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Super Tuesday primary, 4 municipal elections held

By KATE COIL

Municipal elections were held in four cities and towns across Tennessee to coincide with the state's federal primaries on Super Tuesday.

Donald Trump won the Republican primary in Tennessee with 446,682 votes or 77.33% of the ballots cast. Nikki Haley trailed with 112,914 or 19.55%. Haley announced she was suspending her campaign after Super Tuesday results were reported nationwide.

Ron DeSantis – who had already suspended his presidential campaign – won 1.38% of the vote with 7,946 votes followed by Uncommitted Republicans, who cast 4,883 ballots or 0.85% of the vote. Other candidates who have since suspended their campaigns but still were on Tennessee's ballots included Chris Christie (1,874 votes), Vivek Ramaswamy (1,713 votes), Ryan Binkley (722 votes), Asa Hutchinson (533 votes), and David Stuckenberg (352 votes).

Incumbent President Joe Biden was the only candidate on the state's Democratic primary ballot and received 122,735 votes or 92.16%. The remaining 10,442 votes or 7.84% voted for uncommitted.

In addition to the federal pri-

mary races, municipal leadership were elected in Berry Hill and Rockford while referendums were held in Hendersonville and South Carthage.

BERRY HILL

Incumbent city commissioner Greg Mabey fended off challenger John Harvey in Berry Hill. Mabey received 84 votes to Harvey's 70 votes.

HENDERSONVILLE

Voters in Hendersonville approved a sales tax referendum to raise the city's local share of sales tax from 9.25% to 9.75%. A total of 5,764 votes were cast in favor of the increase while 3,283 voted against.

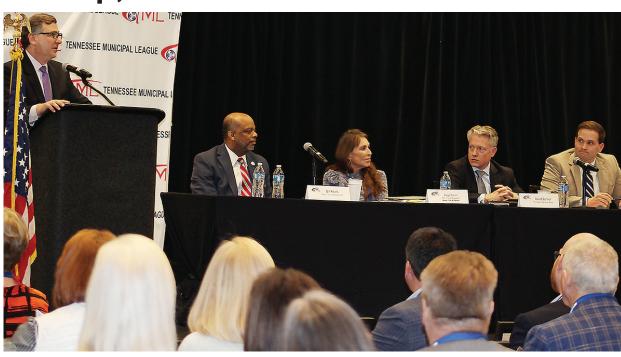
ROCKFORD

Incumbent and current Mayor Carl Koella III fended off challenger Jim Jamison to retain his seat on the Rockford City Commission. Koella earned 162 votes to Jamison's 29 votes.

SOUTH CARTHAGE

Voters in South Carthage voted down a proposed increase of the city's sales tax from 2% to 2.75%. A total of 106 votes were cast against the measure while 77 were for the measure.

City leaders talk urban growth, property tax cap, other issues at TML Conference



TML Deputy Director Chad Jenkins, left, moderates a discussion on urban growth issues with panelists Brownsville Mayor Bill Rawls, Gallatin Mayor and TML 1st Vice President Paige Brown, Tennessee County Services Association Executive Director David Connor, and Farm Bureau Public Policy Division Director Kevin Hensley.

Municipal officials from across Tennessee gathered to discuss issues including a proposed property tax cap bill, potential changes to increase property reappraisals, managing community growth, Tennessee's economic future, and First Amendment implications of social media use by government officials at the 2024 TML Legislative Conference, held in Nashville March 4-5.

Members heard from U.S. Rep. John Rose, Tennessee Comptroller Jason Mumpower, University of Tennessee Research Associate Professor Larry Kessler, Sycamore Institute Executive Director Brian Straessle, and attorneys Sam Jackson and

Bethany Vanhooser from Spencer Fane, among others, during the two-day event.

Rose detailed how federal leaders are working to address issues including housing, critical infrastructure needs such as water and wastewater, and transportation and transit programs.

"There are many in Washington who have it as a goal to support our municipalities," Rose said. See CONFERENCE on Page 8 Conference Photos on Page 8-10



TML President and Farragut Mayor Ron Williams (right) presents Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo with the 2023 award during the TML Legislative Conference held in Nashville.

GPS-powered darts helping Belle Meade recover stolen, suspect vehicles without need for pursuit

By KATE COIL
TT&C Assistant Editor

A new technology is helping the Belle Meade Police Department recover stolen vehicles without engaging in high-speed

pursuits.

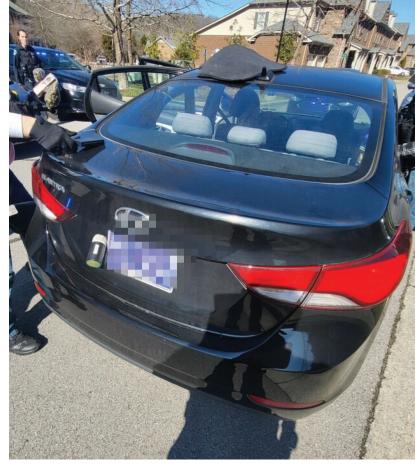
Belle Meade Police Chief
Chuck Williams said the department recently completed its first
arrest and vehicle recovery using
StarChase Technology's vehicle
tracking system. The equipment
allows departments to tag and
track vehicles with GPS-powered
darts, thereby continuing to track
a stolen or suspect vehicle without
engaging in a high-speed pursuit.

Williams said Belle Meade's location – almost completely surrounded by Metro-Nashville as well as roughly two-miles from the Williamson County line and within ten of the Cheatham County line – means that the city has a lot of traffic coming in and out of the Belle Meade Police Department's jurisdiction.

"We have a large number of LPRS [license plate readers] for a community our size," he said. "We were routinely getting stolen vehicle hits - mostly out of Metro-Nashville but also all around the state and different states. We would find these vehicles, but as soon as we turned on our blue lights, they would just take off. It was getting so frustrating. We obviously didn't chase them, but that didn't mean that for a couple of miles they would be driving like maniacs trying to get away. It was becoming so routine that if we managed to get a car to stop, it always turned out the driver was the registered owner who had recovered their car."

Officials with StarChase reached out to Williams stating they were interested in employing their GPS dart technology in the area. While the company had long been working in California, they were hoping to provide solutions to issues surrounding high-speed chases nationwide.

The Belle Meade Police Department was awarded a grant from the state's Office of Criminal Justice Programs that fully



A vehicle tagged with a GPS dart by the Belle Meade Police Department is recovered by officers with the Metro Nashville Police Department's Violent Crimes Unit. The new technology is allowing police departments to track stolen and other suspect vehicles without needing to engage in pursuits.

covered the cost of purchase and installation for the trackers as well as received instruction from the company on how to safely use the technology.

"The company got us all the equipment and sent a team up here to show us how to use and install it," he said. "We did an eight-hour training day. Part of that was in the classroom showing how to use the mapping portion and how to load the canisters. The other part was actually on a controlled track tagging police cars as practice."

Williams described the technology as something out of James Bond or the Fast and Furious series.

"On the push bumper of the police cruiser there is a device," he said. "The dart has some really strong glue and a tracking device on it. It takes a few minutes to warm the glue up to stick. The

device has a laser light to show where the dart will hit on the vehicle. The officer will then hit the button to fire the dart at about 25 miles per hour. It won't dent the vehicle or do any damage at that speed. Then the officer can back off and follow the vehicle on the maps."

Williams said the department tries to dart vehicles at lower speeds both to increase the success that the dart will hit and to avoid causing the suspect to flee. Once the dart hits, GPS software allows the department to monitor the vehicle's location from afar.

The department's first successful arrest from the use of the technology came in February when a LPR camera hit on a stolen vehicle on Belle Meade Boulevard. An officer was able to hit the vehicle with a dart and then back See DARTS on Page 3

Germantown Mayor receives 2023 Mayor of the Year Award

Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo was presented with the 2023 Mayor of the Year award during TML's Legislative Conference recently held in Nashville.

Each year since 1954, the Tennessee Municipal League has honored a city mayor who exemplifies the attributes of intelligence, effectiveness, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice as the TML Mayor of the Year.

A call for nominations went out to our entire membership last spring and through the work of a five-member awards committee – a final recipient was chosen.

Mayor Palazzolo has served on the City of Germantown's Board of Mayor and Alderman for the past 20 years. He was first elected in 2004 as alderman, later elected as mayor in 2014. He is currently serving his third, four-year term as mayor of Germantown

term as mayor of Germantown.

His background in finance, banking, and commercial lending, has been instrumental in helping his city maintain the dual AAA bond ratings since the 1990s, literally saving residents millions of dollars and allowing the city to invest in important infrastructure

needs.

The mayor also helped negotiate a multi-million-dollar deal that returned the city's elementary, middle, and high school to a cityrun school district — including the hiring of a new superintendent, creating and seating a new school board, and opening school doors in 2014. Since then, more than \$90 million has been put toward school capital projects to provide state-of-the-art education.

In his quest to ensure excellence for the city, he helped spearhead the city to become one



Mike Palazzolo Germantown Mayor

of only four cities to be honored as a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Service Assurance Award winner.

His leadership skills were certainly put to the test last summer – when a diesel spill contaminated the town's water supply that left some residents without access to clean tap water for over a week. The mayor declared a state of emergency in response to the ongoing crisis and worked diligently with his staff and the community until the problem was resolved.

