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Six municipal elections held

New mayors chosen in Memphis, Nashville; Knoxville keeps Kincannon



Newly elected Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell celebrates with his supporters after winning the mayoral run-off.

By KATE COIL

Elections have been held in five municipalities so far this fall, including mayoral and council elections in Knoxville and Memphis and run-off elections for mayor and council in Nashville.

New mayors will be taking office in Memphis and Nashville with the city of Nashville also electing its first female-majority city council.

DICKSON

Dickson held a municipal election on Sept. 16. Incumbent Don L. Weiss ran unopposed and was re-elected to the seat. Weiss has served as mayor of Dickson since 1993 and will be the city's longest-serving mayor when he reaches 30 years of service in December.

Newcomer Brett M. Reynolds unseated incumbent Betty Lou Alsobrooks for the Ward 1 council seat. Reynolds earned 252 votes to Alsobrooks' 220.

In the Ward 3 race incumbent Horace Perkins defeated challenger Clayton L. Ellis with Perkins earning 131 votes to Ellis' 52 votes.

Two uncontested races were also held in Dickson. Newcomer Shane Chandler ran unopposed and was elected to the Ward 2 seat previously held by Robby Harmon while incumbent Dwight E. Haynes ran unopposed and was re-elected to the Ward 4 seat.

KNOXVILLE

A primary election was held in Knoxville on Aug. 29 with no run-offs needed following the vote counts.

Incumbent Indya Kincannon defeated challengers Constance Every, R.C. Lawhorn, and Jeff Talman to retain her seat as mayor of Knox-



Knoxville voters returned incumbent Mayor Indya Kincannon to her seat with 57% of the votes.

ville. Kincannon received 9,429 votes, approximately 57% of the vote in a race where 51% is needed to secure the election. Talman followed with 4,808 votes, Every with 1,328 votes, and Lawhorn with 829 votes.

Incumbent Lynn Fugate defeated Cameron Brooks and Darin Worsham for the open Knoxville City Council At-Large Seat A. Fugate led the vote total with 7,188 followed by Brooks with 6,746, and Worsham with 1,685.

For the At-Large Seat B, new-comer Debbie Helsley defeated fellow challenger R. Bentley Marlow. Hensley received 10,536 votes while Marlow received 4,594. The seat was previously held by Janet Testerman.

In the At-Large Seat C race, Incumbent Amelia Parker and Tim Hill defeated Matthew Best for the two open seats. Parker earned 6,598 votes, Hill 5,927, and Best 3,543. Incumbent Charles Thomas ran unopposed and was elected to the See ELECTIONS on Page 5

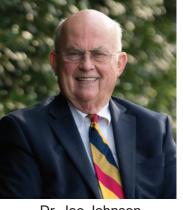
Former UT System President Dr. Joe Johnson dies at 90

Joe Johnson, long-time system president of the University of Tennessee, died Sept. 29, 2023, at the age of 90.

Johnson served as president from 1990 to 1999 and then again as interim president from 2003 to 2004. A UT employee of more than 50 years, Johnson was instrumental in the creation of the UT System structure and the partnership between UT and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

After stepping down as interim president in 2004, he continued to serve as president emeritus, sitting on numerous boards including the UT Medical Center, UT Graduate School of Medicine, and more. In 2012, he received the Silver Antelope Award, which UT officials said is the highest award the national council gives to volunteers.

"Through his vision, leadership and passion, Dr. Johnson provided



Dr. Joe Johnson

years of service to the people of Tennessee and to the University of Tennessee that forged a positive direction for our state," said Ron Williams, Farragut mayor and TML president. "We have lost a great leader. We are indebted to President Joe and his lovely wife Pat for their many years of service to all Ten-See JOHNSON on Page 5

New data: Blue Oval will bring more than 176,000 West Tennessee residents by 2045

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

New population projects indicate that Blue Oval City could bring more than 176,000 new residents to West Tennessee by 2045 with population growth increasing in all 21 counties.

Sharon Younger, founder of economic research and strategic communications firm Younger & Associates, presented the group's population projects at a recent Blue Oval Community Impact meeting hosted by the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TN-ECD).

The firm predicted a "moderately aggressive" growth rate of 11.4% on average across West Tennessee from 2022 to 2045, approximately 176,341 new residents bringing the total West Tennessee Population to 1,723,220. Younger noted that these numbers should be used by communities to help plan how many future residents they need to be prepared to serve.

"I would like to say the population estimates we put before you are moderately aggressive; they are not conservative and they are not over-the-top aggressive," Younger said. "It does make the presumption that our communities will make substantial investments in infrastructure and public services. Without these two investments, these numbers most likely would not be achieved. We are seeing there is a path forward to do that. The other assumption is there are large tracts of lands that will be put into development that haven't previously put into development. West Tennessee has some massive agricultural operations as well as some land that has been left fallow. It is going to require putting those tracts into development and getting infrastructure to those tracts."

Prior to Younger & Associ



As steel continues to go up at Ford's Blue Oval City near Stanton, new population projections can help guide municipalities in how to prepare for the more than 176,000 new residents who will be moving into the area as a result.

ates' findings, the most recent numbers on West Tennessee population projections from the State Data Center at UT's Boyd Center had been made prior to the Blue Oval announcement. Pre-Blue Oval, the State Data Center had projected a 3.9% change in West Tennessee's population with 60,001 new residents by 2045. Younger said these numbers were used by her firm as a starting point

"We know that prior to the announcement of Blue Oval City, the majority of our rural counties have experienced declining populations," Younger said. "Population trends from the past few decades projected out through the future was a declining population, not that it is a negative reflection on West Tennessee in anyway. If you look nationally, the population for rural communities was projected to decline and that was projected to continue for some period of time. We are looking at a total reversal of those populations moving ahead."

