



Virtual TML District Meetings set for December

TML District Meetings will be conducted virtually during the first two weeks in December using a Zoom webinar format.

It is vital that all city officials plan to participate. The meeting will include information on TML's legislative priorities as well as other key legislation that TML anticipates will be addressed in the upcoming session.

Members will also be updated on the League's efforts to restore and return millions in locally-generated sales tax revenues to Tennessee towns and cities.

The 113th General Assembly will convene in Nashville on Jan. 10. It is important that city officials are prepared to educated their legislators on the needs of our cities

and towns.

Information on how to register for each meeting will be sent to city officials in each district. A meeting reminder and Zoom link will be sent out prior to each meeting. For further assistance, please contact your TML staff.

2022 TML Virtual District Meetings

District 1	Dec. 6	10 am / EST
District 2	Dec. 6	1 pm / EST
District 3	Dec. 7	10 am / EST
District 4	Dec. 7	1 pm / CST
District 5	Dec. 8	10 am / CST
District 6	Dec. 8	1 pm / CST
District 7	Dec. 13	10 am / CST
District 8	Dec. 13	1 pm / CST

New data reveals some bright spots in economy

Despite the warnings of a looming recession, the U.S. economy grew by 2.6% in the third quarter, while consumer prices rose less than expected in October.

The Consumer Price Index came in below 8% for the first time in eight months, the strongest signs yet that inflation was slowing. And data released in October from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that the nation's gross domestic product—that is, the total value of goods and services produced in the U.S.—was up in the third quarter, increasing at an annual rate of 2.6%. This increase reflected increases in consumer spending, exports, federal government spending, and state and local government spending.

The job market has remained strong amid economic headwinds, with the U.S. adding roughly 420,000 jobs each month this year and keeping the jobless rate at 3.5%, in line with its pre-pandemic level. Jobless claims have also been below pre-pandemic levels despite growing concerns about a potential recession.

Disposable personal income and personal savings were also up, as was personal consumption expenditures (PCE), which increased \$113.0 billion (0.6 percent). In Tennessee, the PCE increased by 14.2 percent in 2021 over 2020. In Tennessee, the PCE increased by

14.2% in 2021 over 2020.

Tennessee continues to be a leader in economic growth and fiscal health in the United States. Sales tax revenues continue to outperform budget estimates. September revenues were \$2.1 billion, which is \$243.3 million more than September of last year and \$277.2 million more than the budgeted estimate. The total growth rate for the month was 12.76%.

Sales tax revenues were \$105.9 million more than the estimate for September. The September growth rate was 10.86%. Year-to-date revenues are 10.43% more than this time last year.

And although inflation remains a concern, according to the most recent survey by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research, views on inflation are beginning to soften as many state business leaders believe Tennessee's economy is on a much better trajectory than the nation's.

"These number are further indication that our state is in a solid financial position," said Henderson Mayor Bobby King and TML President. "While state sales tax revenues are exceeding projections and producing a significant budget surplus for the state, this is not true in every municipality."

See **ECONOMY** on Page 6

Cooperation, flexibility needed to alleviate affordable housing crisis

By KATE COIL

With prices putting homeownership out of reach for healthcare workers, teachers, police officers, firefighters, and other government employees, housing affordability is a topic being discussed in numerous municipalities across Tennessee and the nation.

A panel of officials involved in housing and related issues spoke at the Tennessee Municipal League's 82nd Annual Conference in Gatlinburg about the challenges around affordable housing and how municipalities work with other stakeholders on these issues.

Ralph Perrey, executive director of the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA), said housing shortages are making it harder to get mortgages, which in turn raises rents, making it harder for those of modest means to acquire homes close to jobs.

"While it's certainly a very challenging environment for housing and homeownership right now, there are some things we can do together," Perrey said. "American's housing shortage hits hardest at the Tennesseans that THDA serves: first-time homebuyers of moderate to middle income and working people in need of decent and affordable rental housing. Fundamentally, what we are talking about is supply and demand. The American Association of Realtors' Affordable Housing Index is at

its lowest since 1989. There is less housing for sale or for rent today than at any point in the past 30 years, and we all know there is more demand. That is especially felt at lower-level price points or the lower end of the market."

Michelle Gaskin Brown, public policy manager with Amazon, said two years ago Amazon created a \$2 billion Housing Equity Fund to create and preserve at least 200,000 units of affordable housing in locations where the company has more than 500,000 or more employees, which includes their operations offices in Nashville. Amazon provides the funding source with the goal of creating housing that will remain affordable for 99 years. Half of the money has already been spent in three Amazon locations.

"The point of this fund is for us to partner with nonprofits, businesses, developers, and local governments to provide funding so they will be able to create and build affordable housing," Brown said. "Affordable housing for us is anything between 30% to 80% average median income. We want to support some of the lower and moderate-income individuals and families to make sure they can live in a home in an area they want to with the understanding their wages may not match the cost of renting and owning a home today."

One major issue the company See **HOUSING** on Page 5

Lee re-elected; Ogles wins U.S. 5th district; all state referendums pass

BY KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

The state of Tennessee has one new member of its congressional delegation while incumbents dominated other federal races and the gubernatorial contest.

In perhaps what was the most contested federal race, Republican Andy Ogles defeated Democrat Heidi Campbell for the U.S. House District 5 seat with Ogles garnering nearly 56% of the vote to Campbell's 42%. Ogles, who presently serves as Maury County mayor, will take the seat that was formerly held by Democrat Jim Cooper who decided not to seek re-election following redistricting.

In other federal races, the remaining eight U.S. congressional seats for the state of Tennessee were retained by incumbent candidates. With Ogles election, U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen becomes the only Democrat among Tennessee's nine-member congressional delegation.

Incumbent Republican Bill Lee defeated Democratic challenger Jason Martin and other eight independent challengers for governor. Lee garnered nearly two-thirds of the vote (64.9%) of the vote while Martin earned nearly one-third (32.9%). The remaining 2% was spread among the field of seven other independent candidates.

Tennesseans will see new faces in three Senate districts and 16 House districts.

New members of the Senate include Republican J. Adam Lowe in District 1, Democrat Charlane Oliver in District 18, and Republican Brent Taylor in District 31.

New Tennessee House members include Republican Robert Stevens in District 13, Republican Elaine Davis in District 18, Republican Bryan Richey in District 20, Republican Kevin Raper in District



Incumbent Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee embraces his wife First Lady Maria Lee at his campaign headquarters in Franklin after winning the gubernatorial race.

24, Republican Monty Fritts in District 32, Republican William Slater in District 35, Republican Michael Hale in District 40, Republican Ed Butler in District 41, Democrat Justin Jones in District 52, Democrat Caleb Hemmer in District 59, Republican Gino Bulso in District 61, Republican Jack McCalmon in District 63, Democrat Ronnie Glynn in District 67, Republican Jody Barrett in District 69, Republican Kip Capley in District 71, Republican Jeff Burkhart in District 75, and Republican Brock Martin in District 79.

With the death of State Rep. Barbara Cooper, D-Memphis, prior to the election, the State House 86 race will also see a new face. The Shelby County Democratic Party will decide who will fill Cooper's



In addition, more than 200 municipalities held local elections to coincide with the state and federal generation elections on Nov. 8.

To see all the election results, be sure to check out *Tennessee Town & City's* special election edition. https://ttc.tml1.org/sites/default/files/uploads/ttc-issues/november-2022-special-election-edition_4.pdf

Ad hoc committee, TBI funding among ways lawmakers seeking to improve justice system

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

A new ad hoc committee and an accelerated hiring process for TBI staff are two ways lawmakers are confronting criminal justice issues ahead of the January legislative session.

Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, and Speaker Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville, announced the creation of a joint ad hoc committee that will study criminal justice issues. The committee consists of State Reps. Bud Hulsey, R-Kingsport; Clay Doggett, R-Pulaski; Andrew Farmer, R-Sevierville; William Lamberth, R-Portland; Antonio Parkinson, D-Memphis, and Lowell Russell, R-Vonore; and State Sens. Ed Jackson, R-Jackson; Richard Briggs, R-Knoxville; Todd Gardenhire, R-Chattanooga; Bill Powers, R-Clarksville; and Jeff Yarbrow, D-Nashville.

McNally said the committee will explore several issues that may come up in the next General Session.

"Criminal justice reform means different things to different people," he said. "To me, it means we need to get tough on crime and the system needs to be reformed. I think it is no secret the two incidents in Memphis were the impetus behind the creation of the committee. I think it will be a good way to initiate the kinds of conversations we need to do to solve some of the problems that have existed. The committee has a pretty wide latitude to look into other materials in the area of criminal justice."

Sexton said three major goals of the committee will be to examine at how the state applies credit served on sentences, how offenders can still receive credit served while violating prison rules and regulations, and how to ensure supervised probation for violent offenders once they do complete sentences.

"When you look at the Eliza



Additional funding to provide more forensic scientists at labs across the state is just one of the ways lawmakers are looking to reform criminal justice in the state.

Fletcher case in Memphis, what you saw was the offender got a lot of credit off of his sentence," Sexton said. "However, when you look at his time in prison, he had over a dozen infractions for drug possession, weapons, indecent exposure, and using a cell phone frequently. So now, we are sitting here asking how this guy got 500 days credit off his sentence when he's doing all this other stuff in prison. One of the things we want to look at is how did that happen. Just because you get good credit shouldn't mean you should keep that time if you're doing things you shouldn't be doing. He was also released without any type of supervised probation. There are things inherently that we think are flaws in the criminal justice system."

While the committee will come back with recommendations, Sexton said there are some issues he does expect to be addressed both by the committee and in session.

"I know that we will address the amount of good credit a prisoner can receive – especially when it pertains to receiving infractions in jail," he said. "We are going to focus

on juveniles, and we have started our roundtable discussions with law enforcement and district attorneys. I think what you'll see is us working on a bill where if a juvenile at a certain age commits one of these violent crimes, you are automatically forwarded to adult court. I think you will see a move in that direction."

In addition to the criminal justice issues, the committee may also study issues that may not entirely revolve around crime, punishment, and the state corrections system.

