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June is Small Cities Month

League of Cities (NLC) is celebrating "Small Cities Month." This year's theme, Small Cities, Big Impact – Celebrating Community and Leadership, recognizes the contributions of small cities, towns and villages and celebrates the local leaders and residents who help them thrive. NLC will help amplify on the national stage the value of America's communities and their people in cities with populations up to 50,000.

I, like many of you, was born in a small town - Trenton, TN, population 5,000. It had everything we needed – good schools, churches, jobs, a hospital, movie theater, stores and lumber yards with everything. We all played Little League baseball and enjoyed "Friday night lights." When the St. Louis Cardinals played, the game was on an AM radio in almost every service station, store and car. The big three automakers were represented with

This month, the National hometown dealerships. We didn't have Amazon but had Sears. TML leaders such as the late mayor and president Tommie Goodwin and alderman George Wade (father of Murfreesboro Councilman Kirt Wade) all helped our small town

> But what made the small town of Trenton special was it's people. They epitomize in my mind to this day what is great about America.

> So, to our small towns and cities all across Tennessee, we salute and thank you for all you do. It matters and makes the difference. And the next time you're listening to streaming music, load up John Cougar Mellencamp's "Small Town" and experience what it's all about.



Anthony Haynes TML Executive Director

Dynamic Workshops planned for 85th TML Conference

Registration Open, Make Plans to Attend!

A host of dynamic workshops will be offered at the 85th Tennessee Municipal League Annual Conference in Chattanooga, Aug. 2-5.

You won't want to miss this opportunity to dive into practical workshops that will empower your city to thrive, with many approved for CMFO and Utility Board Training credits.

Workshop topics to include:

- Slum Clearance, Property Maintenance and the Administrative Hearing Officer
- Unmasking Human Trafficking: Indicators, Laws, and
- Strategies for Intervention Tennessee's Hemp Law Overhaul: What Local Officials
- Need to Know A Panel Discussion on Hous-
- ing and Infrastructure Mapping Tomorrow: Leveraging GIS for Rural Growth &
- Unlocking Community Potential: Understanding and Driv-



- ing Economic Development Communicating with Confidence: Using AI to Support
- City Marketing and Messaging Build Public Trust & Enhance Transparency Through Citizen-Centric Budgets
- Who's Watching the City's
- Effective Governance of Water Utility Systems

And that's not all—we will hear a colorful keynote speech on Sunday afternoon from Coach Donnie Campbell, the real-life inspiration for the wise and ever so cheerful lead character of the Emmy Award leadership lessons that can be seen See CONFERENCE on Page 6



Gov. Lee signs law to cut administrative

fees and boost local government revenues

Gov. Bill Lee has signed into law a new measure that will deliver nearly \$19 million in annual savings to local governments across Tennessee by reducing administrative fees on locally collected taxes.

Senate Bill 1315, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson and Sen. Ken Yager, reduces the Department of Revenue's administrative fee on several local taxes from 1.125% to 0.75%. This 33% reduction in the fee applies to the local option sales tax, local occupancy tax, business tax, coal severance tax, and local tax surcharge.

'This legislation is a win for Tennessee's cities and counties," said Sen. Ken Yager, who served as Roane County Executive for over 20 years. "Local governments work hard to provide services with limited resources, and this law ensures they get to keep more of the revenue they generate. I'm grateful to Governor Lee for signing this important legislation and to my colleagues for their support."

By lowering the administrative fee, counties and municipalities across the state will retain more of their locally generated revenueamounting to an estimated \$18.9 million annually. The additional funding will help local governments improve essential services, balance budgets, and operate more efficiently without raising taxes.

The bill also makes a technical change by removing subsection (h) of Tennessee Code Annotated Section 67-6-710, which is related to the local option sales tax, thereby simplifying the administration of this

West Tennessee cities highlight cooperation as

key to new wastewater agreement, related growth

provision in line with the revised fee structure. Furthermore, the legislation ensures consistency across all applicable tax statutes by applying the same reduced collection fee rate.

Set to take effect on July 1, 2025, this law will apply to all tax collections received on or after that

TML is proud to have been a part of this important effort to help return these revenues to the benefit of residents, businesses, and individuals who pay these taxes. We thank Sen. Ken Yager and Sen. Jack Johnson for their leadership in sponsoring this important legislation and to the TN General Assembly and Gov. Lee for their support. A special thank you goes to Sen. Richard Briggs for championing this issue for several years.

Winning show, Ted Lasso. His presentation will provide valuable Development



By KATE COIL

Elections were held in 10 munic-

ipalities in May and June. For the first time in 48 years, the city of Rogersville elected a new mayor after longtime mayor Jim Sells announced his decision to not seek re-election this year. Sells began his tenure as mayor in 1977. He was first elected an alderman in 1971.

BOLIVAR

A municipal election was held in Bolivar on May 20. Incumbent Michael Brown defeated challenger Gwenda Woods in the single contested race. Brown earned 165 votes to Woods' 50 for the District B, Position

Incumbent mayor Julian McTizic ran unopposed and was re-elected to his position with 267 complimentary votes.

Incumbent Melvin Lawrence Golden ran unopposed and was re-elected to the District A, Position 3 seat with 81 complimentary votes while incumbent Tommie Woods ran unopposed and was re-elected to the District A, Position 4 seat with 82 complimentary votes. Additionally, incumbent Suzanne Rhea ran unopposed and was re-elected to the District B, Position 2 seat with 167 complimentary votes.

Voters went to the polls for an election in Celina on June 3. Incumbent Luke Collins defeated challengers Willie Kerr and Justin Rich, the city's current vice mayor, to retain his mayoral seat. Collins led the vote count with 291 followed by Kerr with 174 and Rich with 63.

Incumbent Lester Kenney Westmoreland will be joined on the Celina Board of Alderman by newcomers Michael Boles and Tracy Mills, defeating five other candidates for the three open seats. Boles will take the seat previously held by Vice Mayor Justin Rich while Mills will take the seat held by Alderman Winton Dillon, who did not seek re-election.

M. Boles led the vote count with 240 followed by Mills with 230, Westmoreland with 186, D. Dale with 145, T. Boles with 142, Spears with 135, K. Dale with 125, and Hayes with 118. See ELECTIONS on Page 7

From left to right, Brighton Mayor Josh Hazlerig, Munford Mayor Dwayne Cole, and Atoka Mayor Barry Akin gathered in Munford to put the final signatures on a landmark new wastewater agreement between the three municipalities. An original agreement was crafted between 1989 and 1990, but no longer met the needs of the growing cities. Officials said the new agreement showcases how collaboration can facilitate regional growth opportunities.

By KATE COIL

TT&C Assistant Editor

A new, historic wastewater agreement between the municipalities of Atoka, Brighton, and Munford is positioning all three cities for growth and showcasing local collaboration.

The city of Munford built its lagoon wastewater system in the early 1960s. The original agreement began in 1989 when Atoka began receiving service from the system. Brighton joined in 1990 as part of a grant program.

As the cities have grown over the past 35 years, officials knew things about the agreement needed to change.

"You can imagine with a 35-year-old agreement there is not much that was set in place 35 years ago that is still relevant," Atoka Mayor Barry Akin said. "Atoka experienced tremendous growth in the last 15 years, and we are also seeing substantial growth in Munford. For

a while, we were under a building moratorium until we could get a handle on the capacity. We reached out to Munford and Brighton, and they agreed this was something we needed to change."

Munford Mayor Dwyane Cole said officials also knew that expanding the lagoon's capacity would not be possible until a new agreement could be reached.

"We knew we needed to expand the lagoon," Mayor Cole said. "Atoka's growth has outpaced Munford, but we are both growing communities. We also knew we needed to reallocate percentages of reserve capacity. We knew Atoka was going to need more and Munford was going to have to take less from the

beginning. Brighton Mayor Josh Hazlerig came into office in November 2024, and said finalizing the agreement was his top priority.

"In the past five years, we have seen some historical growth around our region," he said. "The capacity

of Munford's lagoon was getting pushed to the limits, and some capacities were actually exceeded," Mayor Hazlerig said. "I knew coming in as mayor that this was going to be one of the largest portions on my plate. Anything that we do, we are so close together we have to work together. That's the only way we will make it happen. The mayors of Atoka and Munford have been mentors to me both in this and otherwise."