Haywood County, where the Blue Oval facility itself is located, is expecting the largest population growth at 70.7% between 2022 and 2045. Lauderdale County is projected to have the second highest growth rate of See RESIDENTS on Page 3

Adaptability, unique experiences, and technology can help downtown business

By KATE COIL

The face of retail in downtown spaces is transition yet again as technology and post-pandemic lifestyles continue to change how citizens want to live, work, and play in their communities.

Lena Geraghty, director of Urban Innovation and Sustainability in the Center for Municipal Practice at the National League of Cities, moderated a panel including Greeneville City Administrator Todd Smith, Sweetwater City Recorder Jessica Morgan, and UT-MTAS Management Consultant Angie Carrier at the TML 83rd Annual Conference in Nashville to discuss how to best adapt to the changes in downtown retail.

On a macro level, Geraghty said NLC research has found that changes in business districts have been profound due to the decline of in-office work in certain areas and recovery has been uneven for many communities. Those who no longer have a large office population they can rely on to patronize downtown businesses.

As work-from-home or hybrid work practices become more the norm in the office world, many businesses have also pulled back from brick-and-mortar stores due to the high cost of rent and better bottom lines provided by online-only operations. Likewise, downtowns who are adjacent to or themselves are well-balanced, livable, and walkable neighborhoods encourage a more positive business climate.

Geraghty said one transition researchers are seeing shows customers may choose to buy online but pick up their orders or process returns at a physical location. Communities that can provide digital support to local businesses, create opportunities for in-person retail



Providing a unique, small-town experience is one of the reasons Sweetwater has been able to successfully adapt its downtown commercial district as what residents and visitors want changes post-pandemic. Sweetwater City Recorder Jessica Morgan said words like "charming" are frequently used to describe downtown Sweetwater, which gives it a leg up when people would rather have a unique experience than something repeatable in another community.

experiences, and build partnerships between neighborhood and citizen-based organizations and the retail community may be better positioned for downtown economic development.

STAYING CLOSER TO HOME

While retail usually comes in ebbs and flows in Greeneville, Smith said one blessing from the pandemic was getting residents to see what their own community had to offer.

"Our trend, as a small rural city, was typically on the weekends our folks would go to Knoxville, Asheville, Johnson City, and make a day of going out to eat and going shopping," Smith said. "When Covid happened, our residents, like most residents stayed home. They then began to see what was in the community. In some odd way, Covid actually helped our retail economy."

Retail has always been an important component of downtown revitalization. About 15 years ago, Morgan said the two major anchor businesses of Sweetwater's downtown were a restaurant and a women's clothing shop that was largely out of the price range of most of the city's residents. To build local support, Morgan said Sweetwater leveraged the desire for people to stay closer to home.

"Some of the things we have done are events and festivals," Morgan said. "We really tried to re-envision our festivals and events to not just have events for the sake of having events but to have events that were focused on helping our retailers. That could be sales the day of the event or returning customers after the event. You have to make sure that these events are helping downtown business and not hurt downtown business. You have to See DOWNTOWN on Page 8

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



ASHLAND CITY

The town of Ashland City will receive a \$5 million grant and \$10.6 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as part of \$808 million in federal investments in water and wastewater infrastructure, including more than \$18.3 million in the state of Tennessee. The funds will help provide for additional construction costs to complete wastewater system improvements for the town. The new wastewater treatment plant and sewer rehabilitation will benefit the approximately 4,500 customers.

BRENTWOOD

The Brentwood Fire Department announced a historic event in the department's history when an all-female engine company took to the frontlines of firefighting duty for the first time. Though women have been a part of the department for years, this marked the first time an all-female team was working together on the same shift and same engine. Engineer paramedic and Acting Lt. Robin Thorpe, Engineer Rose Aldrich, and Firefighter-Paramedic May Massie made up the historic team. Only 18% of firefighters are women.

GALLATIN

Ground has been broken on a new industrial park in Gallatin. The 90-acre Aero Business Park at 750 Airport Road will serve tenants near the Music City Executive Airport. Officials with TennProperties said plans for the park include dividing it's 297,000-square-feet into properties that can accommodate businesses needing as little as 5,000-square-feet or as much as 500,000-square-feet of space. The project also hopes to partner with small businesses to allow them to grow at the property. The park will be built in three phases with the first phase completed by the end of the year. Total buildout is expected to take a decade.

GALLATIN

A Belgium-based LED housing and framing producer Twenty Three has chosen Gallatin for its first U.S. manufacturing operations. The global company will invest \$3 million for its manufacturing operations in the Gallatin Industrial Center and create 10 fulltime jobs, with up to 30 new jobs eventually projected. The 31,000-square-foot facility at 170 Commerce will serve as Twenty Three's U.S. production hub for engineering, design and fabrication. The company will retain their customer service office in Monrovia, Calif., but plans to onshore their current manufacturing operations to Gallatin to better serve their customers.