Beyond the city limits, he works with other local, state, and federal lawmakers to better both his city and Tennessee as a whole. In frequent contact with state and federal lawmakers, he is often a vital resource to those looking for a local perspective.

He has also been involved in TML initiatives, working with other municipal leaders to meet common goals. A driving force in the "Return Restore Relief" campaign, he educated both local residents and legislators on the merits of the initiative and encouraged his fellow elected officials to do the same. He also serves as vice chair of TML's Legislative Policy Committee.

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



CLINTON and OAK RIDGE

Type One Energy Group, Inc., officials announced the company will invest \$223.5 million to establish its headquarters and expand operations in Tennessee. Type One Energy will create a total of 330 new jobs by establishing its headquarters in Oak Ridge and expanding fusion research and development (R&D) operations in Clinton. In addition, Type One Energy intends to locate at the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) Bull Run Fossil Plant in Clinton for the company's stellarator fusion prototype machine, Infinity One. Construction will begin following completion of required environmental reviews, partnership agreements, permits and operating licenses. Type One Energy is a leading stellarator fusion energy company and the first recipient of funding through the \$50 million Nuclear Energy Fund, which was proposed by Gov. Bill Lee and approved by the Tennessee General Assembly in the 2023-2024 budget.

COLUMBIA

The city of Columbia is one of four Main Street programs and five cities to receive \$50,000 from the GM on Main Street Grant Program. The program provides grants for placemaking initiatives to nonprofits and municipalities located near GM facilities. The funds will go to Columbia's Infrastructure and Greenspace Improvement project, which will create a safer, more pedestrian-friendly downtown district through infrastructure and greenspace improvements. Improvements will include curb extensions, more greenspaces, and an informational kiosk.

DAYTON

The city of Dayton has joined Lawrence County, Ala., and Calloway County, Ky., as new members of the Tennessee RiverTowns Program. The program is comprised of 22 enrolled communities along the Tennessee RiverLine. The Tennessee RiverTowns Program encourages collaboration and innovation among participating Tennessee River communities. The voluntary three-stage program empowers communities of all sizes to establish their local vision for the Tennessee RiverLine, an initiative of the UT Extension with principal partners, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Tennessee Valley Authority, to connect paddling, hiking and biking experiences along the Tennessee River's 652mile reach. Enrolled communities take part in a multi-step process for gathering community input, hosting river animation and stewardship events, building local support and interest in the Tennessee RiverLine and developing conceptual ideas for riverfront infrastructure to provide better access to the river and create new and improved experiences both on and along the river.

GALLATIN

Gallatin's Historic Rose Mont is a recipient of a \$53,000 grant for Capital Maintenance and Improvement from the state of Tennessee as administered through the Tennessee State Museum. The grant award will be used for repairing and rehabilitating the south side veranda. On the south "service" side of the mansion, a two-storied veranda was enclosed with clapboard in 1883 to create additional living space. In 1973, aluminum siding was added to cover the deteriorated clapboard, concealing its original character. Funds will be used to remove both the aluminum siding and the old clapboard, restoring the veranda to its antebellum appearance. This transformation will enhance the ability to offer tours that accurately reflect the history of enslaved house servants on the property. Additionally, two original staircases in this area require stabilization. The project for the Rose Mont home must be completed by May.

JOHNSON CITY

The Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) will be holding its first ever Field Fest event in Johnson City. The event is a mini-conference and marketplace event that will also include various small group press trips throughout the region. Designed to provide OWAA members, supporting groups and other outdoor industry professionals with an opportunity for networking and education, Field Fest will serve as a complement to the annual OWAA Conference, providing an additional

opportunity for professional growth. The event is scheduled for July 7-11.

KINGSPORT

The city of Kingsport has received a \$7.8 million grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee Foundation for the enhancement of the city's Riverfront Park. The 8.8acre park is located along the South Fork of the Holston River, and plans for it include an inclusive play area, community pavilion, sports courts, water features, fitness area, recreational water access, art installations and restrooms. Construction is expected to begin later this summer. Of the funds, \$6.5 million will go toward construction with an additional \$1.3 million for maintenance. This is the second BlueCross Healthy Place located within the city of Kingsport, the first being located at the Kingsport Miracle League Complex. There are presently 21 Blue Cross Healthy Places throughout the state.

LAWRENCEBURG

Flexco Products of Tennessee, LLC, officials announced the company will invest \$17.5 million to establish manufacturing and distribution operations in Lawrenceburg and will create 60 new jobs. The plant will be the company's second U.S. location and will be centrally located to better serve Flexco's customers with more efficient production and shipping times. Founded in 1977 by Tom Jellison, in Elkhart, Ind., Flexco Products is a producer of tubing and steel and aluminum fabrication. Flexco serves a diverse array of industries, and its manufacturing capabilities expand to more than 30,000 original equipment manufacturer products. The company's services continually exceed expectations and are not customized to industry but to the customer.

MORRISTOWN

Rich Products officials announced the company will invest \$27 million to expand production at its Morristown manufacturing facility. Rich's, a global, family-owned food company, will create 51 new manufacturing jobs, bringing its total headcount throughout Tennessee to nearly 1,400 people. The expansion of Rich's Morristown facility will add 2,400 square feet of space, which will directly support enhanced production of its growing bakery business, serving national and regional grocery and club retailers. The project is expected to be complete in September 2024 with hiring slated to begin in June of this year. Rich's was founded in 1945, and operates across more than 100 countries, employing approximately 13,000 people worldwide. The food company has a strong footprint across Tennessee, operating a network of manufacturing facilities, including two plants in Morristown, which currently employ 650 associates.

PORTLAND

Shoals Technologies Group officials announced the company will invest \$80 million in the next five years to expand its existing manufacturing and distribution operations to a new, larger location in Portland. Shoals will create approximately 550 new jobs over the next five years, bringing the company's total headcount in Portland to roughly 1,400. As part of the expansion, Shoals will relocate its manufacturing operations to a 638,000-square-foot plant at 1500 Shoals Way. The additional staff and larger facility will enable Shoals to better meet its growing customer demand for solar power. Headquartered in Portland, Shoals Technologies Group is a leading electrical balance of systems (EBOS) provider for solar, energy storage and eMobility. The company serves its customers worldwide from several locations in the U.S.

SPRING HILL

Armada Nutrition LLC officials announced the company will invest \$5 million to expand production in Spring Hill. The leading contract manufacturer will create 50 new jobs in Maury County to support the company's increased demand in nutraceuticals. Armada Nutrition LLC is a subsidiary of Nagase & Co., Ltd., which is based in Japan. Armada Nutrition specializes in manufacturing high quality nutritional powders for national and global nutrition brands. Today, the company develops, processes and packages its multi-ingredient powder solutions from its sole location in Spring Hill.

Gallatin uses real-time data to scan, mark pavement defects for better maintenance

By JEFF HENTSCHELGallatin Communications Director

Gallatin has installed sensors on city fleet vehicles that will provide real-time data on where pot-

vide real-time data on where potholes, cracks and other deficiencies are located.

The information will be used to prioritize road maintenance and

increase the lifespan of city streets.

Thirty city vehicles from departments including Gallatin police, engineering and public works have "Real-Time Pavement Performance Analytics" sensors installed on the undercarriages. The technology works similar to a seismograph and records vibrations at roughly 1,000 times per

As a city vehicle conducts normal operations throughout Gallatin, results are uploaded each day to an interactive map that provides GPS coordinates for flaws on city streets. Each street is then assigned a unique Pavement Condition Index (PCI) score, which will then be used to monitor and plan the city's Pavement Rehabilitation Program.

"In the past, determining if a road needed patchwork or a full treatment was a fairly subjective process," Gallatin Assistant City Engineer Charles Gavaghan said. "Now, with the help of our own vehicles, we'll have daily information that will help guide our maintenance schedule."

In addition to the vibration sensors, eight cameras will be installed on city trash trucks to capture "Google Street View"-type images of our road network each week. AI software will then be utilized to detect failures, identify



Sensors have been recently installed vehicles in the city of Gallatin's fleet that provide data on where potholes are located. The technology records vibrations and then uploads information about flaws in city streets, allowing officials to better determine the condition of each street and which streets need repairs.

patterns and causes of the deterioration, and compare the effectiveness of various rehabilitation methods. Similar technology has been used for several years in Gallatin.

In 2018 and 2022, a contractor conducted surveys of all city streets with cameras and road-scanning devices. While the results of that survey prioritized best and worst streets, daily scans of the roadways offer more up-to-date analysis that can be applied toward predictive models and preventive maintenance.

"Taking the guesswork out of our equation allows engineering and the City Council a better idea of where and when to invest in roads," Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown said. "According to the vendor, using this program could result in our roads lasting up to 40% longer, which even a percentage of that means better day-to-day driving and cost savings for city taxpayers."

The city typically spends \$1-1.5

million for planned repaving, and an additional \$75,000 for one-off street maintenance items. The yearly cost of this technology is \$67,500. The expectation is the investment will pay for itself in the form of time and cost savings associated with developing and implementing the City's Pavement Rehabilitation Program.

Engineers expect to have collected a sufficient amount of baseline data on the entire road network by the Spring of 2024. This will allow the city to fully implement the technology in the development of it's next Paving List (2024-2025).

Gallatin is the first municipality in the state of Tennessee to implement this technology. Cities in Arkansas and Kentucky have reported positive results from using this technology available from the vendor, Roadway Management Technology (RMT).