"When people talk about criminal justice, it is always focuses on adults who are in jail," Sexton said. "It is important that they serve their time, and that when they come out of there that they are involved in some sort of programming to help them have the skills to be successful. There is a lot of difference on how successful those programs are. True criminal justice reform starts in K-12 education. The reason I say that is because if you look at the average prisoner in our jails, they don't have a high school degree. If we do a better See **AD HOC** on Page 3

NEWS
ACROSS
TENNESSEE



ALCOA
The city of Alcoa has welcomed two new fire trucks. The two new pumper rescue trucks replace outdated trucks – one built in 1995 and another in 2004 – that fire officials determined needed to be replaced after a needs analysis and multiple rounds of approval. The new trucks were outfitted by Pierce Manufacturing to meet AFD’s needs. The left side of each truck is outfitted with equipment for dealing with any kind of structure fire, while the right side is devoted to emergency medical service and rescue operations. Each truck, which seats six, carries a pump that moves water so quickly it can empty the trucks’ built-in reservoir of 500 gallons in just four minutes. They also carry 30 gallons of foam for gasoline fires and a reservoir of drying powder for dealing with oil spills. One truck will serve at Alcoa Fire Station No. 2 while the other will be put in service at Alcoa Fire Station No. 3.

BROWNSVILLE
After eight years of closure, a Brownsville hospital will be re-opening its doors. The Haywood County Community Hospital closed in 2014 and in that time has gone from being owned by Franklin-based Community Health Systems to a local non-profit to the Haywood County School System before finally making its way into the hands of Braden Health. After millions of dollars worth of renovation, the hospital reopened its doors in August as a walk-in clinic. The reopening is a three-phase process to reopen the emergency room and nine patient rooms by February. While announced before Blue Oval City, Brownsville officials say the reopened hospital will help not only provide vital services to the local community but also help recruit continued business in the area.

CARYVILLE
Gold Creek Foods (GCF) officials announced the company will invest \$15 million to establish manufacturing operations in Caryville. Through this project, GCF will create 218 new jobs in Caryville as the company acquires the assets of Campos Foods LLC, which shut down its beef processing operations earlier this year. Following the acquisition of 241 Elkins Road, the Tennessee plant will be updated and converted into a poultry further processing facility, allowing GCF to increase production by running 50 million pounds of par-fried and fully cooked chicken products per year. Hiring at GCF is currently underway with production expected to reach full capacity by February 2023. Founded in 2000 and headquartered in Gainesville, Ga., Gold Creek Foods is one of the nation’s largest full-service chicken processors. The company specializes in processing raw and fully cooked chicken products, serving well-known customers nationwide. With the addition of the Caryville plant, the company will employ more than 3,500 people across its operations in Georgia and Tennessee.

CLARKSVILLE
Ferrari Stampi USA Inc. officials announced the company will invest \$1.4 million to expand manufacturing operations at the company’s U.S. headquarters in Clarksville. As a result of the project, Ferrari Stampi will create 30 new jobs in the next five years. Ferrari Stampi’s expansion at its Dunbar Cave Road location is a direct result of the company’s decision to purchase Poligraph USA, which will support additional production lines at its U.S. headquarters and help grow its overall customer base. Founded in 2014 by Italian-based Ferrari Stampi, Ferrari Stampi USA Inc. specializes in the production and manufacturing of mold and die for ceramic tiles. The company’s U.S. headquarters in Clarksville is equipped with cutting-edge machinery and technology, and with the addition of 30 new jobs, Ferrari Stampi will more than double its total U.S. headcount.

COLUMBIA
The city of Columbia has contracted with Adams Contracting for a streetscape project on a portion of South Garden Street to serve as

a gateway welcoming visitors to the Columbia Arts District. The roadway features both the Columbia Arts District and Columbia Fire and Rescue Mural as well as takes drivers along several businesses in the area. Ragan Smith and Associates will oversee the project’s initial bidding process, provide construction management, site inspections, and engineering support. The road will become a one-way street that will allow for the enhancement of its sidewalk, increase opportunities for parking spaces, and allow for public space areas. Areas for public art to be displayed will also be included.

CUMBERLAND CITY
Daejin Advanced Materials USA Inc. will invest \$10.2 million to establish its second U.S. manufacturing and processing facility in Cumberland City. Located in a portion of the Select Tennessee Certified Stewart-Houston Industrial Park, the company will be located in close proximity to its electric vehicle battery customers and partners in the Southeastern U.S. The company will create 83 new jobs in the next five years. With an increase in consumer demand and newly awarded contracts with Ultium Cells’ Spring Hill, the facility will allow the company to continue manufacturing process trays for electric vehicle batteries. In addition, Daejin Advanced Materials will expand its production to include a new line for plastic injection, plastic extrusion, vacuum forming and assembly. Founded in 2019 and headquartered in Troy, Mich., Daejin Advanced Materials USA Inc. supports research and development and specializes in the manufacturing of polymers for the electric vehicle battery industry. The company is a subsidiary of Korean-based Daejin Advanced Materials, which employs roughly 1,000 people across its operations in Asia, Europe and the U.S.

FRANKLIN
The city of Franklin has installed a new parking guidance system from InDect Performance Counts to help visitors and residents find available spaces in the two downtown parking garages. The system is a single-space system utilizing ultrasonic mini sensors (UMS) with LED indicators. UMS is a ceiling-mounted ultrasonic sensor used for precise vehicle detection in indoor parking garages. The system is installed over each individual space with an LED indicator that provides easy to see availability. The UMS is the most accurate technology in the parking industry utilizing ultrasonic waves to detect parking availability. The color of the sensors specifies the occupancy/availability of each individual parking space. The total project cost was \$294,000 and was funded from a portion of the city’s allocation from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

JACKSON
Georgia-Pacific will invest at least \$425 million to construct a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Jackson to produce its Dixie products. Located in the Highway 223 East Site, the facility will create 220 new jobs in Jackson and will focus on manufacturing Dixie brand paper plates to support the company’s increase in product demand across its three Dixie brand facilities. Construction on the new 900,000-square-foot facility is slated to begin before the end of the year and anticipated to reach completion by summer 2024. A subsidiary of Koch Industries, Inc., Georgia-Pacific is one of the world’s leading manufacturers and marketers of bath tissue, paper towels and napkins, Dixie disposable tableware, paper-based packaging, cellulose, specialty fibers and building products.

KINGSPORT
Kingsport’s Bays Mountain Park will soon be the home of two bobcat kittens who were being raised in captivity in Montana. Born at a zoological facility earlier this year, the brothers were two of a litter of four with their sisters serving as animal ambassadors at another facility. Once the bobcats arrive at the park, they will be placed in quarantine while park rangers

Brentwood cuts ribbon on inclusive playground



Local officials and families were on hand for the grand opening of the new Miles Together Inclusive Playground at Brentwood’s Granny White Park. The playground is named in honor of local resident Miles Peck and is the first inclusive playground located in the city. The nearly \$1.7 million project was funded through funds raised by the city, Rotary Clubs, and private donations. Children with special needs and their families were instrumental in advocating for and the design of the playground, which features an inclusive rail rider, team swing, glide, hammock, tire climb, musical instruments, and much more. The 18,500-square-foot playground also has a Vitriturf surface and 3,550 square feet of synthetic grass.

GRNC funds to help Columbia replace bridge



A \$1.3 million grant from the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GRNC) will help redesign a one-lane bridge project the city of Columbia has been working toward for a dozen years. Current and former city leaders joined members of the GRNC and Barge Design at the city’s Fairview Park to unveil the redesign of the Iron Bridge Road bridge, which will be funded through both the GRNC grant and a 20% match from the city. The construction is expected to take a year to complete and will make one of the most hazardous bridges in the city safer for both motorists and pedestrians. Presently, the road has an average of 1,700 vehicles crossing it daily. Plans call for the bridge to be expanded to two lanes with a larger shoulder as well as a multi-purpose path for pedestrians and cyclists.

work to get them accustomed to people and their new environment. Park staff are working to add several additions to the bobcat habitat to provide both safety and enrichment for the bobcats. The new bobcats’ names will be announced at a later date. Follow along with the bobcat brothers’ progress on the Bays Mountain Park Facebook page and Instagram.

KNOXVILLE
Hardcoat Technologies LLC will invest \$6.6 million to expand operations at its Papermill Drive location in Knoxville, creating 85 new jobs. The company will locate additional operations adjacent to its headquarters and original injection molding plant. As part of this project, Hardcoat Technologies will acquire an existing building and construct a new 23,500-square-foot facility on Papermill Drive. Both operations will support the company’s recent contract with SL Tennessee and, upon completion, will more than double Hardcoat Technologies’ injection molding, warehousing and assembly capabilities. Founded in 2014 and headquartered in Knoxville, Hardcoat Technologies specializes in injection molding and hardcoating for the automotive, ATV and industrial markets. Through this project, Hardcoat Technologies will employ more than 130 people in Tennessee.

LAKESITE
The town of Lakesite is celebrating its 50th anniversary as a municipality. Originally a subdivision of some 200 homes built in the 1960s, Lakesite incorporated as a city in January 1972 with a vote of 75-15. Since its incorporation, Lakesite officials have paved area roads in need of repair, rehabilitated a duck pond in a local park, and seen its population double in size. With a population of 1,865 and five municipal employees, the town enjoys a robust business district. Lakesite is the second smallest municipality in Hamilton County.

LEBANON
New Balance Athletics officials announced the leading athletic footwear and apparel manufacturer will invest \$68.5 million to

establish a new distribution center in Lebanon. Located in the Speedway Industrial Park, New Balance will create more than 150 new jobs, which will support a portion of the company’s digital commerce business for footwear, apparel and accessories as well as service its wholesale and retail operations for its apparel business. The new automated processing facility will be approximately 350,000 square feet and is expected to be completed in late summer 2023. Founded in 1906, and headquartered in Boston, New Balance is a global athletic footwear and apparel leader with more than 7,000 associates worldwide and global annual sales of \$4.4 billion in 2021. Privately-held New Balance is proud of its strong commitment to the communities where its associates live and work and its purpose-based values of teamwork, integrity, and total customer satisfaction.

MORRISTOWN
Handsone Brook Farms officials announced the members of the company will invest \$30.8 million through HBF Development LLC to establish their first manufacturing operations in Morristown. Founded in 2007, Handsone Brook Farms is a leading producer of organic, pasture-raised eggs. The company relies on its network of small, family farms to bring fresh, organic eggs to grocery stores across the country. As a result of this project, the Handsone Brook Tennessee business will create 140 new jobs in an existing facility on Technology Way, which will be modernized to produce specialty hard-cooked eggs and related products.