JOHNSON CITY

A major wastewater project nearly a decade in the making is now complete in Johnson City. The Lower Brush Creek Interceptor project began in 2014 and replaces a critical pipeline in the collection system as it transports the majority of the city's wastewater from downtown. This project serves several large facilities in the city including East Tennessee State University, the Johnson City Medical Center, the Veterans' Administration campus, the West Walnut Street coordinator, and significant residential and commercial properties. It is one of the single largest water and sewer investments made by the city in the past 30 years. The Lower Brush Creek Interceptor project replaced a 30-inch concrete line installed in the 1950s with more than 21,000 linear feet of new pipe. Construction on the \$25 million project was performed by Garney Companies of Nashville.

LOBELVILLE

Dutch Tech, Inc. officials announced the company will invest \$755,000 to expand its insulation manufacturing operations at the company's headquarters in Lobelville. Dutch Tech will create 73 new jobs in Lobelville three years after the company was founded. Lobelville is located within Perry County, a Tier 4 Distressed county. The additional staff will serve as shift managers, equipment operators and administrative assistants, allowing Dutch Tech to better meet its customer demands and increase production. Founded in 2020, and headquartered in Lobelville, Dutch Tech, Inc. specializes in manufacturing durable, insulation technology. Through the expansion, Dutch Tech will employ nearly 100 people.

NASHVILLE

In addition to trash and recycling, a new pilot program in Nashville will be picking up compost as part of zero-waste efforts in the city. The initial program will offer the service to 750 households to allow compost collection at the curb. Participants will be selected from online applications and will have the option to put compostable material into a bin for pick up separate from trash. The material will then be sent to a composting center and delivered back to residents for use in home gardens and yards. The city estimates about a fourth of all trash it delivers to landfills could be composted instead and that the new effort will reduce the rate in which regional landfills are being used. Those who are not selected for the initial pilot program can still participate by dropping off their compostable materials at one of four collection centers throughout the city.

NASHVILLE

Aero Build, LLC officials announced the company will invest \$861,000 to expand its manufacturing operations in Nashville. As a result of the project, Aero Build will create an additional 43 new jobs at its Nashville headquarters. The new positions will support the production and innovation of Coast, Aero Build's new line of fully electric luxury RVs, which launched earlier this year. Founded in 2017, Aero Build, LLC specializes in manufacturing commercial business trailers and now, with Coast, fully electric luxury travel

OLIVER SPRINGS

The town of Oliver Springs will receive a \$734,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as part of \$808 million in federal investments in water and wastewater infrastructure, including more than \$18.3 million in the state of Tennessee. The grant will complete the rehabilitation of Oliver Springs' wastewater collection system. Corrections to the existing sewer infrastructure will prevent overflows at the treatment plant and improve water quality in the area. This project will benefit the approximately 3,200 customers within the service area. Previous funding includes a \$7.5 million USDA loan and grant.

STANTON

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) has announced a \$3,539,000 investment that will boost economic development and improve the quality of life for current and future businesses and residents surrounding the BlueOval City automotive complex near Stanton. Funding from this project is provided by the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF). The investment will be matched by \$8,140,000 in additional funds from USDA Rural Development. The town of Stanton investment project will provide water and sewer utility services to facilities critical to BlueOval City, a planned automotive assembly complex near Stanton operated by Ford Motor Company and BlueOval SK. BlueOval City is Ford's largest, most advanced auto production complex in its history and will be home to the next-generation electric truck from Ford. Additional facilities supported by the project include an existing fire station and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology, which will serve as Ford's primary training center. The project is expected to create 2,700 direct jobs and over 3,300 indirect jobs.

Greeneville holds push-in ceremony for new fire trucks



Members of the Greeneville Fire Department and city officials held a formal push-in ceremony for two new fire engines at the city's Station No. 2 on Carson Street. The new rescue pumper engine - designated Engine No. 2 - and mini-pumper truck will replace aging equipment. Both trucks were purchased largely through grant money and federal dollars. Engine No. 2 was purchased through a \$609,600 Assistance to Firefighters grant from USDA with a town match of \$95,400 for the engine. The 2023 Sutphen Corp. Model can accommodate six firefighters, has a 1,000-gallon water tank, 30-gallon foam tank, and 2,000-gallon-per-minute pump capacity. The mini-pumper truck was purchased through a CBDG grant and is a Ford F-550 chassis with a pump that has a capacity of 1,500 gallons-per-minute. The mini-pumper carries 310 gallons of water and 20 gallons of Class A foam, used to extinguish materials such as wood, paper, brush and wildland vegetation. Fire Station No. 2 itself is a recent addition, opening its doors in April early this year.

Johnson City breaks ground on new firefighter training facility



Johnson City officials and firefighters broke ground on a new fire training center on a three-acre property behind the city's Fire Station No. 7 on Walnut Street. The facility will include training classrooms, a driver training area, burn pad, and live-fire training tower giving agencies across the county access to hands-on experience. The new training center replaces a previous center that has been inactive for 10 years after the department outgrew the space and the facility no longer met evolving standards. The new facility will provide exceptional access for current and future fire fighters to have immersive and experiential learning. The \$4.6 million project was financed through ARPA funds, designed by Shawn & Shanks Architects, and built GRC Construction.