Columbia breaks ground on expansion, renovation of city's Fire Station No. 1



From left to right, retired Columbia Assistant Fire Chief M.T. Potts, Columbia Fire Chief Ty Cobb, former Columbia Fire Chief Milton Haye, and Columbia Councilman Kenny Marshall take part in a ground-breaking ceremony for the renovation and expansion of Columbia's Fire Station No. 1. The station dates back to 1979 and plans to renovate the facility date back at least a decade. The \$4.8 million project expand the 13,675-square-foot facility to add east and western dorms, a new training center and community room, kitchen space, and upgrade the building to modern energy code standards. The station will also be upgraded to be used as an emergency shelter with the ability to withstand F3 tornado, including providing back up power for emergency command centers and the IT department.

West TN leaders participate in Ford Fly-In



West Tennessee municipal leaders participated in an inaugural Ford fly-in, taking them to destinations including Detroit and Dearborn, Mich. While there, local leadership toured a Ford plant and the Ford Museum as well as meetings with top level company management. The West Tennessee leaders participating in the Ford Fly-In were: Whiteville Mayor Gene Bowden, Ripley Mayor Craig Fitzhugh, Lexington Mayor Jeff Griggs, Covington Mayor Jan Hensley, Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic, Somerville Mayor Ronnie Neill, Bartlett Mayor David Parson, Lakeland Mayor Josh Roman, Stanton Mayor Allen Sterbinsky, TVA West Region Vice President Mark Yates, TVA Government Relations Manager Paul Phelan, Southwest TN Regional Director for TNECD Tracey Exum, Brownsville-Haywood County Economic Development Director Aaron Stewart, Covington Chief of Staff Jason Fleming, Midsouth TN Development District Director Anna McQuiston, SWTDD Executive Director Joe Barker, SWTDD Local Government & Special Projects Coordinator Jill Holland, and SWTDD Information Technology Manager Charley Brown. Read more here.

Brentwood library memory kits help fulfill community need

By KATE COIL TT&C Assistant Editor

A new program at Brentwood's John P. Holt Library is designed to help those diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia along with their loved ones.

A total of 10 memory kits have been made available at the library through the Alzheimer's Association, financed by donations from the Franklin Noon Rotary Club. Kept in clear backpacks, memory kits provide items that stimulate and entertain those with Alzheimer's including books, puzzles, coloring books, and other items.

Laura Musgrave, a volunteer and advocate with the Alzheimer's Association, has worked with the organization to declare Alzheimer's a public health issue in Tennessee in 2019, opening the door for more funding and research, as well as promoting education about Alzheimer's in communities across Tennessee. Musgrave's sister Joanne died because of Alzheimer's at the age of 59.

Musgrave said the kits at the Brentwood library are aimed at capturing the interests of Alzheimer's patients as well as help to focus their memory.

"A lot of people with Alzheimer's tend to fidget," she said. "There are even fidget blankets that allow them to do that. It gives them something to do. The Brentwood Library has kits that are themed after the 50s, 60s, and 70s. There are also kits themed after cats, dogs, and the different seasons. Alzheimer's patients have longer memories; it's short term they have problems with. The kits have flash



An example of one of the memory kits available at the John P. Holt Brentwood Library. The kits are helping to fill a need for memory care in the community as well as showcasing how libraries play a vital role in their communities beyond offering books.

cards in them, so you can show them the card and it will trigger a good memory for them."

In addition to patients, Musgrave said the kits can also benefit caregivers and some even include self-care guides for caregivers.

"Being a caregiver is a 24/7 job," she said. "Even if your loved one spends 20 minutes with this kit, you know they are in a safe spot and being occupied. It also sparks good memories for them. It's an activity you can do together or alone if the caregiver just needs to take a breather for a few minutes."

Mary Katherine Rooker, community engagement and outreach coordinator with the John P. Holt Brentwood Library, said the Brentwood Library has offered for the past seven years a series of lunch and learn classes through the Alzheimer's Association that provides education for caregivers

and family members.

"This is something we are all going to be touched by, whether it is a family member, or we see friends going through it with their family members," Rooker said. "It's a wonderful gift and a much-needed

gift for our community."

Rooker said the kits can either be enjoyed at the library itself or checked out like any other items available at the library and returned after a three-week period. The kits are a part of a growing concept known as the "library of things," which at the Brentwood library includes a seed catalogue, binoculars, and even a ukulele.

"A library is more than just books," she said. "It's about offering people a variety."

Rooker said the memory kits are helping meet an important need in the community.

"You come to the library because you are looking for something, whether you're looking for a book or a DVD or you want to read the newspaper," Rooker said. "Our patrons were asking for a memory care program. We are always looking

for ways we can better serve our community, and this was an obvious choice of something we can do. Our director was looking into what we could do and learned about the memory care kits at the Williamson County Library. We asked how they implemented their program, and they put us in touch with Laura. It grew from there."

Musgrave said libraries are often a safe space for people, especially those with dementia or Alzheimer's

"My sister Joanne was di-

agnosed with dementia at the age of 49," she said. "I didn't know anything about Alzheimer's, and my first thought was to go to the library so I could get the most information. The Brentwood library is a great spot. It has a walking trail. It can be a really great outing for a caregiver to bring their loved one to work a puzzle at the puzzle table, walk on the story book trail, and sit and read by the fireplace."

More than 6 million Americans presently suffer from Alzheimer's disease, which is the leading cause of dementia among older adults. Other common forms of dementia include Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal disorders, and vascular dementia, and it is not uncommon for patients to be diagnosed with two or more forms of dementia.

Sufferers often experience greater memory loss and cognitive difficulties, which may lead to them wandering and getting lost, having issues handling money or paying bills, taking longer to complete daily tasks, and sometimes even have personality and behavior changes. While the majority of sufferers are 65 or older, signs of early on-set Alzheimer's can be detected in patients in their 30s.

"Alzheimer's doesn't discriminate," Musgrave said. "It's not really an aging disease. Early on-set people are getting it in their 40s. Alzheimer's is the third leading cause of death in Williamson County, and we are fourth in the state for reported cases."

Musgrave said libraries and other community centers can put together kits themselves or purchase them from organizations like MEternally. Musgrave suggested community leaders can reach out to local civic organizations to help finance their own kits.

GPS-powered darts helping Belle Meade recover vehicles without pursuit

DARTS, from Page 1

off the vehicle.

"I was anxious to see how it would work, and it was perfect," Williams said. "We darted the car, and it only sped up a little bit. We didn't even really follow it. Within a mile or two, he was back doing the speed limit. We just followed him until about 20 minutes later he parked in an apartment complex. By that time, we had contacted Metro Nashville [PD], and they had their helicopter monitoring the suspect. We placed spike strips at every exit to the complex, and then went in and got him with Metro's Violent Crimes Unit. When he was arrested, he told the officers 'how in the world did y'all find me?' He had no clue."

Williams said the technology is allowing departments to work better together in making arrests.

"For instance, let's say a vehicle is broken into in Smyrna, and this criminal is wreaking havoc there," he said. "If they wind up in Belle Meade, we want to know about it. There are a lot of criminals who may go from Smyrna to Franklin to Belle Meade. This particular suspect stole this vehicle in Metro Nashville, and they were looking for him. We were able to put their case together and keep a bad guy out of Belle Meade. It's good for everyone."

The use of GPS darts comes at a time when law enforcement pursuit policies are being scrutinized across the country following high-profile incidents of





Left: An example of one of the GPS darts that the Belle Meade Police Department is using to help tag vehicles. **Right**: The launching system on a Belle Meade Police vehicle. After warming up the glue on the dart, officers can push a button to deploy the dart, which will launch at a suspect vehicle at around 25 miles per hour, fast enough to tag the vehicle but not fast enough to cause damage. Once attached, officers can pull back but still keep track of the vehicle through the GPS software.

both property damage and deaths of both officers and bystanders. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), fatal crashes involving police pursuits kill more than one person every day with 525 people were killed in 2021, and 545 were killed in 2020 as a direct cause of pursuits.

The Police Executive Research Forum released a report in September 2023 about consid-

erations departments should take regarding their own pursuit policies. The report by the national think tank on policing standards followed a noted increase in fatalities related to pursuits since the pandemic as well as criticism several major departments had received for their increased use of pursuits.

Williams said the GPS darts are a way of keeping both officers and the public safe.

"So many times we get behind these guys, and they just take off and drive so crazy," Williams said. "You can't imagine the guilt of someone dying all in the pursuit of a property crime. There are a lot of departments restricting their policies because innocent people are getting killed. These suspects don't care about that. I think this is a really good solution for what is happening, especially

since the bad guys know we won't chase them over a stolen car."

Jay Stanley, senior Policy Analyst with the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Speech, Privacy & Technology Project, issued a statement on behalf of the ALCU affirming that the use of GPS darts do not require warrants so long as:

They are only deployed in instances where officers have the "equivalent of probable cause of wrongdoing and do not have time to get a warrant"

Law enforcement only deploys the darts with the intention of catching up to the suspect as soon as possible with no intention of using the dart to follow or monitor the suspect, and

The device is removed and location tracking ends when police catch up to the suspect the first time.

Stanely also cited the technology's potential to save lives, particularly those of innocent bystanders who are the most likely victims during fatal pursuit encounters, as an important consideration.