REVISING THE AGREEMENT

Work on revising the agreement began in 2022. One of the biggest obstacles being language claiming it had to be held "in perpetuity." Mayor Cole said lawyers from the three cities worked together to overcome parts of the agreement that no longer meshed with reality.

"The original contract stated that if one community exceeded their reserve capacity, it was their See WASTEWATER on Page 3

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



ASHLAND CITY

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has secured a public-private partnership between the state, Cheatham County, and Ingram Marine Group to develop the Ashland City River Port project. The project will enhance connectivity with more freight transportation options, reducing congestion and spurring economic growth by creating jobs and generating millions in local tax revenue. The project includes a multimodal, multi-commodity inland river port on a 40-acre site at mile marker 162 on the Cumberland River. Ingram Marine Group will pay to construct the \$30 million inland port on the land identified near Ashland City. TDOT will pay for the construction of the \$3 million pier with state funds supporting multimodal infrastructure. The port will significantly enhance the supply chain movement as it's located within 10 miles of Interstates 40 and 65.

CLARKSVILLE

Ascension Saint Thomas has announced the location of a new, full-service hospital with ER on a nearly 100-acre site in Clarksville. The facility, located at the intersection of MLK Jr. Parkway and Interstate 24, will include 44 inpatient beds, with the ability to expand to 132 beds in the future, according to a news release. The Ascension Saint Thomas project represents a \$148.5 million investment in the community and is expected to create approximately 250 healthcare jobs. Plans for the hospital campus include Emergency care, inpatient surgery, cardiology, oncology, women's health, neonatal intensive care (NICU), orthopaedics, outpatient surgery, advanced imaging, other ambulatory and outpatient services to support seamless care coordination, and space to grow.

COLUMBIA

Columbia Fire & Rescue is proud to announce the addition of a new 2025 Fire Master Tanker to its fleet—a proactive investment aimed at strengthening the department's capacity to respond to structure fires throughout the city. The new vehicle, built on an International chassis, includes a 2,000-gallon water tank and a 1,250 GPM Hale QFlo pump. In addition to transporting water, the tanker is equipped with fire hoses and other firefighting tools, allowing it to serve as a secondary pumper when needed. The \$468,100 purchase marks the first tanker of its kind for the department and reflects ongoing efforts to enhance fire suppression capabilities in a variety of emergency situations. The purchase comes amid continued collaboration between the city of Columbia and Maury County Fire Department through an Automatic Aid Agreement.

ELIZABETHTON

The Elizabethton City Council has approved construction of a new, 10-foot linear path that will help connect downtown to the Tweetsie Trail. The linear path along Hattie Avenue will connect South Riverside Drive to the trail at Cedar Avenue, including a two-way bike path, road resurfacing, signage, and ADA compliant ramps, curbs, and sidewalks. The connector has been a priority of Elizabethton's Main Street community and will allow 9.6-mile rails-to-trails path between Johnson City and Elizabethton to allow better access to downtown. The estimated cost of the project is \$520,000, which will include \$416,000 in federal grants and \$104,000 from local funding. The project will be completed in three phases over three years. It is also part of the Johnson City Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization's Transportation Improvement Plan.

GOODLETTSVILLE

The city of Goodlettsville and Goodlettsville Industrial Development Board have approved economic incentives to bolster the RiverGate Mall Redevelopment Project, echoing similar approvals granted by the Nashville City Council and Nashville Industrial Development Board. Merus, Inc., (formerly Al Neyer) is leading the redevelopment, which will result

in a mixed-use community with residential, retail, entertainment, medical and other uses. Most of the existing mall will be demolished with only the Dillard's department store remaining. Approximately 33% of the mall building lies within the city limits of Goodlettsville, but the redevelopment will place between 65-70% in the city, increasing economic benefits to the city. Demolition begins this summer with a phased approach to construction.

JACKSON

MAT Industries, LLC, officials announced the company will expand its manufacturing operations in Jackson, Tennessee, investing at least \$9 million and creating 30 new jobs. The project comprises the addition of multiple production lines and upon completion, will bring the company's total headcount in Jackson to nearly 260 people. The company engineers and manufactures a broad line of air compressors sold at home centers, hardware, farm co-ops, and industrial distributors across North America.

KINGSPORT

Officials in Kingsport held a ribbon cutting for Kingsport Junction, a new food truck park that will serve visitors to downtown businesses and parks. The park was created through efforts of the city, Downtown Kingsport Association, community members, and local food truck owners and is located on Cherokee Street. Food trucks can rent spaces at the site for a single day, three-day weekends, or four weekdays with regional food trucks able to rotate in and out of the facility.

LAWRENCEBURG

Craig Manufacturing USA, Inc., will expand its manufacturing operations in Lawrenceburg, creating 30 new jobs and invest \$4.4 million at its current facility, increasing its manufacturing footprint by 24,000 square feet. Upon completion, the company will employ 110 at its facility on the Team Lawrence Commerce Park, a Select Tennessee Certified Site. Founded in 1946, Craig Manufacturing produces steel attachments for heavy construction, forestry, mining, energy and utility equipment. Headquartered in New Brunswick, Canada, Craig Manufacturing also has operations in Alberta and Ontario. The company supplies directly to original equipment manufacturers and their regional dealer networks. Canada is the state's No. 3 partner for foreign direct investment with Canadian companies investing nearly \$1.7 billion and creating approximately 3,800 jobs statewide.

MEMPHIS

Hyosung HICO, Ltd officials announced the company will expand operations at its U.S. manufacturing headquarters in Memphis, investing \$51 million and creating 123 new jobs. The company's current operations are 360,000 square feet in size and strategically located on a 200-acre site adjacent to both rail and water. Subsidiary to South Korean Hyosung Heavy Industries, Hyosung HICO is a leading U.S. producer of large power transformers, which are critical components of a secure and reliable electric grid. In 2019, the company had the honor of announcing Memphis as its first U.S. production facility - an investment that has since become a cornerstone of its North American presence.

MORRISTOWN

Summertown Metals officials

Clarksville cuts ribbon on new fire station



Clarksville Fire Rescue has cut the ribbon on the city's new Fire Station No 6. The new station includes accordion doors that open much quicker and remain in view of the driver, a warm zone where firefighters can decontaminate after calls before taking carcinogens into living spaces, and a fire pole for quicker access to apparatus from the upstairs of the building.

Dresden cuts ribbon on municipal complex



Officials with the city of Dresden cut the ribbon on a new, \$6 million municipal complex featuring a new city hall, police headquarters, and fire headquarters. Funding for the project came in partnership with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund and Security Bank and Trust Company. The new complex replaces a city hall, fire department, and police department that were all destroyed – along with much of downtown Dresden – in the Dec. 10, 2021, tornado outbreak.

Ashland City Fire Department honored with Patriotic Employer award by ESGR



The Ashland City Fire Department received the "Patriotic Employer" award from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, in recognition of its support for the National Guard and Reserve Force. Col. Don Bradley, (Ret.), representing ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve), presented Chief Walker with the certificate. The department was nominated for this award by Stephanie Miller, one of the city's part-time firefighters and Chief Petty Officer with the Coast Guard Reserve.

announced the company will expand for the first time outside of Southern Middle Tennessee, locating additional distribution and manufacturing operations in Morristown. Summertown Metals will invest \$22.6 million and create 170 new jobs in Morristown, bringing the total number of employees in its facilities in Summertown, Hohenwald, and Morristown to nearly 600. Founded in 2006, Summertown Metals is a Tennessee-based company that has expanded from a single building materials supplier into a quality, custom building materials distributor. The expansion to East Tennessee will allow the company to better meet customer demand, providing additional space for metal roll forming, both wood and steel truss manufacturing and

warehousing and distribution.

NOLENSVILLE

The town of Nolensville cut the ribbon on several new amenities at Gregory Park financed by a \$10,000 donation by Mill Creek Brewing Co. The funding added two concrete game-top tables with built-in seating and a picnic table to the park. Additional concrete cornhole boards are forthcoming. Mill Creek Brewing Co. raised the funds during their tenth anniversary celebrations and donated them back to the Nolensville community where the company is located and many employees live.