MORRISTOWN
The city of Morristown has joined Hamblen County and Walters State Community College as the first local government entity to join the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security’s Tennessee Advanced Communications Network (TACN). Their decision to join TACN makes them the first local government in Tennessee to go to a full state (TACN) and AT&T FirstNet. This provides the ability to have additional coverage to talk on the radio with surrounding state communication towers and cellular

capability during major events and disasters. Currently, TACN supports 50,000 local, state, and federal government users statewide, and that number grows daily. In the last year alone, more than 30 additional agencies have made the decision to join TACN to experience the statewide communications interoperability and the cost savings it delivers.

NOLENSVILLE
The city of Nolensville, Mill Creek Watershed Association, Nolensville High School, a local nonprofit, and area volunteers have brought to life a new pollinator garden on a small tract of land with the intention of aiding the migration of monarch butterflies, among other pollinators. The garden sits along an unnamed tributary of Mill Creek alongside Nolensville High School and is open to the public. The garden was designed with plants native to Tennessee and especially milkweed, which is vital to monarchs. In addition to providing a relaxing environment for the public, the garden will serve as a living laboratory for biology students at the high school, who will provide watering and maintenance of the garden.

OAK RIDGE
Officials with the city of Oak Ridge have broken ground on a new water treatment plant that will replace the existing 1943 facility originally owned and operated by the U.S. Department of Energy. The plant was ceded to the city in 2000, but its age and the growing needs of the community have put the plant at capacity. A new ultrafiltration membrane drinking water treatment plant will be built with the ability to treat up to 12 million gallons of water per day, meeting the needs of both Oak Ridge and the Department of Energy, which it will serve. The \$78.3 million plant is being funded through the State of Tennessee Revolving Loan Fund and Environmental Protection Agency’s Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA). Located on Pumphouse Road, the plant is expected to be operational by Spring 2025.

Lawmakers: Truth in Sentencing shows Tennessee is tough on crime

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

After going into effect in July, lawmakers are confident Tennessee’s [new truth in sentencing law](#) will reduce both violent crime and the likelihood of recidivism in the state.

Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, said truth in sentencing has been a topic of discussion for members of both the House and Senate for a number of years.

“It came together slowly over a very long time,” McNally said. “I have always been interested in the prevention of crime, detection of crime, and punishment. Speaker Sexton and I have very similar philosophies on law and order, and I have always felt that being tough on crime also prevents recurrence of crime. It really was a natural outgrowth of my experience and support of victims. We often forget about the victims. We have seen so many victims and victims’ families that were essentially lied to when they hear that the sentence for a perpetrator is 30 years, but the person ends up serving usually less than 10 years. It’s not right, it’s not fair, and it’s not in their interest; It’s only in the interest of the criminal.”

House Speaker Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville, said the legislation came from meetings with law enforcement and district attorneys from across the state.

“We wanted to have conversations with them to learn how we can help them do their jobs,” Sextons said. “One of the things we kept hearing over and over again was that violent criminals were getting out early, and they were having to rearrest the same people. It was just a revolving door. That got us to focus on violent criminals, defining what violent crimes are, and what we can do to keep these people in jail longer so police officers could keep their communities safe.”

Before the passage of the bill, offenders could earn up to 54 days off each year of their sentence for good behavior. The new bill requires stiffer sentences for some of the most violent crimes that do not already require maximum sentences, many of which lawmakers said law enforcement, victims, and their families felt were not being punished as strictly as they should.

The bill requires offenders to serve 100% of sentences imposed by the court for crimes including attempted first-degree murder, second-degree murder, vehicular homicide resulting from the driver’s intoxication, aggravated vehicular



Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, left, and Speaker Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville, right, hold a ceremonial signing of the Truth in Sentencing Bill at the Knox County Sheriff’s Office.

homicide, especially aggravated kidnapping, especially aggravated robbery, carjacking, and especially aggravated burglary.

Additionally, offenders must serve a minimum of 85% of their sentence if convicted of crimes including aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, strangulation or attempted strangulation, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault against a nurse or first responder, vehicular homicide, reckless homicide, aggravated kidnapping, involuntary labor servitude, trafficking, aggravated robbery, aggravated burglary, aggravated arson, possessing a firearm during the commission or attempt to commit a dangerous felony, and manufacture, delivery or sale of a controlled substance.

Sexton said a lot of study went into determining the eight crimes that will impose a 100% sentence and the 16 crimes that will require 85% of the sentence to be served.

“One of the crimes that was mentioned over and over again was aggravated assault,” he said. “When we were trying to decide what crimes would be under the 100% and what would be under the 85%, we looked at what crimes were more violent. There is a difference between especially aggravated kidnapping and aggravated kidnapping. What we did was put the especially aggravated crimes, attempted murder, second-degree murder, and voluntary manslaughter charges went to 100%,

and then we couldn’t make aggravated kidnapping at 100% because we already had especially aggravated kidnapping at that. So, we put it at 85% and then started looking at what crimes would fit in with that criteria.”

Sen. Jon Lundberg, R-Bristol, who co-sponsored the bill, said there was also concern that similar crimes were not being sentenced the same way in different areas of the state.

“Sentences vary so wildly,” Lundberg said. “If you commit a crime in Knox County, the same crime committed in Shelby County, Sullivan County, or Davidson County could have wildly different sentences,” he said. “More than that, not only could the sentence be different but those people could get out based on good behavior and sentence credits at vastly different times. A few years ago, the governor had a criminal justice reform package, and there were a number of us who had some concerns about what he was proposing. So we said let’s put truth in sentencing out and make it truly truth in sentencing. What we mean by that is just what we passed. The judge can sentence you to eight years in Knox County and 10 years in Shelby County, which is fine based on the circumstances. However, eight years is eight years on those crimes.”

Cost was another major concern of lawmakers. The bill came with a fiscal note that it would increase the state’s incarceration costs by more than \$25 million per year. However,

McNally said that is a small price to pay for the safety of Tennesseans.

“At the end of the day the need for the legislation outweighed the concerns about the cost,” he said. “After all, what is the price for safety and how much is the quality of life for a victim or their family? I would submit those are worth quite a bit more. I am, of course, a very strong fiscal conservative, but this was a cause where I felt the legislation was necessary and extremely important.”

Reducing recidivism is one of the major goals for the legislation.

“We have a big problem with recidivism, and there are two ways of preventing it,” McNally said. “With violent offenders, it is stricter sentencing and with the non-violent offender it is rehabilitation. There are people in our society, unfortunately, who are psychopathic or sociopathic and do whatever is convenient for them. They will repeat that behavior again and again. There are some people that feel we need to give a lesser sentence for good behavior, but I am of the opinion that we need to give additional sentence for bad behavior.

“Some people said this is too hard of a sentence or that it’s too much,” he said. “My response to that is that if word goes out in Tennessee that boy, we’re tough on crime and this isn’t where you want to commit crimes, I’m OK with that message being sent out. What we want to do ultimately is to not put people in prison or in jail. The way to do that is not

to lessen their sentence but to keep them from committing the crime altogether. I hope this has enough exposure that the prison population will not go up and go down, that it just has a downward trajectory.”

Sexton said data backs up that longer sentences reduces recidivism.

“You can just see the career criminals who started when they were juveniles, who keep reoffending and get out early,” Sexton said. “You think about the number of crimes being committed and the number of victims who wouldn’t be there if they hadn’t gotten out early. We also have data from the U.S. Sentencing Commission Report from 2020 that shows sentences longer than 10 years reduce recidivism by 45% or more, and that is without any rehabilitation program. What we are looking at is holding criminals more accountable, and protecting the public. We think recidivism will go down and the number of crimes will go down because when you have a severe punishment, I think criminals are less likely to commit those crimes.”

Lundberg said he has already had feedback from victims’ families praising the law.

“We have had feedback from both sides,” Lundberg said. “From the victims’ side, I have heard lots of thanks because now they know someone will be behind bars for a certain amount of time. I also think it provides clarity for a number of different groups. One is for the victims and believe it or not, it also provides clarity for the perpetrator. Before they would ask the judge when they would be eligible to be released, and a judge couldn’t answer that because there were too many factors going into that.”

McNally said recent news stories show why this law is needed in Tennessee.

“The main goal is to keep citizens safe,” McNally said. “The recent news out of Memphis is all you need to see about why we need this legislation. There are hardened criminals out there who simply are never going to be reformed, and we need prisons and to make sure they stay in prison.”

Lundberg said lawmakers will continue to evaluate the truth in sentencing law and its effectiveness in the next few years to show that it is working to reduce crime and recidivism.

“Ultimately, our job is to make people safe in Tennessee wherever they live,” he said. “It truly does bring what it says, truth in sentencing across the board.”

Ad hoc committee, TBI funding among ways lawmakers seeking to improve justice system

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job of educating our kids and reduce the drop out rate, we know that we will lower the prison population.”

Providing support for law enforcement is another goal Sexton has for the committee.

“We need to make sure when we talk about supporting law enforcement that it’s giving them the things they need to be successful, whether that is faster turn-around testing or resources like a database or communications,” Sexton said. “It’s a much bigger question, and I’m not going to sit here and say truth in sentencing is the end-all, be-all that is going to solve everything. It’s not; it’s a big component of it. We also need to support law enforcement by making sure they have the resources to be successful.”

During the first meeting of the committee on Oct. 5, members of the committee addressed concerns about current good behavior policies within the correction system. Committee member Rep. Andrew Farmer, R-Sevierville, suggested TDOC officials make rehabilitation classes mandatory, regardless of if inmates are eligible for parole, and do not apply “good behavior” time when an inmate is committing infractions while incarcerated.

Senate Minority Leader Jeff Yarbro, D-Nashville, also on the committee, said the state needs to ensure offenders who do leave prison are less dangerous when they leave than when they were incarcerated.

“You can’t just have indefinite incarceration. We have to think about how to ensure the time inmates are in custody makes it less likely they’ll re-offend and not more likely they’ll re-offend,” Yarbro said. “It is really difficult to make the case that an extra thousand days would’ve made the difference between rehabilitation and criminal behavior for someone who was in prison for 20 years already.”