Williams said he encourages other departments to look into GPS darts for themselves.

"They are more than welcome to get in touch with me so we can demo it for them," he said. "It's definitely a solution to look into, especially if you are in a jurisdiction where there are a lot of people running from police and getting away with it. This is a great solution to arrest people and keep everyone – not just officers but the innocent people driving on the road and even the suspect – safe."

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PEOPLE



Eric Ault has been selected as the new personnel director for the city of Oak Ridge. Ault has been with the city since February 2020 when he



was hired as a process improvement specialist in the city's electric department. He was then promoted to assistant to the city manager, a role he has served in for two years. He has been serving as interim personnel director since December 2022. Ault holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's in public policy and administration, both from the University of Tennessee Knoxville. He is a member of the Tennessee City Manager's Association (TCMA).

Michelle Austin, has been selected as the director of Clarksville's Neighborhood and Community Services. A lifelong Clarksville



Michelle Austin

resident, Austin has 25 years of experience in public service, including 13 years at Clarksville Parks and Recreation. During her time there, she worked with the department's leadership team to acquire national accreditation. She has been serving as interim director of neighborhood and community service, leading the city's Long-Term Tornado Recovery Task Force. In her role, Austin will focus on communicating opportunities to residents, housing for all, neighborhood improvements, and community development.

Matthew Bushell has been hired as the new GIS technician for the city of Elizabethton's GIS and Engineering Department. Bushell



Matthew Bushell

has more than eight years' experience working in the collection and curation of spatial data at the Gray Fossil Site and continues to write scientific papers on the project. He holds a master's and bachelor's degree in geosciences from East Tennessee State University, where he studied geology, paleontology, archaeology, and GIS. He will work on mapping the city's water, sewer and stormwater appurtenances and maintaining associated GIS data-

Jessica Cooper has been named the new director of public utilities for the city of Maryville following the retirement of Baron Swaf-



Jessica Cooper

ford. Cooper began her career with Maryville as a co-op student and then started full-time as an assistant environmental engineer in 2006. She was promoted to water and wastewater engineer in 2014 and then deputy director of public utilities in 2020. Cooper holds both a bachelor's and master's in civil and environmental engineering from the University of Tennessee. She is a licensed professional engineer.

Herman Davis, the first African-American mayor of Coopertown, died at the age of 88. Davis served as alderman for District 1 and vice



Herman Davis

mayor of Coopertown from 1998 to 2000 and then as mayor from 2000 to 2004, only the second mayor in the town's history. A native of Alabama, Davis joined the U.S. Army and served during the Korean War before settling in Chicago. He worked first for the postal service and then became a teacher in Chicago. After retiring, Davis moved to Coopertown with his family in 1996. A longtime community activist, he was asked by a search committee to finish the term of a resigning alderman who had also served as the city's vice mayor in 1998.

Valerie Hale has been selected as the new city manager for Crossville

once current city manager Greg Wood retires on March 31. Hale presently serves as Crossville's city clerk, a position she

has held since



Valerie Hale

2017. Hale began her career with the city of Crossville as an assistant city clerk in 2010. Hale has received recognition as a master municipal clerk, the highest honor bestowed by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks. She is a graduate of Tennessee Tech University.

Kevin Haynes, fire prevention officer with the Johnson City Fire Department, has received a designation of fire investigation technician from



Kevin Haynes

the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI). Haynes' designation was the result of passing an exam following 44 hours of training as well as his time and experience in the fire service. Haynes has been with JCFD since 1999.

Jim Jones has been named the sixth police chief for the city of Hendersonville. Jones has been serving as the city's assistant police chief and will



Jim Jones

take over the department following the retirement of Chief Mickey Miller at the end of March. Jones is a 38year veteran of the Hendersonville Police Department, starting as a patrol officer in 1985. He rose through the ranks as a patrol lieutenant and captain, briefly serving as interim chief in 2010. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration from Belmont University.

Jeff Lewis, chief of the Dickson Police Department, has retired after more than 35 years of service to the city. During his tenure with



Jeff Lewis

the city, Lewis served not only in the police department but also as interim director of the city's Parks and Recreation Department and interim director of the city's Public Works Department. The son of a Dickson Police Department officer, Lewis joined the force as a patrol officer in 1988 and became the first Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) officer in the department in 1990. As a captain in the department, he was also instrumental in the creation of the department's Law Enforcement Explorer Post. Lewis was named acting chief of the department in 2017 and later confirmed as the full-time chief later that year.

Javaid Majid has been selected as the new chief financial officer (CFO) of the city of Chattanooga. Majid comes to Chattanooga from Salt Lake



Javaid Majid

County, Utah, where he spent more than 35 years in the finance profession. He most recently served as the county's senior debt administrator. Majid will succeed Vickie Haley, who came out of retirement as CFO in an interim capacity in November 2022.

Don Ridgeway, a former state lawmaker and executive director of the Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council, died



Don Ridgeway

March 2, at his home in Paris. After graduating the University Tennessee at Martin with a bachelor's degree in education, Ridgeway became a teacher at Groe Junior High School before going into the insurance business. He served as a member and chairman of the Henry County Board of Education before being elected to the Tennessee House of Represen-

Longtime city Managers Cox, Ogles to retire

Two long-serving city managers - Gatlinburg's Cindy Cameron Ogle and Morristown's Tony Cox are retiring in March with a combined 85 years of public service.

Cindy Ogle

Ogle retires after 35 years in the role and 45 with the city of Gatlinburg. She joined the city in 1979 as a grants coordinator before being promoted to serve as the city's assistant city manager later that year, a role she held for around a decade.

She has helped guide a unique community where the population of 3,726 is often swelled by the more than 12 million tourists who often crowd into the city that serves as a gateway to the nation's most visited national park. During her tenure, Ogle has overseen numerous major tourism efforts including the construction of the Aquarium of the Smokies – the most visited tourism destination in the state – as well as aesthetic and infrastructure renovations to Gatlinburg's Riverwalk. Ogle noted she has seen the city's revenues grow from \$19.7 million to more than \$100 million

Responsible for managing a staff of 350, Ogle also ensures the city is run in a financially responsible manner that includes environmentally-friendly and sustainable city initiatives and streamlining operating costs. She has also been instrumental in bringing together the municipalities of Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Pittman Center, and Sevierville along with Sevier County officials to meet common goals.

"The best thing about the job is the people and the relationships I have made," Ogle said. "Gatlinburg is such a beautiful place, and God has blessed me to be here in this part of the world. Another thing that I am really proud to have been part of are the city-county boards. We are unique throughout East Tennessee, the state, and the region for how we are able to sit down and work together."

In particular, Ogle mentioned relationships with Pigeon Forge City Manager Earlene Teaser, Sevierville Mayor Russell Treadway, and Sevier County Mayor Larry Waters as friendships she has formed while working together for the good of the public.

Ogle said the most difficult part of her career was during the wildfires of 2016. She lost her home and Mayor Mike Werner lost his home and business.

"We decided to all put aside our personal losses on focus on

tatives in 1984, serving 18 years.

In the House, he served as majority

caucus chairman and chairman of

the transportation, conservation, and

environment committees. He then

spent 21 years with the Northwest

Tennessee Economic Development

planning and environmental engi-

neering both from Arizona State

University in Tempe. He also spent

several years studying architecture.

He was employed in the planning

department of Buckeye, Ariz., from

2005 to 2010, before spending six

years as the head of planning and

zoning for Goffstown, N.H., from

2010 to 2015. He then served as di-

rector community development for

Bristol from 2016 until joining the

perience in public administration.

serving as city manager, department

director, assistant city manager, and

municipal management consultant.

He has previously served as the

founding director for the Department

of General Services in Kansas City,

Mo. He holds a bachelor's degree

in urban history and political sci-

ence from Elmhurst College and a

master's of public administration in

city staff in Gallatin.

Gerald Smith

has been se-

lected as the

new direc-

tor of general

services for

Metro Nash-

ville. Smith

has more than

30 years' ex-

Brian Rose

Gerald Smith

Council.

Brian Rose

has been select-

ed as the new

city planner for

Gallatin. Rose

holds a bache-

lor's degree in

urban planning

and master's

degree in urban



Cindy Cameron Ogle

what it took to get the city to come back better than before," she said. "We came back faster than I think anyone thought we would, and that is a attributable to a lot of people."

In addition to her duties as city manager, Ogle has served on numerous boards and commissions including as a past president of TCMA, past TML board member, past TML Risk Management Poolnow Public Entity Partners - board, and past vice president of ICMA, to name a few. Her work has also earned her several awards including TCMA's 2002 City Manager of the Year Award, Zeno Wall Jr. Tourism Award, YWCA Tribute to Women Finalist, and SCHAS Sevier Award.

Her nearly 50-year public service career began in 1974, serving on the staff of U.S. Rep. John Duncan in. Upon returning to East Tennessee, she worked for one year as a state training officer with the Department of Head Start Training at the University of Tennessee Knoxville before beginning her career with the city. She holds a bachelor's degree in the humanities and a master's of public administration, both from the University of Tennessee Knoxville.

Tony Cox

Cox retired in March after 40 years in public service, including 14 as Morristown's city manager.

"Tony Cox's retirement represents the end of a 14-year run of excellent leadership for the City of Morristown," Morristown Mayor Gary Chesney said. "We have seen growth in jobs, economic development, diverse recreational choices, and significant improvements in governmental management. Tony will be missed but his example is a good model for future growth."