OAK RIDGE

The Tennessee Valley Authority has applied for a license to construct the first small modular

reactor in the U.S. at its Clinch River Nuclear Site in Oak Ridge. The application for the BWRX-300 reactor is designed by GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy and will be reviewed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Similar models are under development in other countries. The 300-megawatt reactor would generate enough electricity to power around 175,000 homes with clean energy and are increasingly being researched for use by tech companies, who want to power artificial intelligence data centers without burning fossil fuels. The reactor could cost around \$5.4 billion though costs would likely decrease as additional reactors were added. TVA plans to build multiple reactors in Oak Ridge as part of its long-term energy plan.

WAUFORD

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

West Tennessee cities highlight cooperation as key to new wastewater agreement

WASTEWATER, from Page 1 responsibility to get back into compliance," he said. "I don't believe anyone back then expected as much growth as we have seen. The original contract was also 'in perpetuity,' but we had to change it. We had to cancel that agreement or else the percentages would have never changed. The city of Munford knew those percentages were not fair, and we wanted it to be fair. The prior contract put depreciation totally on Munford because we owned the facility. We decided to share responsibility for depreciation, which was a big deal."

Building its own sewer facility is cost prohibitive for Brighton, but without increased capacity, Mayor Hazlerig said the town could not attract development or conduct future growth planning.

"It is getting us out of the red on our capacity and gives us some growth potential," he said. "It's giving us options for the future. We were over capacity by a small amount, but at the end of the day, it is going to give us some reserve capacity to be able to look into options for growth. We have a few things in the pipeline, and when you're a small town like Brighton, it doesn't take a lot to make a lot. Sewer capacity is something you have to consider whenever a developer is looking at something."

Mayor Akin said working together to expand the Munford facility's capacity was the best option.

"Financially, this agreement checks a lot of boxes," he said. "Atoka is in really good shape financially, but taking a hit like trying to build your own wastewater facility would definitely be tough. If you were to start on something like that today, you might be looking at a ten-year time frame getting all the regulatory hurdles cleared, getting agreements in place, and that's not even considering getting the financials in place."

GROWTH POTENTIAL

Mayor Akin said wastewater capacity is directly related to how much any of the three cities can



Originally built in the 1960s, Munford's lagoon wastewater system has served not only Munford but also the towns of Atoka and Brighton for more than 35 years. Before work can be done on an expansion project, municipal leaders felt it was essential to draw up a new wastewater agreement that better reflects the current needs of all three cities.

foster residential, industrial, and commercial growth.

"Munford has a line to Mississippi River, and for West Tennessee, that is gold," he said. "We don't have an issue increasing what we're sending. A lot of municipalities in West Tennessee may be next to an outflow entity like a river and meet all the challenges of treating and processing the wastewater, but they can't add a lot of capacity to what they are already handling. One of the major factors up front was can this 15-mile line handle new capacity."

Mayor Cole said the new agreement allows the cities to move forward with expanding the wastewater system. ARPA grants have been secured that partner the cities and Tipton County.

"We also realize, because of several different factors, we are going to meet the capacity of the current treatment specs pretty soon, and we need to fix that," he said. "Atoka and Brighton have room and acerage to put in a new lagoon that increases our capacity by 1 million gallons a day, bringing us up to 3 million. Since we were primarily funding that, we decided we should get a new agreement. This new agreement is much more comprehensive in what factors trigger a warning or clear a warning, treatment, capacity, and who pays for what. It is just a much better agreement."

Even without the opening of Blue Oval City nearby, Atoka Town Administrator Marc Woerner said the project will ensure the future of all three communities.

"We've got wastewater capacity now that can help fuel our economic and community development," Woerner said. "When we do have businesses and investments coming our way, we have the wastewater. That is not something every municipality in West Tennessee has. It's about positioning

Atoka for the future, making sure we have the tools in place there to seize opportunities when they come their way. We know we are getting looks, and it is just a matter of some things coming full circle"

WORKING TOGETHER

Woerner said an additional benefit to this project was strengthening the relationships between both elected officials and employees of all three cities.

"The relationships between the municipalities helped make the cooperation work," he said. "Our partners at the city of Munford and town of Brighton have been great partners through this process. We met with TDEC and we had a meeting that was just with our own city engineers. We've had meetings with elected officials."

Mayor Cole said the agreement is one of the more visible examples of how local municipalities are working together to benefit

the whole.

"I would hope working together cooperatively is always the plan," he said. "No one has to get the credit; you just have to get it done. We have a terrific relationship between the towns. In fact, the mayors of Atoka, Brighton, Munford, and Covington try to get lunch together once a quarter just to talk. My mantra has always been that we need to do what good neighbors do and help out."

Mayor Hazlerig said the collaboration is an example to local residents that their local governments are willing to cooperate.

"I think people find comfort that their leaders are willing to collaborate with their fellow municipalities," he said. "It's good to know we have each other's backs. Munford and Atoka face the same issues we do, especially when dealing with the state or federal government."

Downtown beautification brings Greeneville residents, businesses together

By KATE COIL

A community beautification tradition is bringing Greeneville residents together to invest in their community.

Jann Mirkov, executive director of Main Street: Greeneville, said the annual volunteer planting day brings together residents old and new, young and old to connect with each other and give back to their community by planting new flowers downtown.

"We have a variety of age groups that help us," Mirkov said. "They have buy-in and it's a nice way to have the community engaged. It's fun to see the ownership that they take. We had six youth from our Green County youth leadership group help this year. We also have some of the same people who have come year after year to help. We advertise it, so we get different people each time. Sometimes we get people who are new to the community and looking for some way to volunteer. We team first timers up with those who have volunteered before. Often times, younger members have never planted – even at home - but they are gung-ho at helping get it done."

Heavier lifting is done by the Greeneville Public Works Department while the flowers themselves come from a farm and greenhouse just outside the town.

"The Public Works Department help us move some of the large



Annual planting brings Greeneville residents together to beautify downtown. The event attracts residents from all different backgrounds and provides a unique opportunity for them to get to know fellow community members.

planters and help us with some of the soil," she said. "Volunteers then finish up the bulk of the work. We have enjoyed partnering with the public works department over the years. It's nice that we have that opportunity. They have the manpower to get us to the point that volunteers can do the planting."

Downtown businesses also reap benefits from the efforts. Many of the businesses are still using the

original planters they purchased. The city also has self-watering planters to keep the planters looking nice throughout the summer heat.

"The flowers soften the hardscape of the buildings, and it's really nice for folks to see," Mirkov said. "We tend to use a variety of colors. The self-watering planters still need the man power to fill them up, but it helps having to not water them every night in the heat of the summer. We only water probably twice a week as opposed to every

night."

The flowers also provide a good first impression for the visitors to Greeneville's numerous historic sites.

"Art and flowers can set a mood like music," she said. "People enjoy looking at the different varieties. We have very large planters at a couple of our intersections, which have quite a presence. We have a volunteer who comes to help plant who walks every morning, and said they really enjoy seeing the plants on that run. We even get people who call if they are concerned about a planter. The public keeps their eyes on things."

Planting usually occurs the Saturday before Mother's Day. Mirkov said a combination of weather, the downtown presence on Mother's Day, and Greeneville's Iris Festival the following weekend usually make this the ideal time to plant.

"Mother's Day weekend is typically when the weather shifts, and plants grow at a quicker rate when night time temperatures are in the 50s," she said. "By Mother's Day, we, in this area, can typically avoid the frost. It's lovely because the day after we plant we usually have a lot of people downtown for church services on Mother's Day.

The flowers then usually have a week to take hold before the Iris Festival."

The idea of bringing in community volunteers to help with downtown beautification came from late Greeneville Mayor G. Thomas Love, who served the city for nearly 50 years. Mirkov herself has been participating for 17 years, and said the day has a way of bringing together citizens and local business owners for a good cause.

"Main Street: Greeneville is an all volunteer organization that relies on volunteers to help with all of our projects in Greeneville," Mirkov said. "It doesn't take us long to do all of downtown. We work on about 85 planters, and then we have some other areas we plant flowers like around a statue of President Johnson. We can typically get the planting done in two hours. We have a pretty good system and some great volunteers."