Rep. Antonio Parkinson,



State Sen. Ed Jackson, R-Jackson, Ad Hoc Committee Co-chair

D-Memphis, agreed there the state needed to overhaul how they state approaches rehabilitation with recent numbers indicating 40% of offenders released from state prisons go on to reoffend. Parkinson suggested holding TDOC accountable for recidivism as well as ensuring the mental health care provided to inmates doesn’t stop once they leave the system.

Another initiative recently announced is accelerating the hiring process for 25 additional forensic lab positions at TBI. Gov. Bill Lee, McNally, and Sexton jointly announced the new positions will be expedited ahead of the regular budget process to allow TBI to expand testing capacity and reduce the turnaround time for sexual assault kits (SAKs).

“For several years, Tennessee has made historic investments to support the TBI’s mission so that law enforcement can do its job and combat violent crime,” Gov. Bill Lee said. “As our nation faces rising crime, we are taking this additional step to eliminate bureaucratic hurdles, increase the TBI’s capacity and reduce testing turnaround times as quickly as possible. I’m grateful for the partnership of Lt. Gov. McNally, Speaker Sexton and the General As-



State Rep. Bud Hulsey, R-Kingsport, Ad Hoc Committee Co-chair

sembly in this important action, and our efforts to strengthen public safety will continue.”

New forensic lab positions, including scientists, technicians and administrative support, will be added in each Grand Division in Tennessee: eight positions at the Jackson lab, 11 positions at the Nashville lab, and six at the Knoxville lab.

“While there is absolutely more to do, I am pleased that we are able to take this additional step toward eliminating this backlog,” McNally said. “We have to get these violent criminals off the streets and keep them off. We cannot do that if we cannot identify, arrest and incarcerate them. Rape is a particularly egregious and heinous crime. The current turnaround times for rape kits are clearly unacceptable.”

Recurring funding for these additional forensic lab positions will be included in the state’s upcoming Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget. In the interim, the TBI will utilize existing funds in the FY 2022-2023 budget.

“This is an important step in a series of steps as we continue working together to eliminate the backlog of rape kits while enhancing our support for the TBI, and law enforcement communities throughout

the state,” Sexton said. “Innocence or guilt delayed due to a backlog of DNA testing only compounds the pain and suffering for everyone; I appreciate Gov. Lee, Lt. Gov. McNally, the General Assembly, and the TBI for their commitment to addressing this issue quickly.”

TBI Director David Rausch said the funding will help with vital functions.

“We have been searching for solutions to these challenges for several years now, and we are thankful for Gov. Lee and leaders of both houses in continuing to hear our concerns and work with us toward permanent fixes,” Rausch said. “The commitment to fund additional positions will help us get a jump on the necessary training time to get new scientists prepared to perform their duties. This is a critical step in the process. In addition to this, we have collaborated with the governor and leadership in both houses to prepare to do several things to immediately improve our turnaround times in our Forensic Biology units.”

Rausch said the funds will be used for providing overtime to current scientists and technicians to work pending cases, expanding operations to include weekends, outsourcing as eligible kits to private laboratories, and contracting with retired TBI special agent/forensic scientists to assist in training new employees to free up current scientists who are pulled from case work to train new scientists.

“We’re confident these steps will bring us closer to more efficient turnaround times and put us in a position, within the next year, to be closer to our goal of 8 to 12 weeks for all evidence,” Rausch said. “We also look forward to continuing the conversation with the Governor and the General Assembly to ensure the Bureau – and its workforce – meet the needs and expectations of the state and its residents.”

Sexton said the new funding is

part of ongoing investment the General Assembly has made in the past several years.

“We have increased funding for TBI, and this past year we did increase funding again,” Sexton said. “It didn’t include in the governor’s budget everything they wanted, but they did get a total of 50 new positions with 20 of those being new lab people or forensic scientists. Our goal should be to have them turn around tests between 30 to 60 days. I think everyone believes that the close to 12-month process isn’t fast enough. We want to continue to work with them, and if that means we need to increase their pay, how many people they need, or build a new lab, that’s what we’ll do. If a person who is raped has to wait 12 months for the offender to be charged with a crime, there is a lot of pain and suffering for the victim that is unnecessary.”

McNally said lawmakers are also looking into ways to help streamline other aspects of TBI’s work.

“One of the things we have learned is that the person who handles the kit has to handle it from the moment it arrives through the test. If two or three people handle that kit, they all have to be called to testify at trial,” he said. “They don’t let just one member testify, and a lot of times the criminal defense attorneys are looking for loopholes.”

Court testimony is time-consuming aspect of TBI work McNally said lawmakers are also hoping to improve.

“Another thing they do is call someone to testify, they get so far in the trial, and then end up postponing the trial or calling for a recess,” McNally said. “People end up sitting in court for four to six hours and then have to be called back to testify. We are exploring ways we can use video testimony where the attorneys can ask their questions to the laboratory scientists from the lab.”



PEOPLE

Leslee “Honey” Alexander, former first lady of Tennessee and wife of former Gov. and U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander died Oct. 29, at the age of 77 at her home in Maryville. The second oldest of five children, she was born Leslee Buhler in Los Angeles, Calif., and moved to Texas with her family when she was two. Alexander would graduate from Smith College in 1967 with a degree in American Studies. She and Lamar Alexander met when she was working as staffer for U.S. Sen. John G. Tower in Washington, D.C. The family moved back to Nashville in 1970, and Alexander continued her passion for children’s health and well-being. She also served alongside her husband in Knoxville when he served as president of the University of Tennessee and then again in Washington, D.C., as he served as U.S. Secretary of Education.



Leslee “Honey” Alexander

Joe Cron, former mayor of Kingston Springs, died Oct. 20, 2022 at the age of 74. In addition to serving as mayor of Kingston Springs, Cron also served the town as a police officer and as the first chief of the town’s Public Safety Department. He also worked as a court security officer for the U.S. Marshall’s Office.



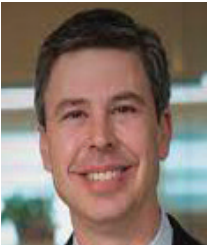
Joe Cron

John Drake, Metro Nashville police chief, has been named to the seven-member Board of Directors for the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), the nation’s preeminent independent research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Chief Drake’s nomination to be PERF’s secretary was uncontested. He will serve through June 30, 2024. PERF, based in Washington, D.C., has more than 3,000 members. Those on the Board of Directors all lead law enforcement agencies. Drake has been Metro Nashville’s police chief since 2020 and has been with MNPd since 1988.



John Drake

Andy Berke, former mayor of Chattanooga, has been named administrator of the Rural Utilities Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Prior to his appointment to USDA from the White House, Berke was serving as a special representative for broadband at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NITA) in the U.S. Department of Commerce. In addition to serving as mayor of Chattanooga from 2012 until 2021, Berke represented Tennessee Senate District 10 in the Tennessee General Assembly from 2007 until 2012.



Andy Berke

Nicole Heyman has been appointed chief housing officer for the city of Chattanooga. She comes to Chattanooga from New Orleans where she served as director of the mayor’s office of community assets and investment for three and a half years. Prior to that, she worked at JNH Consulting in New Orleans, and spent seven years as vice president and director of Louisiana Initiatives for the Center for Community Progress as well as nearly three years in an advisor role with the organization. For four years, she served as director of the New Orleans Vacant Properties Initiative and has been an adjunct professor with the Tulane University School of Architecture. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Louisiana State University and a law degree from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.



Nicole Heyman

Deanna Chappell, former mayor of Troy, died Oct. 2, at her home. Chappell was the first female mayor in Troy’s history when she was elected in 2014 and before that had become the first alderwoman in the town’s history in Troy when she was elected in 2003. A longtime educator in the Obion County School system, Chappell was recently named the 2022 Pride of Obion County due to her lifelong commitment and service to her community.



Deanna Chappell

Mike Compton has been selected as a senior advisor to Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly. Compton previously served as chief of staff to former Hamilton County Mayor Jim Coppinger from 2011 to 2022. Prior to that, he served as chief administrative officer for Walden Security for four years and as chief of staff for then Chattanooga Mayor Bob Corker. He also served as vice president of the Corker Group for 16 years.



Mike Compton

State Rep. Barbara Cooper, D-Memphis, died Oct. 26, at the age of 94. At the time of her death, Cooper was the oldest-serving lawmaker in the Tennessee General Assembly. A Memphis native, Cooper had served as the representative for District 86 for 22 years. Cooper held a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from Tennessee State University as well as a doctorate in philosophy and Christian psychology from Jackson Theological Seminary. A retired educator with the Memphis school system, Cooper was well known in



Barbara Cooper

Quentin Lawrence has been selected as the new director of the city of Chattanooga’s Office of Workforce Development. Lawrence comes to the city from Pathway Lending where he served as vice president of lending for Chattanooga. Lawrence has more than 20 years of experience in non-profits and more than 15 years of experience in financial services. Before that, he served as an assistant vice president and Branch Manager for the former Suntrust Bank, now Truist; as deputy executive director and relationship director for Hope for the Inner City, Inc.; and as an entrepreneur. He holds a bachelor’s degree in finance



Quentin Lawrence

Bartlett renames city park in honor of retiring chief administrator Mark Brown



The park behind Bartlett city hall has been renamed the Mark S. Brown Municipal Park to honor the retiring chief administrative officer of the city after 21 years of service. Brown has been chief administrative officer with the city since 2010. Brown will officially retire next year.

Clarksville leaders ‘Spend a Day in my Wheels’ as part of accessibility challenge



Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts and nine other city employees spent Oct. 4 in wheelchairs to experience the accessibility challenges in their city as part of the “Spend a Day in My Wheels” challenge created by Alex Johnson. Sponsored by the Permobil Foundation and Team Alex, the challenge charges people with accessibility issues in their community. After spending four hours in the chairs, city officials gathered for a meeting to discuss their experiences including finding a parking spot, traveling between floors on city hall, and using public restrooms. Pitts said the experience changed the perspective of city employees. To learn more about the challenge, [click here](#).

from Austin Peay University and a master’s in Christian Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Molly Mehner has been selected as the new town administrator for the town of Collierville. Mehner comes to Collierville from Cape Girardeau, Mo., where she has served as deputy administrator since 2015 and before that as assistant city manager in charge of development services since 201. Mehner also served as a senior planner for the town of Paradise Valley, Ariz., for nearly eight years as a project planning manager and senior planner with the city of Glendale, Ariz., and as a planner with the city of Carbondale, Ill. She holds a bachelor’s degree in urban and regional planning for the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a master’s degree in public administration with a concentration in urban management from Arizona State University. She is an ICMA credentialed manager and a member of the American Planning Association’s (APA) Institute of Certified Planners. She will take over her new role in Collierville from James Lewellen, who retired after 27 years of service to the town.