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Tennessee, Cox first entered public service as a program coordinator with the Upper East Tennessee Human Devel-



Tony Cox

opment Agency. He then returned to UT to get a master's degree in public administration.

Afterwards, Cox held positions with UT-MTAS and the cities of Maryville, Oak Ridge, Lexington, Va., Newnan, Ga., and to serve as city manager for Fairburn, Ga., and Radford, Va. He was appointed city administrator of Morristown in 2010 in the midst of a financial crisis in the municipality.

To combat this, Cox established the city's stormwater and solid waste funds, increased the city's fund balance by more than \$12 million and tackled numerous long-term projects to better the community. Accomplishments achieved during his tenure include major capital improvements, policy updates, road and transportation improvements, and administration enhancements.

He directed concentrated efforts to enrich Morristown's historic downtown and worked with all city departments to improve efficiency, upgrade equipment, and enhance staff training.

Numerous capital projects under Cox's leadership include a new fire station, public works complex, Fulton-Hill park, a farmers' market pavilion and community space, and the 100,000-square-foot Morristown Landing recreation complex.

Under Cox's leadership, Morristown, individual departments, and Cox himself have won numerous accolades for their accomplishments.

"It's been a really good run; in 14 years, we've gotten a lot done," Cox said. "It's not one person who gets anything done; it's a team sport. I've been very fortunate to work with some great folks along the way, including elected officials, an outstanding city staff, and a community who works together. Without that, nothing gets done."

Assistant City Administrator Andrew Ellard was promoted to city administrator upon Cox's

urban management from Northern Illinois University. He is a member of ICMA and is an ICMA Credentialed Manager. Jeff Story, a driver/engineer with the



Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy. Story completed the two-year program and a capstone project focusing on community risk reduction that is currently being implemented by JCFD. Story is the third member of the department to achieve MO status.

the Federal

Doug Tarwater has been promoted to director of Sevierville Public Works. Tarwater joined the city of Sevierville as its deputy public works director in 2022. Prior to that, he worked for more than eight years with the Tennessee Department of transportation, including as director of maintenance operations, civil engineering management, and operations district engineer. Tarwater also has more than eight years' experience in the private sector. He holds a civil



and environmental engineering degree from University of Tennessee Knoxville.

Max Winitz has been selected as the new public information officer for the Franklin Police Department, becoming the first PIO for the depart-



Max Winitz

ment who isn't a sworn officer in the department. Winitz spent more than two years as the media relations coordinator for Blood Assurance before coming to Franklin. He also spent 13 years as a broadcast news anchor and reporter in Florida, and has previous experience in media, and public relations. He holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Quinnipiac University in Connecticut



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STATE BRIEFS

The Tennessee Department of **Environment and Conservation** (TDEC) is accepting applications for the first round of recycling and solid waste reduction grants this year for communities. Grants for education/outreach and organics management are available now through March 15. Applications for grants in other categories in solid waste management will be open in the weeks ahead. A total of \$2.45 million is available. Grants will be offered in four other categories - recycling equipment, used oil, convenience centers, and household hazardous waste - as well as a recycling rebate. TDEC is contacting potential applicants about the grant availability and will host upcoming workshops to explain the application process. All grant applications are submitted online via the department's Grants Management System through this link. More information about the grant program is available at this link.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has been awarded the Pollinator Roadside Management Award for 2023 by the North American Pollinator

Partnership Campaign. The award is given to agencies leading the field in pollinator-friendly roadside practices. TDOT was recognized, alongside the Partners for Pollinators Working Group, for its continuing improvement of Tennessee's roadside maintenance practices. Additionally, TDOT and the Working Group were lauded for their public education efforts and pursuit of partnerships to make an ecological impact.

Tennessee's January unemployment inched up to 3.5% from 3.4% in December. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) reported the unemployment rate increased by both 0.1% month-over-month and year-over-year. The state added 9,900 new nonfarm jobs between December and January with the largest increase coming in the professional and business services sector followed by the trade, transportation, and utilities sector and third largest in the manufacturing sector. Nationally, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.7%. That number was 0.3 of a percentage point higher than the January 2023 statistic.

Five cities benefit from USDA clean water funds

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Tennessee State Director Arlisa Armstrong five municipalities will benefit from more than \$20.8 million for six projects to bring clean water, state-of-the-art infrastructure and economic growth to rural communities.

The municipalities of Stanton, Paris, Bristol, Bluff City, and Erin will all be benefiting from the funds. Stanton will use funds to increase water service to Blue Oval City, the city's fire station, a large-scale daycare for Blue Oval employees, and the TCAT at the Blue Oval site. The funds will also expand Stanton's sewer system and increase wastewater plant efficiency, benefiting more than 700 residents.

The Paris Utility Authority will use funding to replace water lines for the Paris BPU Water Department. Bristol-Bluff City Utility District (BBCUD) will use funding to ensure compliance with Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) standards by upgrading piping and materials. The City of Erin will use funding to provide additional financing to complete Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements at the Erin City Hall.

Two other projects awarded funds include line replacement projects for the Northeast Lawrence Utility District and the North Stewart Utility District.

damage to our state, the impact on

opioid addition, substance use, and

overdose deaths have torn families

apart, damaged relationships, and

settlement, filings in Knox County

Circuit Court describe how Publicis'

work contributed to the crisis by

helping Purdue Pharma and other

opioid manufacturers market and

sell opioids. Court documents detail

how Publicis acted as Purdue's agen-

cy of record for all its branded opioid

drugs, including OxyContin, and

assisted in the deceptive promotion

Publicis was negotiated by an ex-

ecutive committee consisting of

Tennessee, Colorado, California,

Connecticut, Idaho, Massachusetts,

New York, North Carolina, Oregon,

and Vermont. They are joined in the

agreement by the attorneys general

from all states, territories, and the

District of Columbia.

The settlement agreement with

of these drugs.

In agreeing to the terms of this

devastated communities.

TN opioid abatement fund receives \$9M from Publicis Health settlement

The state of Tennessee will receive \$9 million from a \$350 million national settlement with Publicis Health to resolve investigations into the global marketing and communications firm's role in the prescription opioid crisis.

Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti said Tennessee has reached legal settlements totaling more than \$1 billion to date with drug manufacturers and others for their role in the crisis. A vast majority of these funds have been paid to the state's Opioid Abatement Fund and dedicated to remediating the opioid crisis.

Publicis recognized the harm its conduct caused, and the agreement will give communities hit hardest by the opioid crisis more financial support for treatment and recovery, building lasting infrastructure, and saving lives. The company will also stop accepting client work related to opioid-based Schedule II or Schedule III controlled substances.

Tennessee will receive more than \$9 million from the settlement which will be deposited into Tennessee's Opioid Abatement Fund to help address the opioid crisis.

"The opioid crisis has devastated families and communities across Tennessee and we will continue to work hard to hold accountable those companies most responsible," Attorney General Skrmetti said in a statement. "The money we get from these companies will never be enough to make right the damage they have done, but we will continue to work with the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Opioid Abatement Council to ensure that these resources go toward fighting the opioid epidemic."

Today's filing is the latest action General Skrmetti has taken to combat the opioid crisis and to hold accountable those responsible for creating and fueling the crisis. To date, Tennessee has reached legal settlements totaling more than \$1 billion with drug manufacturers and others for their roles in the crisis.

Thousands of Tennesseans die each year from prescription opioid overdoses. These deaths—and the impacts on thousands who have struggled with opioid addiction—have created considerable costs for our health care, child welfare, and criminal justice systems. More significant than the dollars and cents in

TACIR: Tennessee needs \$68B in public infrastructure investment in next five years

Tennessee needs at least \$68 billion worth of public infrastructure improvements during the five-year period of July 2022 to June 2027—a \$5 billion (9%) increase from the year before—according to a new report by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR).

Health, Safety, and Welfare infrastructure needs increased by \$2 billion—37% of the overall increase in the total estimated cost of the inventory.

Over half of this increase—\$1 billion—is needed for water and wastewater infrastructure improvements, including new projects and increases in the cost of existing projects.

The overall increase in water and wastewater needs was offset by \$27 million in cost decreases, \$324 million in completed projects, and \$22 million in canceled projects. The largest completed project is a sewer system rehabilitation in Springfield (\$63 million).

The \$2 billion increase in needed improvements for Education also contributed to the overall increase in the total estimated cost of the inventory.

The increase was primarily driven by a \$1 billion increase in post-secondary education needs, including two new projects at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK)—a facility to accommodate growth in the College of Business (\$227 million) and a chemistry building to replace the current building (\$151 million).

Needs also increased for General Government (\$1 billion), Recreation and Culture (\$236 million),



Over half of this increase—\$1 billion—is needed for water and wastewater infrastructure improvements, including new projects and increases in the cost of existing projects.

and Transportation and Utilities (\$41 million). Reported needs decreased for Economic Development (\$6 million)

The percentage of funded infrastructure needs reported at the time the inventory was conducted increased by 1% from 2021 to 2022. Funding is often not identified until a project reaches the construction stage.

This year's inventory shows \$17 billion in funding that has been identified for the \$50 billion in needs for which funding information is available.

Improvements needed at existing schools and those drawn from capital budget requests submitted by state agencies do not include funding information.