Mirkov said the types of flowers planted downtown vary from year to year but usually have to be annuals able to survive both the heat and sun as well as the shade. This year, flowers selected for downtown planters included lantana, diamond frost, different petunia varieties, bluebells, and verbena, among others.





PEOPLE

lins has been appointed the fifth fire chief for Brentwood Fire and Rescue. Collins has been serving as interim chief since the



retirement of Brian Goss and previously served as the city's deputy fire chief. He began his career in the fire service in Kentucky in 1995. Collins has been with the city of Brentwood in 2002 at the new Station No. 4, and served as a firefighter/paramedic, engineer, lieutenant, and battalion chief before being appointed deputy chief in 2020. Collins holds a bachelor's degree in fire protection administration from Eastern Kentucky University and a master's in public administration from Tennessee State University.

April Furth has been appointed as the new administrator for the city of Chattanooga's Parks and Outdoors Department. She comes to



April Furth

Chattanooga from Vancouver, Wash., where she previously served as the director of community development for Clark County. She also has experience in operational management and customer service in the retail industry.

Derek Hyde has been selected as the new deputy fire chief for Brentwood Fire and Rescue Department. Hyde previously served as



Derek Hyde

the battalion chief for the department and has 23 years of experience. He joined the department as a firefighter in 2002, working his way through the ranks until he was promoted to battalion chief in December 2020. He holds an associate's degree in fire science from Volunteer State Community College and a bachelor's degree in political science from Middle Tennessee State University. He also holds fire officer and executive fire officer designations.

Laura Kid well, legal consultant with UT-MTAS, has received the Justice Joseph W. Henry Award for Outstanding Legal Writing



Laura Kidwell

from the Tennessee Bar Association. Prior to joining MTAS as a legal consultant, Kidwell spent 18 years with the Tennessee Attorney General's office, including serving

nearly 14 years as a senior counsel and nearly five as an assistant solicitor general. She also served as an adjunct professor of law at the Wake Forest University School of Law, where Kidwell earned her law degree. Kidwell holds a bachelor's degree from Furman University in Greenville, S.C.

Kevin Townsel, director of human resources and risk management for the city of Franklin, has been named president of the



Kevin Townsel

Tennessee Personnel Management Association (TPMA). Townsel previously served as president-elect of the organization and assumed the role of president at the recent TPMA conference held in Franklin. Townsel has more than 25 years of experience in human resources and risk management, including roles in both the public and private sector. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana and a law degree from the University of Tennessee College

Marty White has been selected as the new chief of the McMinnville Fire Department after the retirement of Chief Kendall Mayfield.



Marty White

White has more than 20 years of experience with the department, most recently serving as deputy chief. White brings decades of dedicated service to the department, rising through the fire service ranks with a proven record of leadership, professionalism, and a deep commitment to public safety. His experience and vision will serve the department well as he steps into this important role.

Dalton York has been selected as the new planning director of Gatlinburg. He has served as the assistant city planner since 2023, serving



Dalton York

in a vital role in development review, floodplain regulation, and planning commission coordination. Before joining Gatlinburg, he worked as a planner with Siler City, N.C. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science with a concentration in public administration and graduate coursework toward a master's in public administration from East Carolina University. He is also a certified zoning official through the UNC School of Government.

TML meets with White House officials to advance top municipal priorities



TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes and Gallatin Mayor and TML Board President Paige Brown met with U.S. Senator Bill Hagerty to discuss key priorities for Tennessee's cities and towns, including transportation infrastructure, local funding needs, and the challenges of managing rapid growth.



Gallatin Mayor and TML Board President Paige Brown and TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes represented Tennessee municipalities at our nation's Capitol last month as part of a city leadership fly-in coordinated by the National League of Cities.

More than 20 State Leagues particitipated in the event to meet with members of Congress and federal agencies, advocating for strong local-federal partnerships on infrastructure, disaster relief and community investments.

While there, they attended briefings with officials from OMB, USDA Rural Development, SBA, HUD, FEMA, and EPA. Local leaders shared their firsthand stories of how federal policies affect their communities. They provided feedback on how to streamline agency efforts and improve programs with a goal of helping cities better utilize federal resources and enhance service delivery for their communities.

From transportation to environmental resilience, the meetings covered critical ground.

Left: Haynes and Brown met with Christine Glassner, deputy director, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs for Local Governments.

Below: More than 20 State Leagues particitipated in the fly-in to advocate for strong local-federal partnerships on infrastructure, disaster relief and community investments



Carole Graves to retire after 34 years serving local governments

After nearly four decades of service in the communications and public relations field—including 34 years in the local government sector-Carole Graves, TML Senior Director of Communications, has announced her plans to retire on August 31.

Carole joined the TML staff in 2002 and has since overseen a wide range of communications platforms, including print publications, web-based and email communications, social media, speech writing, marketing and promotions, event planning, graphic design, and photography. Among her many key responsibilities, she has served as editor of Tennessee Town & City, and has played a major role in planning, coordinating, and executing the TML Annual Conference.

Prior to her tenure at TML, Carole served for six years as a communications consultant for the University of Tennessee's Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS). In that role, she created public education campaigns for municipalities across Tennessee, assisted with website development for cities, provided training in media relations and crisis communications, and edited various MTAS publications.

Carole's earlier career includes roles in community, employee, and media relations with the Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority;

marketing and public relations director for the Charleston Symphony Orchestra in South Carolina; and reporter and photographer for the North Myrtle Beach Times.

A Knoxville native and graduate of the University of Tennessee, Carole holds a bachelor's degree in mass communications with an emphasis in news and public affairs. She has lived in Nashville for the past 30 years, a city she proudly calls home.

"Carole has made a lasting impact on TML and the communities we serve," said TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes. "Her work and commitment to the League is greatly appreciated and we will forever be in her debt. We will certainly miss her, but we wish her and her husband Mark all the best as they embark on their next chapter."

TTC: After 23 plus years at the Tennessee Municipal League, you've decided to retire. What inspired that decision?

CG: After spending more than two decades with this incredible organization, I felt the time was right to close this chapter and begin a new one. It wasn't an easy decision, but I'm filled with gratitude for the journey I've had and excited for what lies ahead.

TTC: Looking back, how would you describe your experience



Carole Graves **TML Communications Director**

working with municipal governments?

CG: It's honestly hard to put into words. Serving municipal governments through a company so deeply dedicated to the public good has been a true honor. When I first walked through the doors all those years ago, I never imagined how profoundly this place—and the people in it—would shape my career and personal growth.

TTC: What drew you to this work in the first place?

CG: Having previously worked for the Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS), I had the opportunity to see firsthand the outstanding service TML provided

to cities across Tennessee. I already believed in the League's mission of supporting and strengthening municipalities - so it was a natural transition to go from MTAS to TML. Whether it's assisting local leaders, navigating public policy, or highlighting the important work happening in communities, I always felt proud to contribute in some small way.

TTC: What makes municipalities so important in your view?

CG: They're the heartbeat of our state – our nation. The work being done—providing police and fire protection, street repairs, maintaining public parks, balancing budgets, recruiting new industries and businesses —these aren't just routine tasks. They're the building blocks of thriving communities. Local governments play a huge role in shaping the quality of life for all of us, and the work, though often behind the scenes, truly matters.

TTC: What would you like to say to your colleagues?

CG: Thank you. You've been more than coworkers—you've been mentors, collaborators, and friends. I've learned so much from each of you. Your dedication and creativity have inspired me throughout my career.

TTC: And to the municipal leaders you've worked with over the

CG: It's been an absolute honor. I've had the privilege of seeing your resilience and commitment up close. Even with ever-changing needs, tight budgets, and rising expectations, your passion for your communities never wavered. Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your important work.

TTC: Do you have any words for those continuing the mission?

CG: Absolutely—never lose sight of the impact your work has. It may not always be glamorous or easy, but it's vital. You are the quiet champions of the public realm, and the difference you make is real.

TTC: What's next for you in this new chapter?

CG: I'm looking forward to spending more time with my family, traveling a bit, and volunteering for some non-profit organizations that I have always wanted to support if I only had more time. And while I may be stepping away professionally, I'll always remain a champion for good governance and the essential role local governments play in our lives.