Clarksville cuts ribbon on park



Mayor Joe Pitts, community members, and officials with the city of Clarksville and Clarksville Parks and Recreation Department were on hand to cut the ribbon on the city's Beech Street Park. The new park offers a wide variety of amenities to cater to the diverse needs of the community, including an accessible playground, pavilion, seating, benches, and picnic tables. Several city departments contributed to the new park including Clarksville's Street Department; Gas, Water and Sewer Department; Department of Electricity; Clarksville Municipal Properties; the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services; and Clarksville Building & Facilities Maintenance Department Forestry Division.

WAUFORD

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

New data projects more than 176,000 West Tennessee residents by 2045

RESIDENTS, from Page 1

40.1% followed by Fayette County with 37.2%. Younger said growth is projected in all 21 counties.

"The two metro areas - the Jackson metro and the Memphis metro – did not have declining numbers, again reflecting national trends," she said. "What we were seeing in Jackson and Memphis was that the growth rate was slower than the national average and the Tennessee average, which has been pushed above the national average by growth rates in places like Nashville. Another important factor looking at these population projects is that we have been experiencing what economists call full employment, which means we have unemployment rates under 4%. In order for companies to hire someone, they have to find someone to hire. The need for jobs is going to put upward pressure on population as we bring these new jobs in."

While the Younger & Associates projections generally trended higher than the State Data Center's pre-Blue Oval predictions, the Younger projection for Shelby County is a 5.3% population increase, down from the State Data Center's 6.8%.

"The projections for Shelby County are lower than what they were pre-Blue Oval is because our projection goes out through 2045," she said. "That has a dampening effect. We have Shelby County growing more than the state projected in the early years. We then dropped back to the state projection for them in the later years. It's really an anomaly that it looks lower. Essentially what we looked at is that Shelby County has not been growing as Nashville or even as much as the state average. Our assumption is that Shelby County would go to those averages in the immediate future."

Younger said Shelby County was held out of the projections of the remaining 20 counties in the region because it faces other factors those areas do not.

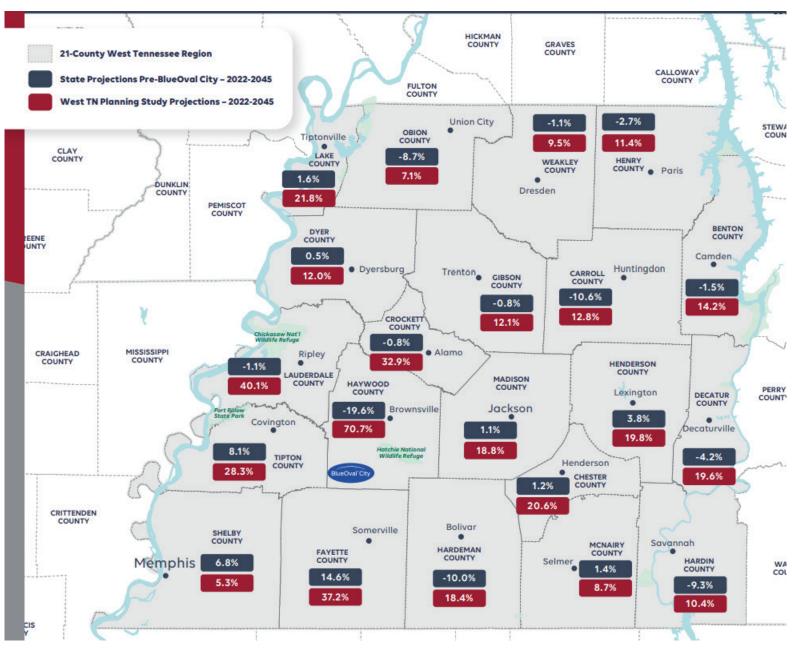
"It makes up such a large percentage of not just the population but of the GDP of the region," she said. "There are many factors different in a Shelby County economy than a rural West Tennessee economy. Rather than lump it all together, we held it separately so we could apply different assumptions and hopefully come up with a better outcome for every county involved."

Younger said there will be two layers of population growth. The first is the estimated direct and indirect jobs created by Blue Oval, SK, and their suppliers. The second layer of growth is "organic growth" that can occur in each community. Younger predicts a total of 21,024 jobs created not just by Blue Oval and related suppliers but also created as a result of the economic growth those jobs will create.

"As we develop in each community better infrastructure, more public services, improve our school systems, invest in amenities that are attractive to people not only will the direct and indirect jobs move into West Tennessee but West Tennessee becomes more attractive in general," she said. "As we see population growth in West Tennessee, that population growth approximates the level of growth Tennessee as a state has enjoyed for years. Tennessee has been one of the fastest growing states in the U.S., but West Tennessee has not grown at that same rate. We are projected West Tennessee to be growing at that same rate by 2030 or 2040."

To arrive at their projections, Younger said researchers looked at a variety of factors including location, the ability to attract Ford suppliers, available housing, public school quality, amenity density, and current population trends. Initially, Younger said population increases will follow the path of least resistance where it is presently easiest to settle in.

"Blue Oval is coming on so fast that people will have to go where there is available housing," she said. "The housing that is available immediately may not be in counties adjacent to Blue Oval. People will initially move further then the population will move out of those areas they



Prior to the Blue Oval announcement, populations in most West Tennessee counties were expected to decline. New data indicates many counties previously expected to decline will instead experience double-digit percentage growth. While most of the counties in West Tennessee had their population projections calculated based on trends in rural communities, Sharon Younger of Younger & Associates said a different approach was taken in Memphis because of its status as a major metro. Growth in West Tennessee is expected to catch up to the above-the-national average growth being experienced in much of the rest of the state.

initially land and then closer to the Blue Oval area. We expect those eastern suburbs of Shelby County will absorb a lot of that growth initially, but over time that growth will gravitate toward the Blue Oval site as people find their preferred place to live and housing becomes available."