Total estimated costs for current infrastructure needs fall into six general categories.

- Transportation and Utilities: \$35 billion
- Education: \$17 billion
- Health, Safety, and Welfare: \$11 billion
- Recreation and Culture: \$3 billion
- General Government: \$2 billion
 Economic Development: \$239

The report includes one-page summaries for each county, which list the estimated cost for all types of needed infrastructure in each county by stage of development, highlight the top three types of infrastructure improvements needed in each county based on the total estimated cost, and provide comparisons of the infrastructure needed at public school systems to student enrollment.

The full report is <u>available on TACIR's website.</u>

State January revenues \$97.8M less than budgeted; above last year's collections

Tennessee revenues for the month of January exceeded collections from January of 2023, but were less than the budgeted estimates.

Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson reported that tax revenues were \$1.95 billion, which is \$15.8 million more than January of last year, but \$97.8 million less than the budgeted estimate. The total growth rate for the month was 0.82%.

"Total tax receipts for the month of January exceeded reported collections from last year, but performance against our monthly estimates continues to lag," Bryson said. "State sales tax receipts, reflecting consumer spending during the December 2023 Christmas shopping season, grew modestly.

"Corporate taxes, or franchise and excise taxes, were less than this time last year, but were nearly in line with our estimates for the month," Bryson continued. "Real estate mortgage tax collections, recorded within the privilege tax, continue to remain low as they were less than monthly estimates. All other taxes combined were \$5.4 million above our revenue estimates and increased 6.14 percent compared to January 2023. While we are encouraged to see some moderate revenue growth, we will continue to monitor economic activity and revenue trends to ensure fiscal stability."

On an accrual basis, January is

the sixth month in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

General fund revenues were less than the budgeted estimates in the amount of \$95.2 million, while the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$2.6 million less than the estimates.

Sales tax revenues were \$86.1 million less than the estimate for January and the growth rate was 0.98%. For six months, revenues are \$72 million less than estimated and the year-to-date growth rate is 1.34%.

Franchise and excise tax revenues were \$1.9 million less than the January budgeted estimate. The growth rate compared to January 2023 was negative 2.47%. Year-to-date franchise and excise tax revenues are 10.90% lower than this same time last year and \$234.2 million less than estimated.

Gasoline and motor fuel revenues increased by 2.97% compared to January 2023 and were \$1.5 million more than the budgeted estimate of \$108.6 million. For six months, revenues are more than estimates by \$3.7 million.

Motor vehicle registration revenues were \$1.6 million more than the January estimate, but on a year-to-date basis are \$3.1 million less than the estimate.

Tobacco tax revenues were \$0.4 million less than the budgeted estimate of \$15 million, and for six

months are \$9 million less than the budgeted estimate.

Privilege tax revenues were \$15.3 million less than the January estimate, and on a year-to-date basis, August through January, revenues are \$79 million less than the estimate.

Business tax revenues were \$3.1

million more than the January estimate. For six months revenues are \$1.2 million more than the budgeted estimate.

Mixed drink, or liquor-by-the-

drink, taxes were \$1 million more than the January estimate, and on a year-to-date basis, revenues are \$4.1 million more than the budgeted estimate.

All other taxes were less than

estimates by a net of \$1.3 million.

Year-to-date total revenues are \$377.7 million less than the budgeted estimate. General fund revenues are \$378.8 million less than the estimate, and the four other funds total \$1.1 million more than estimates. The growth rate for six months is negative 0.98%.

The budgeted revenue estimates for 2023-2024 are based upon the State Funding Board's consensus recommendation from Nov. 28, 2022. Incorporated in the estimates are any changes in revenue enacted during the 2023 session of the General Assembly.

These estimates are available on the state's website.

Infrastructure planning grants awarded to 37 cities

State officials announced 37 municipalities are among 50 entities that will share in \$10.7 million in infrastructure planning grants.

The Infrastructure Planning Grant (IPG) program is part of the of the Rural Economic Opportunity Act and will assist communities and utility districts across Tennessee with long-term planning for their water and sewer systems.

Grants included \$199,500 for **Alamo**, \$448,875 for **Atoka**, \$190,000 for **Big Sandy**, \$285,000 for **Chapel Hill**, \$234,413 for **Clifton**, \$200,000 for **Copperhill**, \$182,000 for **Decherd**, \$400,000

for Dunlap, \$200,000 for Erin, \$114,000 for Gallaway, \$329,175 for Greenbrier, \$346,750 for Harriman, \$85,000 for Hohenwald, \$95,000 for Hollow Rock, \$200,000 for Jefferson City, \$60,000 for Linden, \$207,000 for Lobelville, \$38,000 for Luttrell, \$175,750 for Lynnville, \$500,000 for **McEwen**, \$65,170 for McLemoresville, \$55,000 for Mountain City, \$405,000 for Mt. Pleasant, \$339,150 for Newport, \$201,115 for Obion, \$133,000 for Oliver Springs, \$299,250 for **Oneida**, \$200,000 for Petersburg, \$475,000 for Sardis, \$224,438 for Stanton, \$200,000 for Tennessee Ridge, \$80,000 for Trimble, \$148,200 for Tiptonville, \$216,500 for Vanleer, \$99,750 for Waverly, \$52,787 for Waynesboro, and \$218,500 for White Pine.

Utility Districts alsoreceiving grants included \$190,000 for **Bean Station**, \$430,000 for **Blountville**, \$259,350 for County Wide, \$141,000 for Cross Anchor, \$334,115 for the First Utility District of Carter County, \$189,000 for the **Gibson County Municipal Water District**, \$254,363 for **Horneak**, \$200,526 for **Iron City**,

\$200,000 for Jellico, \$58,353 for Roan Mountain, \$190,000 for South Carroll, \$165,000 for South Elizabethton, and \$200,000 for Tullahoma.

The IPG program is open to utility systems that serve distressed counties and rural communities on the financially distressed utility system referral list. Funds can be used in the following program categories: water system mapping and modeling, water system analysis, sewer system mapping and modeling, sewer system analysis, asset management related activities and regionalization studies.

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Pittman Center shows small cities can employ green land management practices

By KATE COIL TT&C Assistant Editor

With concerns rising about using pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, the town of Pittman Center is showing that even small municipalities can employ green measures in maintaining their public lands.

While on the border of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pittman Center does not have its own parks and recreation department. Despite this, the town maintains the 50-acre Spring Branch Walking Trail through the work of its public works department, the Pittman Center Tree Board, and help from the Foothills Land Conservancy.

Sheila McMahan, member of the Pittman Center Tree Board, said the park was donated to the town in 2008 by a local resident to create a nature park for the community.

A gift from the estate of another local resident turned what had once been farmland and a homestead site into a walking trail for the public to enjoy. The "Y" shaped walking trail features the remains of two homesites, a spring box, and chimney pile, as well as its namesake, the Spring Branch of the Little Pigeon River.

Due to periods of seasonal high water and flooding, the walking trail and the spring it followed began showing signs of erosion. Members of the Tree Board and town officials walked the land to see if they could determine what was causing the problem.

"The branch bank was eroding on the southside because the town was mowing right up to the edge," she said. "That was putting pressure from above and keeping any foliage with strong roots that could stabilize the bank from growing. We noted where it was eroding the most and thought about what we could do to stabilize the branch. We walked with the town, and they agreed with us that a best practice would be not to mow the edge of the bank."

McMahan said leaders decided against using methods such as pesticides and herbicides to control these weeds because of concerns over what that would mean for the local water supply.

"We need to think about the environmental effects," she said. "It isn't as easy as 'let's throw something on these weeds,' and it's done. You have to realize these pesticides are going into the ground and into the water. They are then killing off the insects and animals that rely on that water. The Spring Branch is a major feature of that walking trail, and any pesticide we use there is going to make it into that water. Within three feet, that water is on private land and taking those health concerns with it. You have to think of a better way, something that is long-term and good not just for our eyesight but also for the plant and animal



Instead of using pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic management, green management practices use natural means to protect public parks and lands from erosion, invasive species, pests, and other concerns. Pittman Center is showing that even small cities can use these practices.

kingdoms."

The organic land management movement has been gaining momentum in cities across the country as more is learned about the long-term, harmful effects of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, even those used in municipal parks.

Many of the common ingredients in pesticides and herbicides contain ingredients known as carcinogens by the U.S. EPA and hundreds of lawsuits have been filed against companies like Monsanto, blaming use of their herbicide and pesticide products for causing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

The use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides has also been linked to higher cancer risks and the distribution of metabolic, reproductive, immune, endocrine, and nervous system functions.

Outside human medical concerns, pesticides containing nenicitoids have been banned throughout Europe due to their contribution to the collapse of native bee populations. Leaching of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers into groundwater has also been linked to damaging local water supplies and causing algal blooms, which can harm humans, animals, and local ecology.

Additionally, work is being done to educate the public about why the town is allowing weeds and other growth along the streambank, providing a natural stabilization. This technique, known as "no mow" or "low mow," is one technique municipalities are using both for streambed stabilization but also to encourage pollinator development.

"We are working to plant native trees along the bank, that would help stabilize it as well as help with the weeds," McMahan said. "Some of the species we are looking at are silky dogwood, silky willow, elderberry, button



In addition to flowing into private and agricultural lands, the Spring Branch is connected to the Little Pigeon River, an important water source for many communities in and around Sevier County. Pittman Center officials were concerned that using pesticides and herbicides near the stream could have negative consequences for endangered plants and animals as well as humans.