TTC: Any final thoughts as you wrap up this incredible journey? CG: Just a heartfelt thank you—for 23 unforgettable years at TML. It's been an incredible journey, and I am forever grateful.

TML Board of Directors holds June meeting in Nashville



TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, left, and TML President and Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown, right.



State Sen. Page Walley, center, addresses the board as, from left to right, TML 2nd Vice President and Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks, TML 1st Vice President and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic, TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, and TML President and Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown, look on.



From left to right, Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell, TMBF Chair and Morristown Councilwoman Kay Senter, and At-Large Director and Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts listen to a presentation.



District 6 Director and Nolensville Vice Mayor Jessica Salamida, left, and District 8 Director and Millington Alderwoman Bethany Huffman, right.



University of Tennessee Vice President of Public Service Dr. Herb Byrd III, standing, discusses the Institute of Public Service (IPS) new planning initiative as Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks, TML 1st Vice President and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic, TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, listen.



District 1 Director and Kingsport Vice Mayor Darrell Duncan, left, and At-Large Director and Newport Mayor Roland "Trey" Dykes, right.



District 3 Director and Red Bank Mayor Stefanie Dalton, District 5 Director and Goodlettsville City Manager Tim Ellis, left, and District 6 Director and Nolensville Vice Mayor left, and Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell, right. Jessica Salamida, right.





TML 2nd Vice President Kevin Brooks, left, and At-Large Director and Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts, right.



Above: Members of the TML Board of Directors listen to a presentation about the results of the recent legislative session. Right: TMBF President and CEO Wade Morrell presents the yearly financial report to the board.



Goodlettsville courtroom gives mock trial students hands-on civics lesson

TT&C Assistant Editor

Students had a hands-on civic lesson in Goodlettsville's municipal courtroom as part of a mock trial competition overseen by City Judge Ali Toll.

Members of the Classical Conversation Homeschool Community from Goodlettsville competed against a team of homeschool students from Springfield at the mock trial. Toll said the competition has been held between eighth graders with the Goodlettsville group and other area homeschool associations for the past four years, using the city courtroom in Goodlettsville.

The competition involved two trials in which the teams each got a chance to serve as the prosecutors and defense in a criminal case. Toll did double duty, serving both as the presiding judge overseeing the mock trial and as one of the four scorers who assigned points to each team.

"It helps students get out there and see if they enjoy this activity," Toll said. "For some, this will lead to a career in the future, but even for those who don't plan to be lawyers or work in the legal system, they are gaining skills like public speaking, working as a team, and all the preparation that goes into it. There are all types of roles. There are students who serve as attorneys, and one student is a bailiff who keeps



Goodlettsville Municipal Judge Ali Toll presides over a mock trial involving local students in the Goodlettsville municipal court room. Toll said the experience provides students with a hands-on civic education.

order in the court and swears in witnesses. The witnesses have to come in and assume the role of different characters, so there are skills in acting as well."

The mock trial is the first time many students have ever been inside a courtroom.

"You can definitely tell they are nervous at first, but we try to make the atmosphere as accommodating as possible," Toll said. "After they conclude, I always have remarks for the kids. Many

of them have the intention of being lawyers themselves someday. I'm a part-time city judge and a full-time personal injury lawyer, and I try to impart practical things onto them, both in terms of the law and basic life skills. I try to

make them feel more comfortable and at ease. We want them to know the courtroom is not as scary of a place as they may anticipate."

Mock trial day is also a fun event for Toll and other Goodlettsville municipal court em-

"I hope through this experience the students are broadening their knowledge of the justice system and also increasing their personal skills, like advocating for others," Toll said. "Many times when you are in a courtroom, you aren't dealing with situations that are enjoyable. These students are always excited at the opportunity to learn and present to me what they have worked. We are always blown away with their performance."

For Toll, the event is a way to bring civics lessons to life and give students insights into potential careers in the legal field.

"If we can broaden their education and knowledge about the court, we can remove some of the apprehensiveness they may experience about going to court in the future," she said. "I was the daughter of a welder and a dental assistant. As far as I know, I'm the first lawyer in my family and definitely the first judge. Sharing some of my knowledge I think helps them to see a girl from Millersville can go out and do big things, and so they can they."

85th TML Annual Conference, Aug 2-5

CONFERENCE, from Page 1 on the basketball court, but more importantly can be applied every day at city hall.

Also scheduled to speak is Dr. Marianne Wanamker, dean of the University of Tennessee's Howard H. Baker Jr. School of Public Policy and Public Affairs. She will provide a timely update on the state, national and global economies during Monday's Second General Session.

This is your chance to join fellow leaders from across the state who are tackling the same challenges and shaping the future of their communities and build meaningful connections during evening receptions hosted by the City of Chattanooga and Public Entity Partners, Tennessee's trusted government risk management leader.

Be sure to make time to explore the exhibit hall that showcases the top companies and services tailored to Tennessee's cities and towns, offering you valuable resources and partnerships to better serve your community.

For more information about the conference agenda and to register, go to TML's website at https:// www.tml1.org/85th-annual-confer-

We can't wait to see you in Chattanooga!

Schedule At-A-Glance

Friday, August 1

MTAS Elected Officials Academy

Saturday, August 2

9 am - 5 pm

MTAS Elected Officials Academy 12 - 4 pm

Registration Open

1 - 4:30 pm (Set of 3) CMFO & Utility Board Training

Sunday, August 3

7:30 am

Golf Tournament 7:30 - 9:30 am

BEMO Breakfast 9 am - 5 pm

Registration

9:30 am - 3:30 pm Exhibit Hall Open

10:30 – 11:30 am

Workshops (Set of 3)

11:30 am - 1:30 pm Lunch in Exhibit Hall

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

Women in Government Lunch 1:15 - 2:15 pm

Roundtable Discussions

2:30 - 3:45 pm **Opening General Session** 4 -4:30 pm

District Meetings

Host City Reception

Monday, August 4 7:15 - 8 am

Breakfast

8 am – 3 pm Exhibit Hall Open

8:30 - 9: 30 am

Workshops (Set of 3) 9:45 - 11:15 am

Second General Session

11:30 am -12 noon **Business Meeting**

Installation of TML Board 12 - 1:30 pm

Lunch 1 - 2:30 pm

J.R. Wauford Ice Cream

1:30 - 2:30 pmDoor prizes

2:45 - 3:45 pm

Workshops (Set of 3)

Workshops (Set of 3)

6:30 -11 pm **PEP Reception**

Tuesday, August 5

8:00 - 10:30 am **Awards Breakfast**



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The City of McKenzie has used TMBF programs 10 times beginning in 1987. The latest closing was as a \$206,000 note issued to finance a portion of the costs of a soccer complex for the city. Pictured L to R are: City Recorder Jennifer Waldrup, Mayor Ryan Griffin, and TMBF Marketing Representative Justin Hanson.

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The City of Winchester has used the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund programs five times beginning in 2018. The latest is a \$3,130,500 public building authority loan for Winchester Utility System for water and wastewater projects. Pictured are: Kevin Krushenski, TMBF Marketing Representative; Winchester Mayor Sean Crabtree; and George Powell, General Manager, Winchester Utility System.



STATE BRIEFS

Tennessee's April unemployment remained steady at 3.5%. The seasonally-adjusted employment rate remained unchanged from March but was up from the 3.2% rate in April 2025. The national unemployment rate was 4.2% in April, unchanged from the previous month and up from 3.9% in April 2024. The trade, transportation, and utilities sectors reported the biggest job gains followed by the professional and business sector and then the leisure and hospitality sector.

Tennessee now ranks No. 1 in the nation for FAFSA completion, according to the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), marking a major milestone in the state's ongoing efforts to increase access to higher education. Tennessee achieved a 75.7% FAFSA completion rate among Tennessee Promise applicants—its highest ever and surpasses the previous record of 75.6% set by the Class of 2020. This achievement not only breaks the state's own record but also makes Tennessee the national leader in FAFSA completion. Additionally, 158 Tennessee schools were declared FAFSA Champion schools, meaning they demonstrated either a 90% of higher FAFSA completion rate or significant year-over-year growth in FAFSA completion by 5% or more. The success also aligns with the record-setting TN Promise Class of 2025, which saw more students apply for the last-dollar scholarship than ever before.