Where people may choose to move relies on a variety of factors.

"Travel time is a big one," she said. "Most people want to live within 20 minutes of where they will work. We know with Blue Oval City – at least initially – that will not be possible because of where housing is available. Over time, people want to be within 20 minutes, and you will see that all over the U.S. Conditions of the highways and travel times are important."

Communities with available certified sites ready for the relocation of Blue Oval suppliers as well as an area's history of business and job attraction may also indicate where jobs and thereby population will begin to flow.

"All the research done prior to the pandemic on housing found where people move relies on three factors," Younger said. "The first is where people can find available housing they can afford based on their salary. The second and almost as important a factor is the quality of the public school systems in the area where they were looking. The third is the availability of high-speed broadband. We know Tennessee has been working diligently to solve the broadband issues.'

Amenities a community offers can also make it more attractive.

We are looking at which counties pull in retail from outside their own borders and already have the amenities that bring people in to shop and find entertainment," she said. "We looked at where there is unmet demand and potential for growth. We also looked for a primary campus of a four-year university. While nationally most rural areas have seen populations decline, one of the few factors that went against that is a rural community with a four-year

BlueOval City Impact on the Region by 2035







STATE DATA CENTER PROJECTIONS PRE-BLUEOVAL CITY

1,606,880 1,546,879 2022 ESTIMATE 2045 PROJECTION

60,001 # CHANGE

3.9% % CHANGE

WEST TN PLANNING STUDY PROJECTIONS

,546<u>,</u>879

*Estimate from the US Census Bureau

The population of West Tennessee is projected to go from a little over 1.54 million in 2022 to more than 1.72 million in 2045. All 21 counties in the region are expected to see population growth as a result of Blue Oval City. While not every city is within a 20 minute drive of Blue Oval City at present, changes to the region's transportation network as well as where other suppliers and indirect business choose to locate are still expected to buoy population growth across West Tennessee.

university as did waterfront property."

These factors were then put into a scoring matrix that helped determine where and how growth is expected to happen. She said they also took into account how changes to infrastructure and public services could impact population.

"We used one scoring matrix for the years 2025 through 2030 and a different for the remaining years through 2045," Younger said. "For instances, say a county didn't score high initially on quality of public schools. From 2030 on, that county would have had time to invest and make changes to become much more attractive. The road system will change. Where you are located will not change, but the ability to drive to it might. Investment in infrastructure and public amenities will change. Scoring was much further apart initially and much closer together in the later years."

To view individual area data or learn more in depth information about Younger & Associates' projections, visit this link.



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PEOPLE

Cheryl Ball has been selected as the new chief policy officer for the city of Knoxville by Mayor Indya Kincannon. Ball has



Cheryl Ball

three decades of experience with business operations, strategic planning, marketing communications strategy and stakeholder development. She also has owned and operated her own company. She joined the city administration in November 2021 as deputy economic and community development officer. Prior to joining the city, Ball led the Community Schools initiative for the Great Schools Partnership and then the Knox Education Foundation. Ball earned an MBA from the University of Tennessee and has a bachelor's degree in communications media/public relations with a minor in marketing from Appalachian State University.

Harvey Ellis has been selected as the new town manager for the town of Oakland. Prior to the appointment. Ellis served



Harvey Ellis

as the town's director of public works. Ellis has been with the city for 23 years. Dennis Mullins was selected to take on the position of public works director following Ellis' appointment. Ellis takes over the role of town manager following the retirement of previous town manager Jay Johnson.

Richard Hall, police chief of Germantown, is retiring after 38 years of service with the city. He will be taking a new position as the national



Richard Hall

director of a training company that works with law enforcement officers and dispatchers. Hall graduated from the University of Memphis – then Memphis State University - with a bachelor's degree in education. During his time at the university, he served in the school's park ranger training program and worked two summer seasons as a part-time park ranger at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. After graduation, he went to work for the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism as a park ranger at Lake Chicot. He then took a position with the Germantown Police Department on a friend's recommendation where he would serve for nearly 40 years.

Rebecca "R.J" Justice has been selected as the new chief of Urban Design and Development for the city of Knox-



R.J. Justice

ville by Mayor Indya Kincannon. Justice has been involved in the local design and development community for more than 15 years. She started at the city in 2017 as the first urban wilderness coordinator, then transitioned to serve as the deputy economic development officer in 2020. Justice graduated with a master's degree from the School of Landscape Architecture at the University of Georgia and hold's a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee.

Holly Kirby has begun her term as the chief justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court after being elected unanimously to serve a two-



Holly Kirby

year term. She is the fourth ever female chief justice of the court and succeeds Justice Roger Page. Kirby was the first woman to serve on the Tennessee Court of Appeals when she was appointed in 1995

and served until 2014 when Gov. Bill Haslam appointed her to the Tennessee Supreme Court. Kirby, a native of Memphis, attended high school in Columbia and earned her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Memphis.