Molly Mehner

Bill Rawls, mayor of Brownsville, has earned his master’s degree in leadership and public service at Lipscomb University. Rawls earned the degree through a scholarship program offered by the Ayers Foundation with the aim of using his degree to elevate conversation and opportunities in his community. Rawls earned his bachelor’s degree in banking and finance from Morehouse College, which he utilized in his role as a partner in the Rawls Funeral Homes, his third-generation, family-owned business. Rawls also served in the U.S. Army Reserves for eight years.



Bill Rawls

Sheila Reed has been named the state’s new director of local government finance by Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury Jason Mumpower. A 34-year veteran of the comptroller’s office, she has held key positions in the divisions of local government audit, state and local finance, and most recently served as the assistant director of local government finance. A graduate of Austin Peay State University, Reed is a certified public accountant and active within the Tennessee Government Finance Officers Association (TGFOA). She will take over from former director Betsy Knotts, who left the comptroller’s office to serve in the private sector. Additionally, Steve Osborne and Ross Colona have been named as assistant directors within the division of local government finance.



Sheila Reed

V. Graig Temple has been selected as the new fire chief for the city of Spring Hill. Temple takes over from acting chief Kevin Glenn and comes to Spring Hill from Fort Bend County, Texas, where he served as chief of emergency medical services for seven years. Prior to that, he served as the assistant chief of operations for the Anchorage, Alaska, Fire Department; as a fire and EMS lieutenant with the Ocean City, Del., Fire Department, as EMS Chief with the Bethany Beach, Del., Volunteer Fire Company, and as a paramedic with the Sussex County, Del., EMS. Temple has also served as a fire instructor for the Delaware State Fire School and Cypress Creek EMS in Spring, Texas.



V. Graig Temple

Deniece Thomas has been appointed the new commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. She will succeed Jeff McCord following his departure to lead Northeast State Community College. Since, 2019, Thomas has served as a dep-

uty commissioner for the department. She joined the department in 2007 when she joined the Clarksville American Job Center. She rose through the ranks of the department, serving as a director, assistant administrator, assistant commissioner, and then deputy commissioner. She holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Alabama Birmingham and a master’s degree in civic leadership from Lipscomb University.



Deniece Thomas

Sam Turner has been selected to fill the unexpired term on the Jackson City Council left by the resignation of District 1 Councilman Gary Pickens, who moved out of the city. A Jackson resident since 1978, Turner served as vice president of business analysis at the Jackson Energy Authority and presently works at a private consulting firm that he runs. Turner has an associate’s degree from Jackson State as well as a bachelor’s degree in organization leadership and an MBA, both from Union University.



Sam Turner

Nathan Walker, mayor of Monterey, died Oct. 10, after being diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer a few weeks before. Walker was elected mayor of Monterey in August after previously being appointed as the city’s interim mayor in March. Walker previously served as the alderman representing Monterey’s Ward 3 since 2014. Alderman Bill Higgins remembered Walker for his “brilliant” mind and major contributions to the municipal budget over the years as well as his dedication to helping the community.



Nathan Walker

Technology, changing industries could impact state’s future economy

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

The progress and growth of the Certified Municipal Finance Officer (CMFO), as well as the current and future of the state and national economy were among the topics covered at the second general session of the Tennessee Municipal League’s 82nd Annual Conference in Gatlinburg.

Dr. Bill Fox, special advisor to University of Tennessee Chancellor Donde Plowman, said one of the hot topics surrounding the economy is whether or not the country is in a recession.

“GDP has declined for two consecutive quarters, and as a rule of thumb, people have often said that is a recession,” Fox said. “My guess is we are not yet, but that’s not to say we won’t be. When you’ve created 528,000 jobs in the U.S. economy in July, it’s hard to imagine that’s a recession. The fact that jobs continue to grow and consumers continue to spend likely mean we are not in recession.”

Fox said a lot of the economic stimulus money given by the federal government moved economic growth forward, particularly in 2021. When the federal government stopped spending this money, it created negative economic growth.

“As long as consumers keep spending, we won’t have a recession,” Fox said. “Consumers were also given a lot of money, and some of it is still sitting there in their savings accounts. One good way to track that spending is to look at the Tennessee state sales tax and your local sales tax to see are people still spending.”

There is a risk of a recession and smaller GDP growth both in this year and next, but Fox said job growth and creation in Tennessee is back to where it was in 2019. The state continues to do well in both 2021 and 2022 in terms of job growth.

“Job growth has been strongest in the service sectors in our economy,” Fox said. “The service sector has done super. Manufacturing not so much, although we are a very strong manufacturing state, well above national norms. It is great that Ford is coming and adding to that and helping West Tennessee.”

Fox said it is also important to note that what we identify as goods



Food delivery robots, like these presently in use on the University of Tennessee at Knoxville’s campus, are redefining concepts of goods and services as well as the larger economy itself. With modest-skill workers in demand and their wages rising, companies may look to automation to fill the gaps.

and what we identify as manufacturing is changing, such as autonomous delivery rather than by person. Despite ongoing positive job growth, Fox said he wouldn’t be surprised if we started to see some gains in unemployment.

“If we have a recession and even if we don’t, we are likely to see the unemployment rate come back up some,” he said. “It’s not going to stay this low. The demographics are not suggestive that what we can have from here is a rapidly growing labor force to ease the tightness that we are feeling. The labor force participation rate plummeted during COVID. It’s mostly come back, except for young males, and this is an issue not only with labor force, but also an issue with higher education.”

A lot of economic trends we are seeing now were accelerated by COVID, like the downward trend in restaurants and in-person retail, an increase in working from home, technology replacing humans, and a reduction in the number of modest-skilled workers.

“Technology is tending to replace those modest-skilled workers,” Fox said. “Demographics have reduced the number of modest-skilled workers so much that their wages are going up. In Tennessee data, the 56 to 65 labor participation force crowd falls while the 55 to 25 crowd slightly grows. If you put that together, there is no growth in our labor force in this decade. Demographics do not solve this problem. We have a tight labor

force no matter what going forward. Many areas in rural Tennessee saw population declines over the past decade, and the signs are not positive for that to improve from there. Natural population growth – which is births minus deaths – is very low in the U.S. If the U.S. population is going to grow, it has to be from immigration.”

Fox said that immigration can come from other states and draws like higher education may be one way to do that. If Tennessee wants to continue positive economic growth, Fox said it means upscaling education ranging from four-year university degrees to members of the workforce earning other types of certificates and certifications in the trades.

Inflation is another hot topic Fox said many economists are focusing on, and that it is not expected for prices to decrease.

“We actually don’t want prices to decrease,” he said. “If you think prices are going to go down, you don’t buy; you wait. You don’t want an economy where across the economy people are waiting to spend. What we can expect is hopefully for inflation to level out.”

While there are positives, Fox remained cautious in his overall economic outlook.

“The bottom line is the economy maybe will have a recession and maybe won’t, but we are hovering around weak economic growth,” he said. “We are going to see employ-

ment growth slowing down, only because we are running out of people to hire. Inflation rates will probably come down but remain too high for the next year.”

State Comptroller Jason Mumpower discussed the growth of the certified municipal finance officer (CMFO) program, noting that there have been 871 CMFO certifications issued since the program began in 2017 and 613 of those certified through the program have maintained their continuing education. Mumpower said that 289 cities also have at least one CMFO on staff.

“That is important,” Mumpower said. “We have seen success in this program, and we have seen financial improvement as a result of this program. Earlier this year, after several years of working on this, the General Assembly approved to include in the budget this year \$1.5 million of non-recurring money for the CMFO program. This money is going to be used to incentivize participation in the CMFO program by allowing people who complete the program to receive a \$1,000 stipend. The money is also being used to reimburse travel and expenses incurred when city staff are traveling for this continuing education.”

One major change Mumpower said city officials should be aware of is a new push for Tennessee cities to use the Comptroller’s uniform chart of accounts in their upcoming audits. The process will begin implementation for financial statements for June 2023.

“A uniform chart of accounts is simply a set of common account numbers to categorize various streams of revenues, expenditures, assets, liabilities, and fund balances,” Mumpower said. “There are, especially in this day and time when we manage our accounts by computer, many benefits to having a uniform chart of accounts, but it certainly makes it easier to compare data across cities regardless of size and geographic location.”

Counties across Tennessee already use uniform chart of accounts and have for several years. Mumpower said this system would make municipal financial information more accessible and easier to compare.

“Our office often receives re-

quests for municipal financial data from you all wanting to compare yourselves to other cities,” he said. “We receive requests from the legislature, from TACIR, from the governor’s office, from researchers, and lately from the U.S. Census Bureau. Before, all we were able to do was point to our website where we have 342 pdf audits available, which are not easily searchable or easily comparable. That is part of the reason we are implementing this uniform chart of accounts tool.”

While the uniform chart of accounts will be implemented, Mumpower said efforts have been made to ensure costs are not passed on to municipalities. Cities can choose for their CPA auditors to input the data while doing their audit.

“We are not mandating that you as a city government keep a uniformed chart of accounts,” he said. “You will not need to change the chart of accounts you are currently using. You will not need to change your accounting software, and you will be able to keep your books, records, and funds exactly as they are now. Cities can choose to input this data into the crosswalk tool on your own or have your auditor do it for you, which may end up saving your city some extra expense.”

Mumpower said it would be “an understatement” to say the state of Tennessee is presently in good financial standing

“We have a Tennessee tradition of keeping taxes low, of keeping debt low, of building and maintaining reserves, and operating with fiscal integrity,” he said. “These things together are what still have us ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the most fiscally stable state in the nation, and we continue to be one of the only states in the nation with a triple AAA bond-rating. Our state has weathered the pandemic and our revenue collections have remained very strong. Many of your revenue collections have remained very strong. In the last year, Tennessee has landed the largest economic development project in state history and has led the nation in GDP growth.”