Tennessee is the second-most researched state for potential movers. according to a recent analysis by U.S. News and World Report. In the first quarter of 2025, U.S. News tracked migration interest among U.S. residents via online searches and found South Carolina was the most researched followed by Tennessee. Delaware and North Carolina took the third and fourth spots followed by Maine in fifth. The survey said the interest in Southern states seems to be focused on milder weather, lower cost of living, and recreation opportunities. States with beaches, mountains, and robust music scenes all faired well in the rankings. The least researched states were New Jersey followed by California, Connecticut, and Nebraska.

Elections held in 10 cities

ELECTIONS, from Page 1 **DUNLAP**

A municipal election was held in Dunlap on May 3. Incumbent Dwain Land defeated challengers Dave Anderson, Carson Camp, and Jimmy Axmacher to remain mayor of Dunlap. Land led the vote count with 467 followed by Anderson with 139, Camp with 33, and Axmacher with 9.

Incumbent city commissioners Jeff Harmon and Judy H. Layne ran unopposed and received 476 and 502 complimentary votes respectively. The annexation referendum that was on the ballot only had only two votes in favor of the referendum.

GATLINBURG

Gatlinburg held a municipal election on May 20. Former police chief Randall J. Brackins ran unopposed and was elected to the Commission Seat D with 273 votes. The seat was previously held by Vice Mayor Mark McCown.

Incumbent Kirby Smith defeated challenger Brian Papworth for the Commission Seat E. Smith earned 257 votes to Papworth's 44.

LUTTRELL

Voters went to the polls in Luttrell on June 5. Incumbent Jerry Lawson ran unopposed for mayor and was re-elected. Incumbents Caleb D. Dyer and Brad Griffey ran unopposed for the two open city council seats and were also re-elected.

MCEWEN

McEwen held a municipal election on May 17 in which three candidates ran unopposed. Incumbents John Etheridge, Basel Hooper, and Dwayne Ross all retained their seats.

MILLEDGEVILLE

A municipal election was held on May 24 in Milledgeville.

Five candidates ran for five open seats with Brenda Essary, Dannie Kennedy, Danny Williams, Ricky Hollin, and Doris A. Kennedy elected to the board. Essary, Dannie Kennedy, and Williams all earned 11 votes while Hollin and Doris Kennedy earned 10.

PIGEON FORGE

A municipal election was held

in Pigeon Forge on May 13.

Three incumbent candidates ran unopposed and were re-elected to their seats. Kevin J. McClure retained his Commissioner Seat A, Jay Ogle retained Seat B, and Tony R. Watts kept Seat C. McClure earned 157 complimentary votes, Ogle 152 complimentary votes, and Watts 145 complimentary votes.

ROGERSVILLE

Rogersville held a municipal election on June 7.

Local businessman John C. Metz defeated challengers Alderman Brian Hartness and Tommy Wilmoth for the mayoral seat previously held by Jim Sells. Metz earned 583 votes to Hartness' 283, and Wilmoth 13.

Incumbents Todd Biggs, Danny Brooks, and Brock Gladson will be joined by newcomers Brady Forgety, former Police Charlie Gibson, and Andrew Pope on the Board of Aldermen.

Three seats were open after Alderwomen Sonda Price and Eloise Edwards did not seek re-election and Hartness ran for mayor. The six successful candidates beat out challengers Mike Campbell, Robbie Helton, and Patrick Johnson to earn their seats.

Forgety led the vote count with 668, followed by Biggs with 601, Gibson with 589, Brooks with 490, Gladson with 456, Poe with 444, Johnson with 359, Helton with 298, and Campbell with 227.

Voters in Rogersville also voted 695-119 to move the city's elections to the standard November Date. A formal resolution will have to be passed by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

WAVERLY

Voters in Waverly went to the polls on May 14. Newcomer Paul Rice defeated fellow challenger Gretchen Turner to fill the seat vacated by the death of late Alderwoman Thomasine Hill. Rice earned 136 votes to 109.

Two candidates also ran unopposed for alderman seats. Incumbent Mike Goodman retained his seat with no challengers while newcomer Chris Greenwell was the only candidate running for the seat formerly held by Alderman Jerry Wright.

Gov. Bill Lee, First Lady Maria Lee make suprise visit to Tennessee troops in Kuwait



Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee and First Lady Maria Lee traveled to the Middle East to visit more than 700 Soldiers from the Tennessee Army National Guard's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. The task force, comprised primarily of soldiers from the 278th's 2nd Squadron, is serving a year-long deployment in Kuwait. While in Kuwait, Gov. Lee and the First Lady visited with soldiers to thank them for their service and received a briefing on Operation Spartan Shield to better understand how the Tennessee National Guard is integral to the mission's success. The Governor also met with U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait, Karen Sasahara

Gov. Bill Lee announces historic investment in state transportation

Gov. Bill Lee joined the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) today in Memphis to announce a historic investment in infrastructure.

For the first time in history, the state's annual budget includes additional dedicated recurring General Fund dollars for transportation. The unprecedented \$80 million in recurring and additional \$1 billion in non-recurring dollars will allow TDOT to accelerate, leverage, and add new projects to the fiscally constrained 10-Year Plan.

The announcement coincided with the release of TDOT's updat-

ed 10-Year Project Plan for 2025, which outlines 96 projects across the state. Among these projects are significant initiatives in West Tennessee, including widening I-40 between Germantown Road (SR 177) to near SR 205 and a Smart Freight Investment along I-40, which explores innovative technologies that will enhance freight transportation's safety, efficiency, and speed.

While in Momphis TDOT

While in Memphis, TDOT also celebrated the completion of the newly reconfigured I-55 and Crump Boulevard interchange and highlighted the beginning of con-

struction on the Summer Avenue widening project. Both represent significant strides in local infrastructure improvements.

In Jackson, Governor Lee and TDOT unveiled Tennessee's first new interstate trade route in 45 years: I-69, marking a significant advancement in regional connectivity. Additional statewide investments were announced, including Rural Service Patrol, resurfacing efforts, and bridge safety enhancements.

For more information about TDOT's 10-Year Project Plan, visit Build With Us.

State April revenues \$117.6M less than budgeted

Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson announced that revenues for April were \$2.7 billion, which is \$117.6 million less than budgeted estimates and \$316.9 million less than April of last year

General fund revenues were \$114.0 million less than the April estimate, and the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$3.6 million less than the estimates.

On an accrual basis, April is the ninth month in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

"Though tax revenues for April were lower than budgeted estimates, we remain cautiously optimistic about improvements for the three remaining months of collections," said Bryson. "We are encouraged that sales tax receipts were close to targeted figures and that the state's business and privilege taxes continue to show promising gains."

"As we continue to closely monitor state finances, we remain committed to maintaining a balanced budget that serves Tennesseans well."

On a year-to-date basis, August through April, total tax revenues are 0.79% less than the budget estimate, or \$128.1 million less

than expectations. When compared to this same period last year, total tax revenues have decreased by \$333.9 million or 2.02%.

General fund revenues are 1.02% less than the year-to-date budgeted estimate, or \$141.0 million. Likewise, year-to-date general fund collections compared to this same period last year have decreased 1.95% or \$271.9 million.

Individual tax performance compared to April 2025 Budgeted Estimates:

- Sales Taxes: Below estimate by 0.02% or \$0.3 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Below estimate by 13.19% or \$153.2 million
- Fuel Taxes: Below estimate by 4.58% or \$5.1 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 13.85% or \$41.0 million

Year-to-date performance compared to Budgeted Estimates:

- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 0.79% or \$84.9 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Below estimate by 11.00% or \$335.2 million
- Fuel Taxes: Above estimate by 0.31% or \$3.0 million
 - All other taxes: Above estimate

by 7.88% or \$119.3 million

- Individual tax performance compared to April 2024:
- Sales Taxes: Up 3.61% or \$44.2 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Down 27.13% or \$375.5 million
- Fuel Taxes: Down 4.05% or \$4.5 million
- All other taxes: Up 5.96% or \$19.0 million

Year-to-date tax performance compared to August 2023 through April 2024:

- Sales Taxes: Up 4.49% or \$467.4 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Down 24.05% or \$858.9 million
- Fuel Taxes: Up 0.81% or \$7.7 million
- All other taxes: Up 3.15% or \$49.8 million

The budgeted revenue estimates for 2024–2025 are based on the State Funding Board's consensus recommendation from Nov. 29, 2023, which was adopted by the second session of the 113th General Assembly in April 2024.

