate declined to 4.2% in June, though only 57,000 jobs were added nationwide. While the unemployment rate declined 0.1% from May, the amount of new jobs was less than half of the 129,000 in May – revised down from an initially reported rate of 172,000. April job gains were also revised down from an initially reported 179,000 to 148,000. Inflation remained at a three-year high with consumer confidence also near post-pandemic lows. Restaurants, bars, and hotels cut 61,000 jobs nationwide despite predictions that World Cup events would lead to a temporary jobs gain in the sector. Despite this, the economy is growing moderately, expanding at 2.1% annual pace for the first three months of the year. Economists believe that declining immigration as well as a mismatch between

what job seekers have to offer and what jobs are available may be driving current employment issues.

A [new survey](#) from Consumer Reports found **75% of Americans are not confident data center developers will pay the full costs associated with the energy needs their facilities require.** While seven major artificial intelligence companies signed a White House pledge known as the [Ratepayer Protection Pledge](#) to “pay the full cost of energy and infrastructure no matter what,” the survey found that only 4% of Americans said they were “very confident” these companies would fulfill the pledge. Further, 78% of Americans said they had concerns their household energy bills would increase due to data centers.

Nearly half of all adults under the age of 30 are still living with

the parents because of housing affordability issues. A new [report from the Federal Reserve](#) found 49% of adults under 30 are living with parents, a 12% increase since 2019. Many cite the inability to find a financial foothold and afford independent housing, particularly due to rising housing costs since the pandemic. Rent prices increased 30% over the last five years and while home price growth has slowed, the median existing home sales price still remains at a record high of \$429,300 nationwide. Instead of living independently, many young adults are opting to live with parents and help through buying groceries, paying for utilities, and in other ways. As a result, [household growth was down for the fourth year in a row](#). While household growth had averaged 2 million a year, the amount of new American households only grew by 1.1 million in 2025.

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July 24-25: Franklin
[Bluegrass Along the Harpeth Fiddlers Jamboree](#)
Honoring Franklin’s own Sam and Kirk McGee, this old-time music festival brings together musicians, dancers, vendors, residents, and visitors for a not-to-be-missed event.

July 24-25: McEwen
[172nd Annual Irish Picnic and Homecoming](#)
More than 20,000 people come from near and far to celebrate McEwen’s Irish heritage and reconnect with family and friends.

July 25: Gruetli-Laager
[Swiss Heritage Festival](#)
The Stoker-Stampfli Farm and Museum hosts the 52nd Annual Swiss Heritage Festival, honoring the hundreds of Swiss emigrants who made their home in and around Gruetli-Laager and Grundy County.

July 25-26: Monteagle
[67th Annual Mountain Market](#)
Monteagle’s Hannah Pickett Park hosts one of Tennessee’s longest running summer events with even more energy and excitement, featuring live music, shopping, and a business expo highlighting local innovation and entrepreneurship.

Aug. 1: Maryville
[Makers Market, Bluegrass, & Beignets](#)
This charming, family-friendly, open-air market is an event you won’t want to miss with a fantastic variety of vendors, gourmet food options, and traditional music.

Aug. 7-8: Nashville
[Tomato Art Festival](#)
Tomato Art Fest has been uniting fruits and vegetables for more than 20 years. The annual festival attracts people from all over with fun-themed art, local music, delicious food, costumes, wacky contests, shopping, kids’ activities, and more.

Aug. 14-15: Johnson City
[Meet the Mountains Festival](#)
This free, outdoor festival showcases all of the Johnson City’s recreational assets and provides a one-stop-shop to explore outdoor opportunities.

Aug. 15: Loudon
[Loudon Riverfest](#)
Glide through the river in an exciting kayak paddle event, indulge in delicious offerings from local food vendors, and cap off the day with a spectacular fireworks display.

Aug. 15: Townsend
[8th Annual Great Smoky Mountains Hot Air Balloon Festival](#)
Join in for a spectacular evening of hot air balloons and family fun with this annual fundraiser that supports local community initiatives.

Aug. 15: White Bluff
[6th Annual World Honeybee Day Festival](#)
Join us for a day of fun, music, learning, and community to celebrate the incredible honeybee.

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Financial Advisor

Tennessee municipalities celebrate America 250



Dandridge kicked off its America 250 celebrations on April 18, 2026, the anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord. The celebration included a parade through historic downtown Dandridge followed by a concert featuring David Worley and a fireworks display. (Photo by Blue Ridge Photography)



Downtown Dickson encouraged local business owners to decorate for celebrations and erected banners honoring Revolutionary War patriots around the city. (Photo by Dickson)



Members off the Clarksville Police Department present the colors at the city's Celebration of American 250. (Photo by Clarksville Parks and Recreation Department)



Fireworks explode over the Capt. Jeff Kuss USMC Memorial at Smyrna's Lee Victory Recreation Park on the Fourth of July. (Photo by Patrick Cella/Town of Smyrna)



Germantown residents watch the city's Fourth of July fireworks display. (Photo by Brad Villane)



Nolensville officials test out the official selfie station at the town's Fourth of July event. (Photo by Nolensville)



The crew of the USS Greeneville were invited to the town of Greeneville to take part in a wide variety of celebrations during the Fourth of July weekend. Here, two crewmembers participate in the ceremonial firing of an antique cannon at the Niswonger Foundation. (Photo by Larry Horn/Greeneville)



Morristown hosted a Kids' Bike Parade at a local park. Local children were allowed to decorate their bikes or scooters before a parade led by the Morristown Police Bike Patrol. (Photo by Morristown)



Fireworks explode in the sky on the Fourth of July over the Sweetwater Depot and Visitor's Center in downtown Sweetwater. (Photo by Sweetwater)