While there may be challenges on the horizon, Mumpower said he is confident the state’s financial policies will meet those challenges head on.

Cooperation, flexibility needed to alleviate affordable housing crisis

HOUSING from Page 1
has seen in the housing market is equity. In addition to working with minority-led developers and nonprofits, Amazon is working with local governments to ensure affordable housing developments go hand-in-hand with good schools and transit opportunities.

“A big part of our funding is to also relieve those transportation costs, which can take out a huge chunk of money from a paycheck each month,” Brown said. “We want to make sure all the properties we are partnering with have some close proximity to transit lines and transit centers. We recognize that there are a lot of local, state and federal things we have to overcome to move the needle. We realize we can leverage our company’s capital to provide those loans, grants, and low-market capital. We also pride ourselves in being able to scale up quickly.”

Through the program, Brown said Amazon officials have seen how costs are increasing on everything from moving dirt to prepare a site for construction to the final costs associated with moving a family into a home.

Josh Sanderson, a development associate with Knoxville-based Smithbilt Homes, said the term “affordable housing” means different things different people and is used in a variety of contexts. Sanderson said he prefers the term “affordable homes,” which he defines as a family pledging their income to a 30-year mortgage.

“Our main focus is what is affordable. We used to say if you work for Smithfield homes you can afford one of our houses. That is not true anymore. The cheapest you can get with Smithfield is \$309,900. We used to sell them at \$159,900 three years ago. The costs have gotten unbelievable, and a lot of that is out of our hands. As homebuilders we know we are in the risk business. We know supply and demand, lumber costs, and the economy can go up and go down.”

While the amount of homes THDA is building is up, Perrey said the organization is still doing less than it was able to before COVID because prices have risen. The recent economic downturn negatively impacted builders, which is making it



From left to right, Smithbilt Homes Development Associate Josh Sanderson, Amazon Public Policy Manager Michelle Gaskin Brown, and Tennessee Housing Development Agency Executive Director Ralph Perrey discuss affordable housing issues at the TML 82nd Annual Conference in Gatlinburg.

harder to find the skilled labor needed for construction. In 2008, the Memphis Homebuilders Association had more than 1,500 members and now, even after merging all West Tennessee homebuilders’ associations into a single organization, there are only 562 members of the group.

Inflation is another contributing factor that is making homeownership harder. Perrey said the average mortgage through THDA programs is \$187,000, which is up about \$30,000 than it was two years ago. The average lender is paying \$300 a month more than those who received loans last year. With more people unable to afford homeownership, more people are also looking to rent which Perrey said is driving up rents.

“Everywhere in our state we need to build more housing for purchasing, more housing that is going to be affordable for workforce,” he said. “This is hard to do because buildable land is expensive and hard to find. Materials cost more and even if you manage to get them, there is no guarantee you will get them in time. Skilled labor is in short supply, and you pay up for it.”

One problem Sanderson said builders are also encountering is a shortage, both in the trades they need to build homes and in the number of inspectors needed to approve permits.

“Another thing we are running into is that – because of the labor shortage – municipalities don’t have the inspectors,” Sanderson said. “When we call for a plumbing

inspection, it can be 14 days out or even three weeks out. We can’t wait three weeks for an inspection. That labor shortage is only going to get worse. One suggestion is penalizing and incentivizing us. So, if I call out for a framing inspection and my framing isn’t done yet, I get penalized for wasting the municipality’s time. I’m all about setting up rules and regulations that help the guys who know what they’re doing and penalize the ones who are sloppy and wasting time.”

Sanderson said costs can also go up as a result of changes requested by municipal planning commissions in order to approve building projects, and he said builders often find it frustrating when city employees recommend moving forward with a project only for city boards to vote it down without understanding the implications that vote could have.

“There is a lot that goes into it, and one change here or one change there results to dollars being passed down to the homebuyer,” he said. “The homebuyer is hurting right now. We are having to subsidize our homeowner’s associations because they cannot afford to pay for the ponds that have to be done for stormwater. When you are nickel-and-diming homebuyers who are scraping together pennies to come to the table, it makes homebuying harder too. Right now, we are losing a contract a day because they can’t close on the house or they can’t afford furniture or groceries as the cost of living goes up.”

Perrey agreed that, while they often have good intentions, regulations have negatively impacted organizations like THDA as well. Perrey said that Nashville’s Habitat for Humanity is struggling to build homes for the less than \$300,000 ceiling price tag it usually offers.

“A lot of requirements communities have put in place are well intentioned and there is a good reason for each and every one of them, but when you layer them on top of each other there is a substantial cost,” he said. “You may want to ask if all of those things are necessary on each and every development and have a little flexibility.”

Sanderson said what may seem like a small fee here or there can add up, making the homebuilder pass on the price of these permits to the buyer.

“What we can control and want to control are the regulations,” he said. “The two-by-four we use in California is the exact same size we use in Tennessee. The only difference in cost is the amount we have to pay in regulations and the price of the land. The state of Tennessee made it effective July 1 that the way we transfer the land has a \$200 transfer fee. When you build 400 houses, that’s \$80,000 a year.”

Perrey encouraged municipal officials to take a look at regulations they have in place and see if there is any room for flexibility to help facilitate builders who want to make affordable homes.

“Think about your land-use and zoning requirements. Think about if

you have city-owned properties and if you could make some of that available to those wanting to do long-term, affordable developments,” he said. “Think about how your community feels about higher density housing, such as duplexes, townhomes, and those 12-unit garden apartments. Think about manufactured homes like the cross-mod development Clayton Homes is offering outside of Dandridge that are built in two or three months. In some places where you have an employer come in and need housing, this may be an option. Think about how rapidly you can get permits to build something. Time is money.”

Educating the public on what affordable housing is – and especially what it isn’t – can also help.

“I know this can be a politically difficult thing, because when a lot of people hear you talk about affordable housing what they’re picturing is the projects,” Perrey said. “The prerequisite to a lot of these changes is what I call getting the talk right. You have to paint a better picture of what you’re building, where it is, and who is going to live there.”

With State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds becoming available, Perrey said cities could consider using some of those funds to support housing development.

“A lot of the developments we at THDA have funded are done with bonds, tax credits, and grants,” he said. “Costs have gone up, and just getting the thing built has funding gaps. Your federal funds may help bridge those finished projects that we have already funded in your communities. We would be glad to help you identify those projects in your communities.”

Perrey also asked that local officials consider contacting their federal representatives and asking them to support the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, also known as Senate Bill 1136 and House Bill 2573.

“Among other things, it would increase by 50% the amount of housing tax credits our agency has to administer,” he said. “It also makes a change in the bond program that would also let us fund at least 50% more housing developments with bond capacity. This bill actually has substantial bipartisan support.”

STATE BRIEFS



Tennessee State Parks have been honored with the Project Excellence Award from the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals for the parks’ innovative Tires to Trails program, which recycles tires. The award was presented at the National Outdoor Recreation Conference in Knoxville. Tennessee State Parks officials, along with those from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), cut the ribbon in June on a new hard-surface pathway over 2.5 miles long – made from rubber crumbs derived from tires – at T.O. Fuller State Park in Memphis. The path is one of the longest rubber-bearing trails in the United States. The project was a partnership between TDEC, TDOT, the city of Memphis, Shelby County, and Memphis City Beautiful.

Unemployment in Tennessee remained unchanged between August and September, according to data released by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD). The state’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September came in at 3.4% and is just 0.2 of a percentage point away from Tennessee’s all-time low rate of 3.2%. One year ago, unemployment across the state stood at 3.8%, which is 0.4 of a percentage point higher than the current rate. Tennessee employers created 13,700 new nonfarm jobs between August and September. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector had the largest number of new jobs, followed by the leisure and hospitality sector, and then the education and health services sector. In a year-to-year comparison, the number of nonfarm jobs across the state increased by 140,200. The leisure and hospitality sector created the most jobs while the trade, transportation, and utilities sector, and the education and health services sector came next on the list.

An additional 838 acres of land has been added to Fall Creek Falls State Park as part of a purchase arranged through multiple part-

ners. Located within the Dry Fork watershed, the property contains nearly five miles of streams, including Dry Fork, Benton Branch, and Mount Pleasant Branch. Waters from these streams flow within the park to Cane Creek. In addition to pristine waters, the property is within the headwaters of numerous nearby caves. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation announced a collaboration between TennGreen Land Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee, and The Conservation Fund with the support of the Open Space Institute and the Lyndhurst Foundation led to the purchase of the new property, which provides significant habitats for endangered species. The land lies within the Cradle of Southern Appalachia Initiative, a conservation blueprint adopted by the Thrive Regional Partnership’s Natural Treasures Alliance.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation’s (TDOT) Nobody Trashes Tennessee has announced its second No Trash November, a month-long statewide initiative encouraging Tennesseans to participate in cleanup events in their communities. Last year’s inaugural campaign included over 1,000 volunteers who collected over 47,000 pounds of litter from the state’s roadways. In partnership with Keep Tennessee Beautiful (KTnB) and TDOT’s Adopt-A-Highway groups, residents are invited to join the public events being held across the state. Besides KTnB affiliates across the state, existing Adopt-A-Highway groups are also invited to participate in No Trash November by conducting one of their four litter cleanups on their designated two miles of roadway during the month. To find a local cleanup event and to register your group to participate in No Trash November, visit nobodytrashestennessee.com. Campaign tools and resources including a cleanup location map and a trash tracker measuring pounds collected are also available online.