The entrance to the Spring Branch Walking Trail in Pittman Center. The 50-acre park that contains the trail was donated to the town by local landowners who wanted to preserve it. The area was once used as farm land prior to the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the remains of two home sites, a spring box, chimney pile, and barn still stand in the area. In addition to preserving the area's historic heritage, the trail is also allowing Pittman Center to conserve many of the unique, native species that are found in the region.

bush, ninebark, oaks, magnolia, redbuds, black gum, and tulip trees. We also planted some native flowers and plants in the park and along the stream."

Other native plants that Pittman Center officials have encouraged to grow in the area include rue anemone, Carolina vetch, pussytoes, bloodroot, violets, and

various ferns and related plants that call the region home.

McMahan said the Tree Board, town officials, and community members are still working toward putting in more native trees and plants as well as complete the walking trail into a entire loop.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, McMahan said the town also had issues with an invasive plant species known for how hard it is to root out: kudzu.

In 2021, the town brought in goats from Knox Goats to remove kudzu in the community through a \$6,600 Firewise Grant. In addition to offering a pesticide-free solution to the problem, the goats also helped reduce wildfire risk in the area.

"We wanted to help the population of pollinators, but also reduce potential run-off of pesticides in the area as much as possible," she said. "It's better to work within your natural resources as much as possible."

Bordering on the nation's most visited national park, Mc-Mahan said it is important for Pittman Center to adopt more natural methods of maintaining their public lands and parks, not just for local residents but also the millions of visitors who come to enjoy what nature has to offer.

"The Great Smoky Mountains is vast, and the park service is slim," she said. "Having a small area that a small government is focused on and helping those native species, it allows those species to continue to thrive. We are protecting the environmental concerns surrounding those species and on a more personal level. We can also educate the public about those native species, and why they are important to our area. If you grew up in this area or this is your home, you do like to see the native flowers and trees. They give you a homey feeling. This is our community."

For other municipalities who want to look into how they can also use green management practices, McMahan's first piece of advice is to get out and visit those parks and public spaces, take in the natural beauty, and see what areas are having issues.

Secondly, officials should reach out to those who are knowledgeable about green management practices, and how they can benefit local plants, animals, and residents.

"Find the people who are concerned enough to take action," she said. "Within small communities, if you educate the public it will pull in the concerned citizens. They can then continue to educate the rest of the community. Tree Boards and other small groups can help take some of that burden from city officials, because officials in small cities are always so overwhelmed. With your citizenship involved, they can help formulate these plans in a manageable way."

No loan is too large or too small



The Town of Oakland closed a \$7 million public building authority loan with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund to finance water and sewer projects. The town has used TMBF programs since 2021. Pictured are Town Recorder Yvonne Bullard, Mayor H.Michael Brown, TMBF Marketing Representative Justin Hanson and Town Manager Harvey Ellis.



The City of Loretto has used the TMBF loan programs since 2021. The most recent closing was a \$2 million public building authority draw loan to be used to finance various public works projects. The loan was provided by a local bank, Bank of Frankewing in Pulaski. Pictured are City Recorder Jennifer Augustin, Mayor Steve McMaster and TMBF Marketing Representative Kevin Krushenski.



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ARPA 3-Year Anniversary: Documenting the success of direct federal aid to cities

All obligations must be complete by Dec. 31,

BY NLC STAFF

Three years after its passage, the impact of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) on America's cities, towns and villages cannot be overstated.

APRA's State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) provided integral relief for local governments to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure stability for communities moving forward. During a time of uncertainty, SLFRF allocations ushered in funds to help cities, towns and villages ignite a bottom-up economic recovery strategy to assist the hardest-hit residents, stabilize municipal budgets, and maintain consistent spending on standard local government operations and ser-

The SLFRF program provided direct federal aid in the form of block grants to all state, county and municipal governments, allowing for more opportunities for regional and multi-jurisdictional collaborations compared to competitive or categorical grants that are often limited to narrowly defined activities. Additionally, the SLFRF distribution model equitably allocated aid for metropolitan cities by borrowing the anti-poverty formula from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to deliver funding where it was needed the most. Relatedly, the three- and a half-year timeframe given to recipients to obligate funds has continued to foster opportunities to broadly engage residents and respond to community feedback on decisions around the use of these one-time dollars to address historic, immediate and long-term inequities. Many communities formalized community feedback opportunities, like Dayton, OH, which invested in a resident survey to use community voices and data to guide their decisions.

New safeguards for local government autonomy also

debt, and investing are the three

most common ways Americans

expect to use their 2024 tax

returns. As of mid-February,

approximately 25.5 million

taxpayers had submitted returns

with the average return coming

back at \$1,741, according to

the Internal Revenue Service.

An estimated 67% of taxpayers

expect some level of refund. Of

those taxpayers, 30% say they

plan on putting those funds into

their savings account. Savings

and paying down debt were

the top priorities for tax returns

among all generations, except

for Generation Z, who planned

to invest over paying down debt

and saving funds. Another 20%

of taxpayers of all generations

plan to use their refunds for

NATIONAL BRIEFS

allowed local leaders to tailor expenditures to their own community's top priorities by discouraging states from layering additional or more restrictive spending limitations beyond those approved by Congress. The combination of direct federal aid and safeguards for local autonomy largely eliminated any cause for state and local competition that characterized earlier allocations of emergency aid.

As the December 2024 obligation deadline approaches, municipalities must make a final decision on where to obligate any remaining SLFRF dollars.1 Given that these are one-time funds, local governments will likely endeavor to obligate and spend down their grant funds to as close to zero as possible. To unlock the potential of any remaining unobligated SLFRF allocations both large and small, and in celebration of ARPA's third anniversary, NLC will highlight investment opportunities for local government grantees of all sizes by sharing project ideas and examples on how to obligate remaining funds in the following categories:

- Community Aid
- Government Operations
- Housing
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Public Health
- **Public Safety**
- Infrastructure

These key areas are highlighted in NLC, Brookings Metro and the National Association of Counties' Local Government ARPA Investment Tracker - which is another resource for localities to find thousands of project ideas across recipient types. Because these topics often overlap or impact one another, these blogs can be reviewed together for the strongest impact and to inspire spending opportunities. It is important to note that the projects highlighted throughout these blogs can be scaled to fit a municipality's size or desired cost depending on the available remaining funds, anticipated need and capacity.

Saving money, paying down vacations, home improvements, or small businesses will begin to feel

While inflation is cooling and the

country's gross domestic product

(GDP) is growing beyond econo-

mists' expectations, small busi-

ness owners are still struggling.

According to the National Feder-

ation of Independent Researchers,

inflation and labor shortages as well

as weakening consumer spending

are leaving many small businesses

scrambling to adapt. Americans

are beginning to pullback spend-

ing as their pandemic-era savings

begin to dwindle. Americans have

experienced some of the steepest

price hikes in decades in the past

few years with the consumer price

index peaking at 9.1% in June

2022. Economists are hopeful that

as prices continue to stabilize that

big-ticket purchases.

Status of Obligations

Unlike other federal funding, SL-FRF has given local governments opportunities and time to address immediate COVID-19 impacts and assist community members disproportionately impacted by the pandemic over the last two years. As of Sept. 30, 2023:

- Tier 1 recipients have obligated approximately 68%
- Tier 2 recipients have obligated approximately 63%
- Tier 5 municipalities have obligated approximately 70% (as of March 31st, 2023)

Although many local governments have budgeted much of their SLFRF dollars, all obligations must be complete by Dec. 31, **2024.** For more information on the status of SLRF obligations, refer to NLC's collaborative blogs with the Brookings Metro and the National Association of Counties (NACo).

Looking Towards the Future

ARPA's landmark legislation envisioned a role for all of America's elected officials — at the federal, state and local levels - in the nation's continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Enacting this vision, SLFRF unleashed the problem-solving potential of local governments and the non-partisan know-how of local leaders to overcome challenges both anticipated and unfamiliar stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As local governments continue to obligate funds, they can take advantage of data-driven decision making to inform their projects. Local leaders can look within their own community to determine where ARPA funds have been invested and locate any gaps in service to shape their remaining spending priorities. As this next stage of the program approaches, localities can continue to rely on Treasury's guidance for eligible uses, reporting and compliance. Continue to check NLC's resource library to see the incoming relevant ARPA resources and reports or find them at NLC's ARPA webpage.

the effects of easing inflation.

The labor market added 275,000

new jobs in February, a sign

of continued solid economic

growth. The addition marked a

second month with a surprising

surge in job creation that exceeded

the expectations of economists.

The unemployment rate, however,

increased to 3.9%. Rising wages, at-

tractive benefits, and more flexible

work schedules have drawn many

Americans back into the workforce.

Despite the robust jobs market,

employee confidence is falling

steadily, particularly in white-collar

professions, while those in blue

collar or frontline service profes-

sions like healthcare, construction,

and manufacturing remain more

TENNESSEE **FESTIVALS**

March 12-23: Johnson City <u>Johnson City Jazz Festival</u>

The annual festival of live jazz will bring together all mixtures of the genre and will be held at the Carnegie Hotel.