Jason Miles has been selected as the new public works director for the city of Johnson City. Miles brings more than 25 years of expe-



Jason Miles

rience to the department and its five divisions: engineering, solid waste, stormwater, streets, and traffic. Miles comes to Johnson City from Fayetteville, N.C., where he served as the city's project and contract manager. Miles earned a bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech in civil engineering and is pursuing a master's degree from the University of Arkansas in engineering.

Christopher Moews has been selected as the new police chief for the city of La Vergne. M o e w s comes to the La Vergne Police De-



Christopher Moews

partment from Milwaukee, Wis., where he presently serves as a captain. He has been with the city since 1996 and during his 30 years of service has embraced community engagement and building relationships between the community and elected officials. He has also been a member of the Milwaukee Police Department's Police Chief's Use of Force Review Committee, the Critical Incident Review Board, and the Police Officer Support Team. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and has completed management training at the Northwestern Center for Public Safety, International Association of Chiefs of Police, FBI-LEEDA, and the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Command College Certified Public Manager Program.

Debra Murrell, longtime employee of the city of Lakeland, died Sept. 9, 2023, after a battle with cancer. Murrell was first



Debra Murrell

hired by the city of Lakeland on June 29, 1998, as a utility clerk/minutes clerk, audited the MLGW and sewer accounts, and established trash service for new residents. She worked her way up through the city as a development facilitator, business liaison, administrative assistant, and in codes enforcement. She has also served as recorder for various city boards, including the Board of Commissioners. Most recently, she served as a community development specialist, city recorder, and court clerk. Muller held an associate degree in business from Southwest Community College and is a Certified Municipal Clerk for Tennessee.

Andrew Patton has been selected as the new director of human resources for the city of La Vergne. Prior to coming to the city, Pat-



Andrew Patton

ton had diverse experience in the human resources field including serving in the corporate and music and entertainment industries as well as an entrepreneur. He served as an employee relations investigator with Amazon where he oversaw 1,2000 associates in an HR team based in Nashville. He holds a bachelor's degree from Kent State and a master's in business administration in human resource management from Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts. Patton also holds an accreditation through the Society of Human

TML officials attend 2023 GovCon



TML officials were attendance at the 2023 TNECD GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE in Chattanooga. The two-day event featured many great sessions on small town development, Brownfield resources, sustainable transportation practices, and much more. Pictured (L to R) are TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, Bolivar Mayor and TML Vice President Julian McTizic, TN Municipal Bond Fund CEO Wade Morrell, and Newport Mayor and TML Board Member Trey Dykes.

Brentwood's all-female engine company makes history



The Brentwood Fire Department marked a historic milestone last month when, for the first time in its history, an all-female engine company took to the front lines of firefighting duty. While women have long been a part of the Brentwood Fire Department, it had never seen an all-female team working together on the same shift and engine - until now. Robin Thorpe serves as the engineer paramedic and acting lieutenant, Rose Aldrich is an engineer, and May Massie is a firefighter-paramedic. From lett to right: Aldrich, Massie, and Thorpe.

Resource Management (SHRM) and served as an adjunct faculty member at Trevecca Nazarene University and Bethel University in Indiana.

Stephanie Pugh has been selected as the new downtown director for the city of Covington. The newly-created position will coordi-



Stephanie Pugh

nate activity within the city's downtown revitalization program that utilizes historic preservation as an integral foundation for downtown economic development. Pugh presently works as an insurance agent in Covington, a position she has held with Shelter Insurance since 2018. A native of Covington, she studied English literature at Lambuth University.

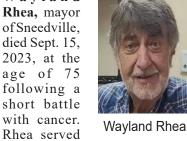
Jason Quick has been selected as the new city manager for the city of Tullahoma. Quick had previously served as the principal



of Tullahoma High School until the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Quick was selected following a process involving input from Tullahoma's Citizens Committee, an evaluation conducted through UT-MTAS, and interviews with city department heads. Quick will take over the role from Tullahoma Fire Chief Kenneth Pearson, who has been serving as interim city administrator in Tullahoma. A Tullahoma native, Quick served as a teacher and coach at the South

Gibson Special School District in Tennessee and at Huntsville High School in Huntsville, Ala., before serving as an administrator at Bob Jones High School in Madison, Ala. He then served as the assistant principal and fine arts director of Athens City Schools in Alabama before returning to Tullahoma.

Wayland Rhea, mayor of Sneedville, died Sept. 15, 2023, at the age of 75 following a short battle with cancer.



as mayor of Sneedville for 35 years. He also served as president of the Sneedville Utility District as well as a Hancock County Commissioner for more than a decade. He also owned and managed several businesses in Sneedville. Vice Mayor Steven Harrison will serve as interim mayor.

Beverle Rivera, former mayor of Lakeland, died Aug. 11, 2023, at the age of 95. Rivera served as the first mayor of



Beverle Rivera

Lakeland from its incorporation in 1977 until 1989. A native of Memphis, Rivera attended Memphis State University and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. She lived in Memphis; Boston; Closter, N.J.; and Puerto Rico before ultimately residing in Lakeland and was instrumental in the incorporation of the city. She also operated a day care in the area. Following her death, she left several items to the city including

the first flag flown over Lakeland City Hall.

Tom Solomon, longtime city recorder and city manager for the city of Dayton, retired on Sept. 1, 2023. Solomon began



Tom Solomon

his career with the city as a police officer before becoming the city recorder and then holding dual roles as city recorder and manager. David Shinn, former prosecutor for the state of Tennessee, will take over the role as city recorder and city manager for Dayton following Solomon's departure.