Learn more about <u>estimated</u> revenues and the budget here.

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10 things city leaders need to know about "The One Big Beautiful Bill"

BY MICHAEL WALLACE NLC Local Authority & Intergovernmental Relations

As Congress debates "H.R. 1, The One Big Beautiful Bill," city leaders need to understand what's at stake for local governments. From preserving key tax exemptions to new threats to Medicaid and transportation funding, this sweeping legislation touches nearly every corner of municipal finance and services. Here's what you need to know:

1) The main objective of the bill is to extend expiring tax cuts and other provisions enacted under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, including lower individual tax rates, a larger standard deduction, increased estate tax exemption and extension of the Child Tax Credit. These extensions are only a small part of the overall bill, however. New proposed tax cuts included in the bill have driven up the overall cost to the federal government beyond those necessary for extending the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, necessitating new spending cuts and limitations on federal benefits.

2) Congress still has a long way to go before it can send The One Big Beautiful Bill to the President for enactment. The House passed the bill by one vote, largely along party lines, on May 22. The bill is now under consideration in the Senate, where substantial rewrites are possible to address concerns within the Senate majority that the bill would add too much to the federal debt, with a range of estimates as high as \$5.1 trillion. Any changes made by the Senate will require the House to hold another difficult vote. The bill will reach the President's desk only after the House and Senate pass identical bills.

3) NLC's top policy priority for the tax bill, the tax-exemption for municipal and private activity bonds, is

Inflation cooled briefly in

April, but economists and

policy makers are bracing

for it to re-accelerate as

companies adapt to tariffs. In-

flation was up 2.4% for a year

through April with core infla-

tion - which excludes food

and energy prices - up 2.8%.

The Federal Reserve has been

trying to wrestle inflation back

to 2% since the pandemic. The

Bureau of Labor Statistics

reported the Consumer Price

Index rose 2.3% from a year

earlier, the slowest annual

pace since early 2021. Prices

also rose 0.2% over the month,

NATIONAL BRIEFS

preserved in the House bill. This is a critical win for local governments, however, Senate concerns about the overall cost of the bill mean the risk of losing the tax-exemption, or subjecting tax-exempt bonds to new limitations, remains. This was the case for the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act which preserved the tax-exemption but eliminated advance refunding. A stand-alone bipartisan bill to restore advance refunding, the "Lifting Our Communities through Advance Liquidity for Infrastructure (LOCAL Infrastructure) Act of 2025," has since been introduced.

4) Other provisions in the bill supported by the NLC would address issues important to local governments, including an expansion of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits that could finance the construction or rehabilitation of between 500,000 and 1 million affordable rental units over ten years, a new round of Opportunity Zones with more incentives for private investment is rural areas, an increase in the State and Local Tax Deduction (SALT) from \$10,000 to \$40,000, and an increase in the federal debt limit.

5) On the other side, the bill would repeal unobligated funds for Neighborhood Access and Equity Grants for transportation and economic development projects and clean energy improvements enacted under the Inflation Reduction Act that local governments are eligible to receive. Moreover, changes to Elective Pay (also called Direct Pay) Tax Credits for clean energy projects would reduce their utility to local governments.

6) New limitations on Medicaid eligibility could force states to make tough budget choices impacting funding for local governments. Changes to Medicaid including new work requirements, and shifting more costs to states, especially for those that have adopted federal-state cost-sharing for Medicaid expansion (40 states have adopted Medicaid Expansion), would lead to an estimated reduction of \$700 billion in federal Medicaid spending over the next ten years. These changes could force states

place on nearly all America's trad-

ing partners with the exception of

a 30% rate in China, down from an

original 145% in place last month.

China has also reduced its tariff

on American goods from 125%

to 10%. Despite this, economists,

policymakers, and the Federal

Reserve have all cautioned that

the scope and scale of tariffs will

likely stoke inflation and decrease

The U.S. economy added 139,000

jobs in May, down from a re-

vised 147,000 in April. The job

gains were slightly higher than the

130,000 economists had predicted.

but could come in lower as 95,000

economic growth.

to choose between increasing state spending to continue coverage for up to 13 million people at risk of losing health insurance because of federal spending reductions, or make cuts in other areas including programs that provide state funding for local governments.

7) Changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, would also impact state budgets. Changes to SNAP would impose new work requirements and shift costs to states for the first time, leading to similar concerns about pressures to decrease state funding in other areas including funds for local governments. Currently SNAP benefits are fully covered by the federal government.

8) The bill includes a provision preempting local governments from regulating artificial intelligence systems for ten years. However, it includes carve-outs for laws intended to facilitate the deployment of artificial intelligence technologies or to facilitate their use for government functions such as permitting and procurement.

9) The bill omits the requirement to allocate 20% of new Highway Trust Fund revenues to mass transit projects. The bill imposes a new electric vehicle fee that would go into the federal Highway Trust Fund. Traditionally, 20% of Highway Trusts Funds are allocated to mass transit projects including those carried out by local governments. However, unlike prior revenue increases for the Highway Trust Fund, the bill does not mandate 20% of revenues raised by the new fee be dedicated to mass transit

10) Despite the fact that there is not unanimity on the total estimated cost of the One Big Beautiful Bill, warning signs about the federal debt are growing. According to the non-partisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, the House bill could add \$3 trillion to the national debt. On May 16, Moody's downgraded the U.S. sovereign credit rating, sending a warning to Washington that over-reliance on deficit spending could jeopardize the global advantages of the U.S. economy.

March and April payroll reports.

Unemployment remained at 4.2%

with health care companies and

restaurants adding the most jobs

while government and manufac-

turing lost the most. While gov-

ernment jobs were largely federal,

manufacturers have been cutting

back in the face of trade wars.

While the labor market remained

fairly solid in May, many employ-

ers expect current policies to take

a toll on America's economy and

many anticipate a recession before

the end of the year. So far this year,

employers have added an average

of 124,000 jobs per month, down

from the 168,000 last year and

216,000 per month averaged in



June 14: Dunlap

Dunlap Coke Ovens Bluegrass **Festival**

A bluegrass festival that celebrates local heritage and raises funds for the Sequatchie Valley Historical Association.

June 14: Pulaski SunDrop Festival

Experience the essence of Historic Downtown Pulaski at the Sun-Drop Festival, a vibrant celebration showcasing our community's charm to both locals and visitors.

June 21: Bell Buckle

RC Cola and Moon Pie Festival This wacky, fun for the whole family event celebrates the South's original fast food - an ice cold RC Cola and a fresh MoonPie.

June 21: Dickson

Dickson Street Festival Enjoy attractions, bands, vendors, and food trucks in downtown Dickson.

June 21: Lenoir City Festival of Friends

An event designed to provide public awareness of the disabled communities in the area as well as a fun opportunity to get the family out for festive activities.

June 21: Oak Ridge <u>Lavender Festival</u>

Historic Jackson Square hosts this celebration of health, herbs, and the environment.

June 28: Franklin

21st Annual Blackberry Jam Music Festival

The Jam will bring a talented, diverse line-up of musicians and our community together, and all for a great cause, Hard Bargain Association.

June 28: Kenton

White Squirrel Festival

An annual hometown festival honoring Kenton's unique white squirrells.

July 4-5: Jonesborough

Jonesborough Days Celebrating the legacy of the

Storytelling Capital of the World.

July 4-5: Smithville

54th Annual Fiddlers' Jamboree The old-time Fiddlers' Jamboree is a tradition that draws musicians, craft artists, and spectators to the Smithville Square each summer.

July 5-6: Savannah

46th Annual Wayne Jerrolds Bluegrass Festival

Wayne Jerrolds Park and the Savannah Market host this annual bluegrass festival.