Data reveals bright spots in economy

TML proposing legislation to return 100% local share of sales tax dollars to all cities

ECONOMY from Page 1

TML is proposing two pieces of legislation in the upcoming 2023 session that would return more of the locally-generated sales tax dollars to each community. In 2002 to address a serious budget crisis, the state of Tennessee altered its 55-year revenue-sharing relationship with local municipalities by increasing the sales tax rate to 7% from 6%, but keeping all the new revenue collected for the state’s general fund. Additionally, the state capped the local government portion on single item sales and retained the state’s 7% levy as well as the local option tax (2.75%) on purchases between \$1,600 and \$3,200. TML is calling on legislators to reverse these measures enacted 20 years ago and to once again allow local governments to share in 100% of the state sales tax revenues that flows into the state’s general fund and to allow local governments to realize 100% of

the local share of sales tax revenues generated by the 2002 increase in the single article cap. “City officials across the state are seeking the revenue-sharing relationship between state and local government to be applied to 100% of sales tax revenue that flows into the state general fund,” said Mayor King. “The restoration of this important revenue to local taxpayers would allow residents to see direct benefits from increased investments in infrastructure, essential

TDEC announces 11 cities to share in more than \$34.5M in ARPA grants

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) announced 11 municipalities will share in 12 grants totaling \$34,585,121 from the state’s American Rescue Plan (ARP) fund, part of which TDEC is administering in the form of water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure grants. The grants announced follow the announcement of six grants totaling \$37,910,909 from the ARP in August, bringing the total rewarded by TDEC thus far to \$72.4 million. The grants announced today include one collaborative grant and 11 non-collaborative grants for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure planning, design, and construction. Grants were awarded to the municipalities of Farragut, Germantown, Johnson City, Lewisburg, Livingston, Loudon, Millington, Mitchellville, Portland, Westmoreland, and White House. The cities of Portland and Westmoreland, along with Sumner County, will receive a collaborative grant of \$6,752,438 for a multi-phase regionalization water project addressing water loss and distribution challenges. Tennessee Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson reported that total September tax revenues were \$2.1 billion, which is \$243.3 million more than September of last year and \$277.2 million more than the budgeted estimate. The total growth rate for the month was 12.76%. “September sales tax receipts and corporate tax revenues outperformed expectations and led all tax growth for the month,” Bryson said. “However, all other revenues combined experienced negative growth of 2.34% compared to September 2021. “While we are encouraged to see early monthly revenue receipts outpacing our estimates, we must continue to closely

Farragut will receive \$1,721,566 to fund a variety of stormwater improvement projects including improvements to quality and drinking water conservation and the development of a Stormwater Infrastructure Plan. The city of Germantown will receive \$2,601,138 to update water meters, reading devices, and data retrieval systems. The city of Johnson City received a \$7,817,569 to leverage an existing State Revolving Fund loan to upgrade its aging wastewater system, replacing 21,000 linear feet of main. Lewisburg will use \$1,816,744 to address a state-mandated compliance order that is the result of sanitary sewer overflows. Livingston will leverage \$960,607 with a State Revolving Fund loan to complete extensive meter changeouts with automated meter reading equipment and to install remote zone meters in the rural part of the system. Loudon will receive \$1,094,581 to reduce inflow and infiltration to limit chronic overflows, use trenchless technologies to repair old lines, rehab existing manholes, and service connections to limit customer monitor our state’s finances amid an uncertain economic environment.” On an accrual basis, September is the second month in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. For September, general fund revenues exceeded the budgeted estimates in the amount of \$266.3 million, and the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were more than the budgeted estimate by \$10.9 million. Sales tax revenues were \$105.9 million more than the estimate for September. The September growth rate was 10.86%. Year-to-date revenues are 10.43% more than this time last year. Franchise and excise taxes combined were \$163.9 million more than the September budgeted estimate of \$611.7 million. The September growth rate was 22.33%, and the year-to-date corporate tax growth rate is 18.98%. Gasoline and motor fuel revenues for September decreased by 5.16% and were \$5.8 million less than the budgeted estimate of \$112.3 million. Motor Vehicle Registration revenues were \$7.1 million more than the September estimate, and on a year-to-date basis have exceed estimates by \$7.6 million. Tobacco tax revenues for the month were \$3.7 million less than the budgeted estimate of \$21 mil-

disturbance, and reduce impacts to the environment. Millington will use \$1,782,166 to supplement an existing project to modernize their drinking water system. Mitchellville received \$576,293 to install 76 new sewer pumps installed, allowing for significant upgrades to the failing system. White House received \$1,373,645 to execute a construction project that will make corrections to the wastewater collection system. Additionally, Metro Lynchburg Moore County will receive \$2,509,310 while Rutherford County will also receive \$5,579,064. Tennessee received \$3.725 billion from the ARP, and the state’s Financial Stimulus Accountability Group dedicated \$1.35 billion of those funds to TDEC to support water projects in communities throughout Tennessee. Of the \$1.35 billion, approximately \$1 billion was designated for non-competitive formula-based grants offered to counties and eligible cities. The remaining funds will go to state-initiated projects and competitive grants. lion. For two months, revenues are \$1.3 million less than the budgeted estimate. Privilege tax revenues were \$0.9 million more than the budgeted estimate of \$45.9 million. However, on a year-to-date basis, privilege tax receipts are less than estimate by \$5.1 million. Business tax receipts were \$0.7 million more than the budgeted estimate for September. For two months, revenues are \$6.4 million more than the budgeted estimate. Mixed drink, or liquor-by-the-drink, taxes were \$6 million more than the September estimate, and on a year-to-date basis, revenues are \$6.6 million more than the estimate. All other taxes were more than estimates by a net of \$2.2 million. Year-to date revenues for the first two months of the fiscal year were \$407.7 million more than the budgeted estimates. The general fund exceeded estimates by \$383.5 million and the four other funds that share in state tax revenues exceeded estimates by \$24.2 million. The budgeted revenue estimates for 2022-2023 are based upon the State Funding Board’s consensus recommendation from Nov. 23, 2021 and adopted by the second session of the 112th General Assembly in April 2022.

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Practice, protocols important tools for security, violence prevention

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

From threats at city hall to protests to active shooter incidents, having plans and protocols in place with local first responders, city employees, and other community partners are vital to ensuring a cohesive, collaborative response to any issues that may arise.

Dr. Daniel Scherr, a professor with the criminal justice program and cybersecurity program at the University of Tennessee Southern, discussed the importance of local governments working with their employees, first responders, and other stakeholders to have plans in place for a wide variety of situations during the Tennessee Municipal League’s 82nd Annual Conference in Gatlinburg.

Scherr emphasized that a plan must not just be thought of but that everyone involved must understand plans for the wide variety of situations that may be encountered at city hall or within the city itself, ranging from someone attempting to pass a bad check while paying their water bill to a threatening individual at city hall to handling a community protest to responding to an active shooter event at city hall or in the local area.

By knowing what is expected of everyone ahead of time, local governments can guarantee both a unified and uniform response to these situations.

“Talking about a plan that you never see it again, never touch it again, and never revisit your plan is not a plan; it’s a thought process you had one day at lunch,” Scherr said. “Unfortunately, a lot of our plans stop there. It’s usually be-



Well-meaning employees can often be one of the biggest threats to the security of a building, like city hall. Staff buzzing in visitors without checking identification or allowing someone dressed in delivery uniforms and carrying a package into the office could put the building at risk of attack. By having protocols in place and practicing for potentially violent incidents, municipalities can better equip their employees to properly react to everything from disgruntled citizens to cybersecurity to mass causality incidents.

cause money or time make things hard to put into place. A lot of times, that is a limiting factor. Sometimes there is a political aspect to it as well.”

Knowing that the human element is also one of the most vital when it comes to security is also important. Scherr said that city employees trying to be helpful can often inadvertently lead to breaches in security systems, whether that is giving out a password to a computer system or buzzing a person into a building because they are dressed

like an EMT or a delivery person.

“Your number one vulnerability in any security asset, whether it’s your computers or in your offices, is your people,” Scherr said. “If I walk up in my suit with a nice little name tag on and a clipboard in my hand, and I tell them I am there for an official purpose, shake their hand, and smile really well, a lot of people are going to walk me through your security. We don’t want to have failures in security because we are trying to be nice to people. There are ways to uphold

your security but hold people accountable as well...I’ve got locks on the doors, I’ve got cameras, and this, that, and the other. Not really. I can be carrying a pizza box and get buzzed in most places.”

Having protocols in place, such as verifications of identities or only allowing visitors into certain areas of a building if they have a security escort, can help balance the desire to serve the public with the need to protect security assets. Scherr said city employees should also be encouraged to take the “see something, say something approach,” such as notifying someone when they see a door normally left shut or locked propped open.

The first step of preparing for any incident is to identify what challenges and considerations your community might have. Scherr these include the population, demographics, and the level of crime in an area.

An example Scherr used was of a local group wanting to have a protest around the downtown square. By meeting ahead of time with community partners and those wanting to protest, community leaders can allow the protest to happen but still put limitations in place that protect public safety, such as blocking off certain roads and diverting traffic.

“We understand you are going to protest, and you may not be very good friends with us right now, but let’s make a plan so we can all stay safe,” Scherr said. “We don’t want things to turn violent. We don’t want to send law enforcement in to arrest people, because that isn’t going to go well for anyone. You can come in, you can make your point, and we can all be safe.”

If things do start to turn violent, Scherr said it is vital that law enforcement and other first responders know their expectations and how they are supposed to respond, such as when or if force should be used, when does the level of force or response go up, and what behavior would trigger an arrest.

“You have to have these things written out, otherwise you start to get a varied response,” he said. “Having a different response in the same area or within the same territory creates that lack of trust again.”

Knowing who is in charge of the situation ahead of time is also important. Whether an active shooter incident at city hall or a responding to a protest, knowing who is the person giving the orders and who is supposed to obey those orders ahead of an incident can help ensure critical time and response.

Building trust in the community is also an important aspect of successful emergency planning. Scherr said whether or not the community has trust in leadership can have major consequences in high-emotion situations.

“Having that line of communication open and explaining what you are doing can resolve a lot of these issues before a protest happens.”

Doing a threat assessment ahead of time can also be valuable for preventing events on the front end.

“It could be a problem that your front office buzzes everyone in or as soon as someone walks up, they open the door,” Scherr said. “Find out what are your vulnerabilities and what are some of the problems you might have.”

Public Entity Partners continues Partnering for Success webinar series

Public Entity Partners’ annual Partnering for Success Webinar Series is designed to increase knowledge of current risk management exposures and provide helpful information on topics that are important for public entities.

These webinars are free for PE Partners members.

Previous webinars have covered the Tennessee Drug Free Workplace Program, building a risk management culture with leadership and buy-in, overcoming cyber challenges for municipalities, the leading loss drivers for vehicular accidents and auto liability claims, workers’ compensation return-to-work programs, managing sewer backup and overflow claims, understanding the basics of underwriting and liability for elected officials.

The 2022-2023 series launched in October and continued in November with Working with Media, which offered guidance on the art of media relations and the importance of properly presenting your organization.