Blake Walley has been selected as the new city manager of Savannah. Walley has been serving as the city's assistant city



Blake Walley

manager since 2021. Prior to that, he served in several roles in planning in both the public and private sector including as a planning manager with Oxford, Miss.-based Slaughter & Associates PLLC; as director of planning and community development with Somerville; as project manager with Opelika, Ala., Economic Development; and as a planner and government operations consultant with the Florida Department of Children and Families. Walley holds a bachelor's degree in urban environmental studies from Birmingham-Southern College and a master's degree in city, urban, community, and regional planning from Auburn University.

Six fall elections held in municipalities

ELECTIONS, *from Page 1* District 5 seat with 1,287 votes.

Incumbent John Rosson defeated challengers Tyler Caviness, Mary Ward, and Andrew Beamer for the two open municipal judge seats in Knoxville. Rosson led the vote tally with 5,963 followed by Caviness with 5,735, Ward with 2,215, and Beamer with 1,924.

LEXINGTON

The city of Lexington held a municipal election on Sept. 16.

Challenger Roger Loftin defeated incumbent Jack Johnson for the Alderman Position 1 seat with Loftin earning 546 votes to Johnson's 280.

Incumbent Tim Rhodes defeated challenger Steve Hensley for the Alderman Position 2 seat with Rhodes earning 505 votes to Hensley's 305.

In the Alderman Position 7 race, incumbent Gabe Williams fended off challenger Blake Stanfill with Williams earning 439 votes to 369 votes.

Incumbent Sandra Wood ran unopposed and was re-elected with 653 complimentary votes.

19,895, Herenton with 18,990, Turner with 18,778, Gibson with 2,175, McKissack with 1,437, Brown with 1,028, Camper with 591, Harvey with 325, Price with 129, and Atwater with 122. Bernard, Calico, Hall, Ragland, Shaw, and Winn all received less than 100 votes.

Young is the president and CEO of the downtown Memphis Commission since 2021. Prior to that, he served as director of the city of Memphis' Division of Housing and Community Development from 2016 to 2021 and in various planning and legislative analysis roles with Shelby County, the city of Memphis, and private companies.

In the District 1 race, incumbent Rhonda Logan defeated challenger Kymberly Kelley with 6,222 votes to 1,961 votes. In District 4, incumbent Jana Swearengen-Washington defeated challenger Teri Dockery with 7,866 votes to 2,906. For District 5, Philip Spinosa defeated fellow challengers Meggan Kiel and Luke Hatler with Spinosa receiving 8.860 votes, Kiel 6,936, and Hatler 721. The seat was previously held by

ed challenger Benji Smith 29,091-13,155 for the Super 9, District 1 seat while incumbent J. Ford Canale defeated challenger Brandon Washington 26,719-16,127 for the Super 9, District 2 seat.

Two candidates also ran unopposed and were elected to their seats. Incumbent J.B. Smiley was re-elected to the Super District 8, Position 1 seat with 33,607 complimentary votes while fellow incumbent Jeff Warren was elected to the Super District 9, Position 3 seat with 36,538 complimentary votes.

Run-offs will be held on Nov. 16 in the District 2, District 3, District 7 and races where no candidate secured enough of the vote to be declared the winner.

Jerri Green and Scott McCormick will advance to the run-off in the District 2 race, defeating challengers Keith L. Burks, Will Frazier, Rodanial Ray Ransom, and Mark White for the seat previously held by Frank Colvett. In District 3, James E. Kirkwood and Pear Eva Walker fended off challengers from Ricky Dixon, Kawanias McNeary, and Towanna C. Murphy to advance. The seat was previously held by Patrice J. Robinson. In District 7, incumbent Michalyn Easter-Thomas will face off against Jimmy Hassan in November after fending off challenges from Edward Douglas, Jarrett Parks, Dee Reed, Austin Rowe, and Larry Springfield.

NASHVILLE

A historic election in Nashville saw the selection of a new mayor and the first majority-female city council in the city's history.

Former city councilman Freddie O'Connell defeated challenger Alice Rolli for the mayoral seat with O'Connell earning 61,840 votes to Rolli's 34,384.

For the at-large city council seats, incumbent Burkley Allen will be joined by former District 29 Councilmember Delishia Porterfield and newcomers Quin Evans-Segall and Olivia Hill on the council, defeating challengers Chris Cheng, Howard Jones, and Jeff Syracuse, and incumbent Russ Pulley. Porterfield led the vote count with 42,143 followed by Evans-Segall with 40,432, Allen with 38,601, Hill with 37,409, Cheng with 36,061, Jones with 33,841, Syracuse with 31,557, and Pulley with 30,833.

In the initial election, only Zulfat "Z" Suara garnered enough votes to gain a seat on the council.

Other run-offs were decided for district seats in Nashville. In District 4, newcomer Mike Cortese defeated fellow challenger Davette Blalock with 2,151 votes to 1,875. The seat had previously been held by Robert Swope.

In District 11, newcomer Jeff Eslick defeated challenger Eric Patton with 1,705 votes to 1,678. The seat was formerly held by Larry Hagar. For District 29, newcomer Tasha Ellis defeated John Reed with 1,322 votes to 780. The seat was previously held by Delisha Portfield.

Former UT System President Dr. Joe Johnson dies at 90



TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes, left, and former UT System President Dr. Joe Johnson.