July 11-12: Ripley Tomato Festival

An annual celebration of the tomato and local tomato growers.

compared to a 0.1% decline in jobs were shed from both the March. There is a 10% tariff in Retirement is a journey

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

Chattanooga's National Park City designation 'just the beginning'

By KATE COIL TT&C Assistant Editor

Natural beauty, outdoor activities, and a commitment to conservation are among the reasons the city of Chattanooga was chosen as the first National Park City not just in the U.S. but in the whole of the western hemisphere.

The National Park City Foundation was created by British National Geographic explorer Daniel Raven-Ellison to encourage cities to promote their outdoor community assets as national parks do. Chattanooga is only the third city in the world to obtain the designation, behind London, U.K., and Adelaide, Australia.

Alison Barnes, Trustee of the National Park City Foundation, was one of the officials who visited Chattanooga during the process.

"During our peer review we saw first-hand the extraordinary breadth and depth of engagement with the Chattanooga National Park City vision informed by outstanding experts in design, ecology, culture and arts," Barnes said. "National Park City status introduces a new chapter for a city with a long history of revitalization and renewal through connecting its unique landscape and the history of its people."

Brian Smith, communications and marketing director with Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors, was one of the key figures who helped turn the idea of Chattanooga as a National Park City from dream to reality. He said the city's former City Administrator Scott Martin was a member of World Urban Parks – one of the organizations that helps evaluate candidate cities – along with Raven-Ellison when the National Park City concept began.

"We are encouraging people to think of Chattanooga as a city in a park instead of just a city with a bunch of little parks in it," Smith said. "That doesn't mean we have to put a park everywhere. It means I can enjoy the park down the street, but I can also enjoy where I'm from by adding some things to my own backyard. We don't have the most parks of any city, but it's the availability of parks we have. The uniqueness of those parks makes us a city in a park."

One of the initiative's goals is to show the diversity of species, outdoor activities, and opportunities in urban settings. The National Park City Foundation was also looking for a city of Chattanooga's size to participate in the program.

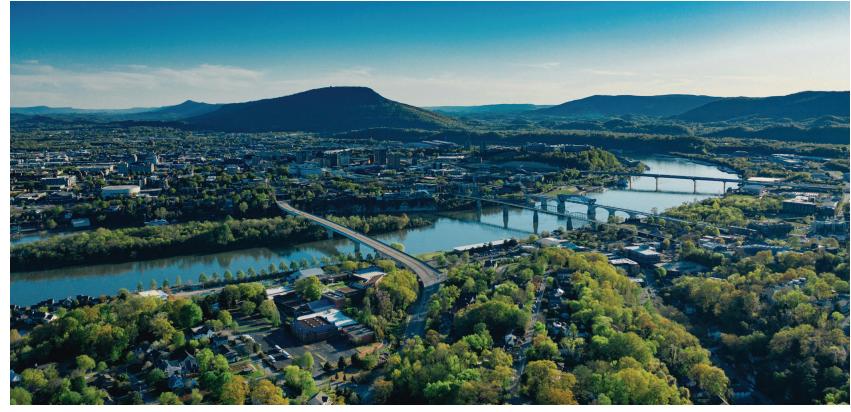
"Chattanooga's competitive advantage is the outdoors, the recreation, and the amenities we have around the city," Smith said. "We also have a story of a city with a tumultuous past. We were the starting point of the Trail of Tears, endured the Civil War, and were ranked the dirtiest mid-sized city in the 1970s. Now, we are world-recognized for our green efforts."

To qualify, Chattanooga had to meet 23 criteria, including showing policies the city was considering, proof of government and citizen support, and a charter outlining future goals. As goals are met, the committees set new targets, and at the end of 2026, the city will produce an annual report on the progress it has made as a National Park City. The role of the city is to keep committees on track.

"We set up charter teams to spearhead each goal," Smith said. "For example, one of our goals was having unrivaled access to nature, meaning the committee would have to address what barriers we had to access to nature and how to eliminate them. We also have a committee for sustainable growth as people continue to move here."

Another part of the criteria was producing a "journey book" showing the history of Chattanooga and its work toward earning the National Park City title. Bringing in Chattanooga's reputation as a Gig City, partners created a digital journey book rather than a physical one with plans to update the online version as goals are achieved.

"Our journey book does not have a 'the end' because we know we are going to keep adding to it," Smith said. "That is where technology and the design element came in. Also, everyone has a phone and devices. If we can make access to this information more available on their phones,



Chattanooga has become only the third city in the world and the first in the entire western hemisphere to earn the National Park City designation. The program was created by a former National Geographic explorer who wanted to see more urban areas lauded for their commitment to the outdoors and natural wonders.



Members of Chattanooga's National Park City team celebrate the designation as the first National Park City in America, North America, and the western hemisphere. Chattanooga has become the third city to obtain the designation behind London and Adelaide, Australia.

that will get more people out and about. We are hoping this can show people how to access things they are interested in and what organization is supporting that. We figure if everyone has devices in their hand, let's utilize that to get more information to the people."

One of the final steps in the process was a site visit from international representatives on behalf of the foundation. Smith said the group spent three days being shown as many of the projects and people working toward the designation as possible.

"They wanted to come here and see what they had read about in our journey book," Smith said. "Part of it was to see if we were doing what we had, but they also wanted to meet the people we had talked about, understand our plans, and see the work we had done. We showed them that you can stay downtown and literally go bouldering or kayaking or biking on the greenway from there."

The group toured the Tennessee Aquarium and the Tennessee Aquarium Institute to learn about aquatic conservation efforts, the Chattanooga Zoo and its Hellbender Research Area, as well as public art, city initiatives, parks and preserves, and natural areas.

"For me, who has lived here 15 years, it reassured me how special Chattanooga is," Smith said. "We are not perfect, but we really have a lot of special things here. What we have been able to overcome over the years and the people who have put that together are amazing. On one side of town, we're saving red wolves and on the other we are growing fish to put back in the river."

Smith said the National Park City recognition is just beginning of the city's journey with the designation helping to hold the city accountable for moving forward with commitments made during the process. One goal is to better promote showcasing the various ways the city and partner organizations are doing around the city to improve water quality, nature access, and outdoor activities.

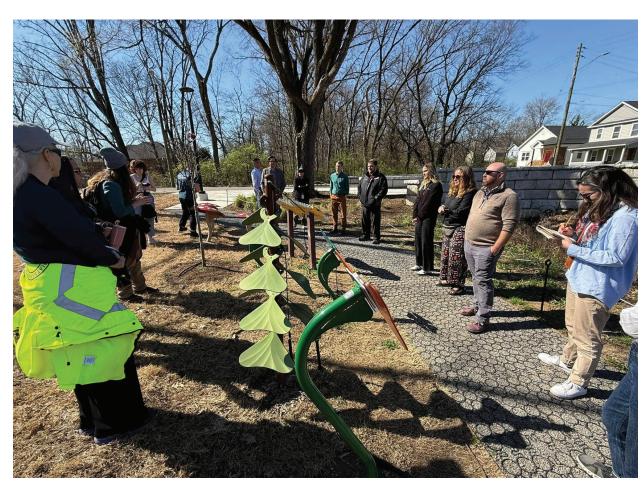
The initiative is changing how Chattanooga thinks about and promotes itself as an outdoors destination. Smith said a lot of the process began by asking people to ask "what if Chattanooga did this" or "what if Chattanooga had that?" When the response came in, Smith said he and many city officials realized some of these proposed opportunities already existed within the city and just weren't being promoted enough.

eren't being promoted enough.

The city is currently working



Members of the National Park City review team visit the Tennessee Aquarium Institute to learn how the organization and the city of Chattanooga are protecting waterways and conserving native species.



The National Park City review team visiting exhibits at a local park as part of their tour.

on a list of 100 mini-adventures – most free activities – citizens and visitors can take place in to promote the National Park City spirit.

"Everybody can participate and do something to be part of a National Park City," Smith said. "You don't have to come to meetings or be part of a committee team or volunteer. If you plant more native grasses or flowers, that is contributing to a National Park City. If you bike or walk or kayak down the river, that is part of being a National Park City. If you enjoy public art, that is a part of it. It is the responsible of the city and our partners to provide as much access

to those things as possible so people can take advantage of that."

Going forward, Smith said the city is looking for ways to fill gaps in who in the community is served and turn the National Park City website into a hub for information local opportunities and programs.