This webinar was presented by representatives at Corporate Image public relations and media firm in Bristol, Tennessee.

The Dec. 7 webinar, Public Records, will cover basic information regarding compliance with

PARTNERING
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WEBINAR SERIES

December 7th

January 25th

February 22nd

the Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) and responding to public records requests pursuant to the TPRA.

This session will be presented by Patrick Morrison, attorney at Nashville-based Farrar & Bates, LLP.

Engaging Employees through Performance Management will be the topic for the Jan. 25, 2023, we-

binar. Presented by Sarah Curtis, loss control training specialist at PE Partners, this session will break down the employee performance management process into simple, easy-to-follow steps for creating an engaged and productive team.

On Feb. 7, 2023, a session on professional and proven hiring practices will be presented by John Grubbs, human resources

consultant with the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

Because well-designed and lawful hiring practices are critical for selecting the right person for the job, as well as for reducing exposure to employment practices liability, this webinar will focus on several foundational points for the hiring and selection process.

All upcoming webinars will be held at 1 p.m. Central time / 2 p.m. Eastern time.

To register for a webinar, visit the PE Partners website at pepartners.org.

For additional information, contact Heather Hughes, communications & research specialist, at HHughes@PEPartners.org or by calling 615-371-6006.

No loan is too large or too small



Oakland recently closed on a \$5,200,000 PBA fixed rate loan through the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund to finance parks and recreational facilities for the town. Oakland previously used TMBF’s alternative loan program last year to issue two capital outlay notes. Pictured are Jay Johnson, Town Manager; Tommy Green, TMBF Marketing Representative; H. Michael Brown, Mayor; and Yvonne Bullard, Town Recorder.



The city of Waverly used the TMBF fixed rate PBA loan program to borrow \$5,000,000 to finance necessary projects due to the August 2021 flood disaster. First Federal Bank provided the financing through the TMBF program. The city has used our programs previously. Pictured are Waverly Mayor Buddy Frazier and City Recorder Kayla Thomas.

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Tennessee Municipal League Board holds Nov. 2 meeting in Nashville



At-Large Director and Farragut City Administrator David Smoak, left, and District 3 Director and East Ridge City Manager Chris Dorsey, right.



TML Second Vice President and Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown, second from left, delivers a report as First Vice President and Farragut Mayor Ron Williams, left; TML President and Henderson Mayor Bobby King, second from right; and TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, right; look on.



TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, center, delivers his report as First Vice President and Farragut Mayor Ron Williams, left, TML President and Henderson Mayor Bobby King, right, listen.



TCMA Vice President and Paris City Manager Kim Foster, left, and At-Large Director and Brentwood City Manager Kirk Bednar, right.



TMBF President and Morristown Councilmember Kay Senter, left, and TML Second Vice President and Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown, right.



District 8 Director and Millington Vice Mayor Bethany Huffman, left, and District 7 Director and Somerville Alderman Mike French, right.



From left to right, Brentwood City Administrator Kirk Bednar, District 4 Director and Algood City Administrator Keith Morrison, TML Deputy Director Chad Jenkins, and East Ridge City Manager Chris Dorsey



TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, left, and At-Large Director and Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic, right.



Above: At-Large Director and Newport Mayor Roland Dykes, left, and TCMA Executive Director Pat Hardy, right.

Left: At-Large Director Cleveland Mayor Kevin Brooks, left, and District 1 Director and Kingsport Alderman Darrell Duncan.

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Five basic data backup best practices your municipality should follow

BY DAVID DONOVAN
Senior Infrastructure Architect

There is no denying that backing up your municipality’s data is important. Ransomware attacks, natural disasters, and hardware failures can easily lead to permanent data loss. It is crucial to have a plan in place if your city or town experiences an incident that leads to data loss. A true data backup involves having a copy of your most important information stored offsite so that, no matter the disaster, you can recover your data.

However, many municipalities often think they are backing up their data when in actuality they are not following several important best practices. If something were to happen to your data, not following these best practices may jeopardize your ability to recover that data. Let’s look at five basic data backup best practices you should have implemented at your town or city.

1. Back up routinely and frequently.

A great way to ensure that none of your most important data ever gets lost is to schedule backups routinely and frequently without long intervals between the backups. Without a schedule, remembering to perform a backup could fall between the cracks and you could lose some of your most important information in the wake of an incident.

It’s also a best practice to ensure that you more frequently back up data that changes more often, such as payroll data or documents your employees are actively working on. Data that is archived or changes infrequently can be less frequently backed up.

2. Have both onsite and offsite data backup.

In case of a smaller incident such as a server failure, an onsite backup solution can allow for your municipality to be up and running again in minutes. For example, you may have a redundant backup server replicating the information on your current server. If the original server fails, this backup server can take over—giving you access to your

data within minutes and maintaining your operational continuity.

However, in the case of a natural disaster or ransomware that affects even your onsite backups, you need offsite data backup to preserve your data. That means storing your data physically far from your building, just as through a cloud solution or data center. If your onsite servers are destroyed, your data will be safe and sound in a different location. While it may take hours to access your data and restore it into a usable state, you know it’s there.

It is important to have both an onsite and offsite data backup plan in place. While onsite backups are very beneficial for smaller incidents, they cannot protect you from larger disasters.

3. Encrypt your backup data.

In case a cybercriminal or unauthorized person accesses your data backups, you need to encrypt them so that your information is unreadable and useless. Encryption of data at rest and in transit—such as when you’re sending data backups to your data center or cloud provider—turns your information into garble unless an authorized person is accessing the information. Whether employee personal records, health information, contracts, or even criminal records, encrypting protects the information from being seen by prying eyes. A good data backup and disaster recovery solution should include encryption.

4. Periodically test your data backup.

The responsibility you have for backing up your data goes further than just, well, backing it up. You need to perform periodic tests to make sure everything is running smoothly. Testing will help discover any missing gaps in your data backup or show if your data backup process fails. Through finding possible errors, you can make any necessary corrections before it is too late. You don’t want to discover critical issues with your data backup after an incident.

5. Keep your data backups organized.

You should always keep your data backups organized so that you can find and access critical information after an incident. Otherwise, unstructured data, even if recovered, can be useless for a long



time until you find a way to fully restore databases or applications. It’s important to identify, organize, archive, and back up critical data and important records. Payroll, accounting, public safety, utility billing, and other critical data needs to be prioritized in a data backup and disaster recovery plan. Following records retention laws can also help keep your data backups lean and focused. There is no need to back up unnecessary data your town or city no longer uses or is required to keep.

Many municipalities don’t realize the importance of data backup until it is too late. Data backups are a vital practice that should be done routinely and frequently. By following these five basic data backup practices, you are already one step ahead of counteracting any cyber threats or natural disasters that could come your way that would result in data loss.

About VC3
VC3 is a leading managed services provider focused on municipal government. Founded in 1994 with offices across North America, VC3 forms partnerships with municipalities to achieve their technology goals and harness their data. In addition to providing comprehensive managed IT solutions, VC3 offers cybersecurity, website design, custom application development, and business intelligence services. Visit www.vc3.com to learn more.



Nov. 10: Gatlinburg
Gatlinburg Chili Cook-Off
The official kick-off to the holiday season in Gatlinburg, come to enjoy free, live entertainment and plenty of chili to warm up in the cold weather. For more info, visit <https://www.gatlinburg.com/event/gatlinburg-winter-magic-kickoff-and-chili-cookoff/16/>

Nov. 11-12: Cookeville
Art Prowl
Historic downtown Cookeville hosts Art Round’s annual art fair and studio tour. Meet more than 80 local artists in studios, businesses, and other locations throughout downtown with demonstrations and events for kids and families. For more information, visit <https://www.artroundtennessee.com/artprowl>

Nov. 19: Franklin
Franklin Fall Makers Market
Come shop a variety of goods from local artisans. This market will feature local and regional makers of hand-crafted art, food, jewelry, crafts and more. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/franklin-makersmarket/>

Dec. 3: Bell Buckle
A Quilted Christmas
This quilt walk through downtown Bell Buckle brings visitors out to enjoy ten stops with a wide variety of quilts ranging from old to new, unique to traditional. For more information, visit <https://bellbucklechamber.com/>

Dec. 3: Goodlettsville
Yulefest
A Goodlettsville tradition for more than 35 years, Yulefest kickstarts the holiday season with tours of Historic Manskers Station and period demonstrations and events held at Moss-Wright Park. The free event features music, traditional decorations, and unique holiday gifts. For more information, visit <https://www.goodlettsville.gov/1420/Yulefest>

NATIONAL BRIEFS

More Americans are surviving cancer than ever before, according to a new report from the American Association for Cancer Research. In the past three years the number of people living with a cancer diagnosis has increased by more than a million with 18 million cancer survivors in the U.S. as of January. That number is projected to increase to 26 million by 2040. The five-year overall survival rate has increased from 49% in the mid-1970s to nearly 70% in 2017, the most recently available figures. Declines in smoking rates, technology that improves the ability to catch

and treat cancer earlier, and new medications and treatments on the market have all contributed to survival rates.

Leisure travel in the U.S. has exceeded pre-pandemic levels while business travel is expected to come close to 2019 rates. The American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) found that leisure travel is expected to end at 14% above 2019 levels this year while business travel will come within 1% of 2019 levels. Among the top 50 travel markets in the country, 80% are expected to see hotel revenue exceed 2019 levels but only 40% are expected to ex-

ceed 2019 levels for business travel. The top 10 travel markets are, in order: New York; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; Chicago; Orlando, Fla.; San Francisco; Atlanta; Las Vegas; Boston; Dallas; and San Diego, Calif.

Less than half of Americans plan to get their flu shot this year, but many say they will still mask up for flu season. A survey conducted by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) found only 49% of U.S. adults plan to get a flu shots, even among the 1 in 5 Americans who are at higher risk for flu complications. Despite this, nearly 70% of Americans still

believe that getting the annual flu shot is the best way to prevent the flu. More U.S. adults are gravitating toward wearing a mask than getting the shot with 58% saying they plan to mask up at least some of the time during flu season. The top reasons for not getting the flu shots are belief that the shots don’t work very well, concerns about side effects, having never gotten the flu, concerns about getting the flu from the shot, and not believing the flu is a serious illness. However, medical professionals maintain the flu shot has been the most effective preventative for the flu for more than 100 years.

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