March 22-23: Linden

16th Annual Blooming Arts Fes-<u>tival</u>

Blooming Arts Festival has grown to feature more than 150 exhibitors, including artisans, musicians and food vendors. The festival attracts more than 10,000 patrons to Linden.

April 4-7: Columbia

Mule Day

Celebrate the 50th anniversary of Mule Day, an annual celebration of all things related to mules and is held the "Mule Capital" of the

April 5-6: Atoka Atoka BBQ Fest

Nancy Lane Park hosts this Memphis Barbeque Network officially-sanctioned event featuring a kids' cook-off, kids' events, grilled cheese challenge, food trucks, vendors, cornhole tournament, and more.

April 6: Cleveland

Hot Slaw and Art Y'all

This national festival combines Cleveland's hot slaw heritage with live music, artist exhibitors, popup street performances, family games, contests, food vendors, and

April 6: Monterey

4th Annual Banana Pudding Festival This festival features more than 100 aristans and boutiques, kids' activities, food trucks, and a banana pudding taste-test contest where the public are the judges.

April 12-14: Erwin **NoliFest**

This annual whitewater river sports festival, hosted each year on the beautiful banks of the Nolichucky River, attracts a variety of outdoor enthusiasts and paddlers in the kayak and SUP communities from around the country.

April 13-14: Waverly

Spring Paint Jam

The Walls Art Park in Waverly hosts the Spring Paint Jam. This one-of-a-kind park allows artists to legally graffiti on 18 different walls with 36 different places to paint.

April 14: Nolensville Buttercup Festival

Celebrate the coming of spring with this festival featuring food, games, art, vendors, and more from the Nolensville Historical Society.

April 14: Cookeville 2nd Annual Firefly Festival

Dogwood Park in Cookeville hosts this celebration of local music and cultural heritage featuring ne-ofa-kind artwork, sample delicious food, and participate in immersive activities.



upbeat.

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

Municipal leaders talk legislative issues at 2024 TML Conference

CONFERENCE, from Page 1

"I know that comes as a surprise because, for many of you, your interactions with Washington have not been as pleasant as we can hope. There are many ways that the federal government and Congress are working with you, including many programs that are helping local leaders in meeting transportation, infrastructure, rural development, and housing needs."

Mumpower detailed a proposal his office has brought before the General Assembly that would increase how often property reappraisals occur from the current every five-to-six years to an average of every two, three, or four years depending on certain factors.

Additionally, Mumpower said the state is seeing a "normalization" of its revenue as the state is still bringing in revenue 40% higher than it was pre-pandemic, but lower than it has been in previous years. Less federal money coming into the state as well as slowing economy will mean the state's budget will be different than it has been in the recent past.

Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks presented a call-to-action regarding the proposed Senate Bill 171-House Bill 565 that if passed would implement a property tax caps. Brooks explained how this proposed cap could severely limit the ability of cities to provide necessary services and infrastructure, especially as populations continue to grow. As a former state lawmaker himself, Brooks said the legislature is known for busting its own spending cap – the Copeland Cap – which requires state expenditures not to grow faster than the state economy.

Dr. Kessler said consumer spending spurred economic growth post-pandemic, but higher prices and inflation are eroding that power. While home prices on average in Tennessee are lower than the U.S. average, Kessler said the gap is starting to narrow with home prices in many major metropolitan areas of the state having exceeded the national average for a few years.

The high prices of the home market are also driving up rental prices as more people seek rentals when they cannot buy. Kessler noted that high housing prices can lead to slowdowns in other areas of the economy as residents struggle to finance basic needs.

Tennessee's tax revenue growth has slowed, partially because the economy is rebounding from the pandemic as well as a slowdown of online sales tax revenues. Kessler said a lot of the change is due to policy changes, such as the grocery sales tax holiday as well as cuts to the franchise and excise tax.

A panel comprised of Gallatin Mayor and TML 1st Vice President Paige Brown, Brownsville Mayor Bill Rawls, Tennessee County Services Association Executive Director David Connor, and Farm Bureau Public Policy Division Director Kevin Hensley discussed the challenges of balancing urban growth and how municipalities and counties can work together as small governments to facilitate incoming businesses and residents while maintaining green spaces and agricultural land.

Straessle detailed how the Sycamore Institute works as an independent, nonpartisan public policy research center and how the organization has worked to deliver both a yearly analysis of the governor's proposed budget as well as research for the Legislature on issues including federal education funding, youth mental health issues in the state, gun violence, and healthcare.

Jackson and Vanhooser discussed how both municipalities and government officials with social media accounts must take care in what they post, deleting comments, and how they interact with the public on those accounts as social media increasingly becomes a public form.

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule by June to resolve two conflicting lower court rulings – one in the Sixth District Court to which Tennessee belongs and another from the Ninth District Court – about whether public officials can block accounts for accessing their social media accounts. Jackson noted that while public officials are entitled to "private" social media accounts, posting about government business on a "private" account may,



U.S. Congressman John Rose addresses city officials at the TML Legislative Conference.





Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury Jason Mumpower discusses a proposed property reappraisal measure under consideration by the Tennessee General Assembly.



Above: University of Tennessee Research Professor Dr. Larry Kessler discusses the state's economic outlook.

Left: Attorneys Sam Jackson and Bethany Vanhooser with Spencer Fane discuss how government officials can avoid violating First Amendment rights when using official social media accounts.





Above: From left to right, TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, President and Farragut Mayor Ron Williams, 1st Vice President and Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown, and 2nd Vice President and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic.

Left: Sycamore Institute Executive Director Brian Straessle gives an overview of the organization's various research projects.



Above: Milan Alderwoman Tammy Wade led a discussion during the Women in Municipal Government meeting.

in fact, make the account legally considered public.

The conference also allowed city officials the chance to meet with their respective lawmakers as well as attend floor sessions of both the Senate and House at the State Capitol.

Representatives of TML Partner Programs – including American Fidelity, Everywhere.care, GovCard, GovDeals, PATH, Public Entity Partners, Rackley Roofing, SERVEPRO, the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund, VC3, and Voya – were also on hand to discuss how their services can help municipalities.



TML members listen to speakers during the Annual Legislative Conference, which was held in Nashville from March 4-5.

Municipal leaders talk legislative issues at 2024 TML Conference



From left to right, Springfield Mayor and District 5 Director Ann Schneider-Williams, Lawrenceburg Mayor and District 6 Director Blake Lay, and Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon.



Left to right: Millington Alderwoman and TML District 8 Director Bethany Huffman, Covington Mayor Jan Hensley, Munford Alderwoman Deborah Reed, and Munford Mayor Dwayne Cole.



From left to right, Morristown Vice Mayor Tommy Pedigo, Morristown Mayor and TML District 2 Director Gary Chesney, and Newport Mayor and TML At-Large Director and Trey Dykes



U.S. Congressman John Rose, left, with Lebanon Mayor Rick Bell



Farragut Mayor and TML President Ron Williams, left, with Farragut Assistant to the Administrator Trevor Hobbs.



Clinton Councilwoman Wendy Maness, left, and Paris Vice Mayor Vickey Roberts, right



Gallatin Mayor and TML 1st Vice President Paige Brown, left, and Franklin Mayor Ken Moore, right



Unicoi Mayor Kathy Bullen, left, with Erwin Alderman Michael Baker, right.



Collierville Vice Mayor Maureen Fraser, left, and Atoka Mayor Barry Akin, right



Jackson Councilman and TML At-Large Director Johnny Dodd, left, and Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts, right



 $From \ left to \ right, Oakland \ Alderman \ Adrian \ Wiggins, City \ Manager \ Harvey \ Ellis, and \ Alderman \ Jeff \ Fisher \ Manager \ Harvey \ Ellis, and \ Alderman \ Jeff \ Fisher \ Manager \ Harvey \ Ellis, and \ Alderman \ Jeff \ Fisher \ Manager \ Harvey \ Ellis, and \ Alderman \ Jeff \ Fisher \ Manager \ Harvey \ Ellis, and \ Alderman \ Jeff \ Fisher \ Manager \ Harvey \ Ellis, and \ Alderman \ Jeff \ Fisher \ Manager \ Harvey \ Manager \$

Municipal leaders talk legislative issues at 2024 TML Conference



From left to right, East Ridge Finance Director Diane Qualls, Mayor Brian Williams, Councilman David Tyler, and Councilwoman Aundie Witt



Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell, left, and Cleveland Mayor and TML At-Large Director Kevin Brooks, right



Bartlett Alderwoman Monique Williams, left, and Alderman Kevin Quinn, right



Left to right: Munford Alderman Steve Childress, Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo, and Millington Mayor Terry Jones



Loretto Mayor Steve McMasters, left, and City Administrator Jesse Turner, right



Athens Vice Mayor Larry Eaton, left, and Mayor Steve Sherlin, right



Germantown Alderman Brian Ueleke, left, and Johnson City Vice Mayor Aaron Murphy, right



Red Bank Vice Mayor and TML District 3 Director Stefanie Dalton, left, with Kingsport Alderman and TML District 1 Director Darrell



From left to right, Millington Aldermen Chris Ford, Larry Dagen, and Thomas McGhee



Collierville Town Administrator Molly Mehner, left, and Mayor Stan Joyner, right



From left to right, Bolivar Councilwoman Caroline Miller, Atoka City Recorder Rachel Covarrubias, and Memphis Senior Financial Literacy Coordinator Edmund Ford Jr.

Photos by Kate Coil