JOHNSON, from Page 1 nesseans,"

TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes recalled working with Johnson at the university and the influence Johnson had on both him and UT.

"Dr. Johnson always made time for others, especially those seeking his counsel," Haynes said. "He was a man that mentored mentors. University students, staff, presidents and trustees all sought his advice. And if you were smart, you'd take it. Dr. Johnson was one of the early architects of what the University of Tennessee has been able to achieve today. He understood the critical role of a land grant university in serving its state and people. One expects a university president to be keenly focused on advancing academics and research. But few maintain the same focus and commitment, as did Dr. Johnson, to outreach areas of the university such as assisting state and local governments, and industries such as agriculture. For more than 50 years, he lived every day to advance that relationship and role. As a result, Tennessee is better for it."

UT System President Randy Boyd said Johnson was the embodiment of the University of Tennessee."

"UT would not be the great institution it is today without the leadership, vision and compassion for people that Dr. Johnson so eloquently had," Boyd said. "This is a tremendous loss for our university system, but an even greater loss to the state of Tennessee."

Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon said Johnson's death was a loss for all of Knoxville.

"Knoxville mourns the passing of Dr. Joe Johnson who gave so much to UT and the community. Condolences to all his friends and family," she said.

U.S. Congressman Tim Burchett said he and his wife would be praying for the Johnson family.

"I've known him my entire life, and I know he cared deeply about the students at UT and his community," Burchett said. "He'll be truly missed in East Tennessee."

Herb Byrd III, vice president of public service at the University of Tennessee, said Johnson helped make IPS possible. "I am saddened to hear of Dr. Johnson's passing," Byrd said. "He was a tremendous leader for the University of Tennessee, as well as a visionary for and supporter of IPS. We've lost a great man and advocate, and our thoughts are with his family."

A native of Alabama, Johnson attended Birmingham-Southern College where he earned a bachelor's degree in history in 1955. He earned a certificate in public administration, a master's degree in public administration, and an Ed.D. in higher education and industrial management.

Johnson came to UT in 1958 after serving as a sergeant in the U.S. Army, including two years spent stationed in Korea. He served as a research associate and lecturer in UT's politicial science department while earning his master's degree.

He then worked as an executive assistant to Gov. Buford Ellington in Nashville from 1960 to 1963 and then in the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration as a senior budget analyst, director of the budget division, and deputy commissioner.

He returned to UT in 1963 as an executive assistant for then-System President Andy Holt. Johnson was then named vice president for development and chancellor for the health sciences center in 1969, where he served until he became vice president for development and executive vice presidents in 1973. He served in both positions until ultimately becoming president of the university system I 1990.

During his tenure, UT saw several significant milestones, including the university's bicentennial in 1994, the Vols first national football championship since 1951, and the partnership between the university and ORNL.

Johnson is survived by Pat, his wife of 64 years, and daughter and son-in-law, Kelly and Bill Harlin, and two grandchildren, Luke Harlin and Tucker Harlin. He was preceded in death by his son, Kent Johnson, in 2020.

He was involved in many community organizations, including Imagination Library of Knox County, the Pat Summitt Foundation, McNabb Center and more.

Paul A. Young addresses supporters after winning the Memphis mayoral race.

MEMPHIS

The city of Memphis held a municipal election on Oct. 5 that included a crowded field of candidates for the mayoral seat previously held by term-limited Jim Strickland as well as races for 13 city council positions.

Paul A. Young has been selected mayor of Memphis after defeating 16 other candidates, including former gubernatorial candidate Carnita Atwater, Jennings Bernard, Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner, Judge Joe Brown, Kendra C. Calico, State Rep. and Democratic Leader Karen Camper, J.W. Gibson, Reggie Hall, former Shelby County Commissioner James Harvey, former Memphis Mayor W.W. Herenton, Memphis-Shelby County School Board Member Michelle McKissack, Brandon A. Price, Justina Ragland, Tekeva Shaw, Shelby County Commissioner Van Turner, and Derek

Young led the vote total with 24,408 followed by Bonner with

Worth Morgan.

Incumbent Edmund Ford Sr. held on to the District 6 seat, defeating challengers Keith D. Austin II and Larry Hunter. Ford led the vote count with 10,138 followed by Austin with 1,924 and Hunter with 1,183. I

Janika White secured the Super 8, District 2 seat previously held by Cheyenne Johnson. White defeated fellow challengers Davin Clemons and Marion Alexandria-Williams with White earning 26,234 votes to Clemons 5,624 and Alexandria-Williams 4,244.

In the Super 8, Position 3 seat previously held by Memphis City Council Chairman Martavius Jones, Yolanda Cooper-Sutton was victorious with 9,407 votes to the 7,601 votes of Brian Harris, 6,944 votes of Jerred Price, 5,848 votes of Berlin Boyd, 3,170 votes of Paul Randolph Jr., 2,470 votes of Lucille Catron, and 829 votes of Damon Curry Morris.

Incumbent Chase Carlile defeat-

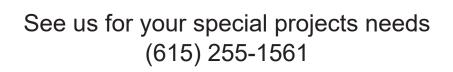
No loan is too large or too small



The City of Memphis recently closed its first loan with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund in the amount of \$6.8 million for the purpose of financing equipment for the city's solid waste department. The loan was funded through Commerce Bank in Nashville. Pictured are TMBF Marketing Representative Justin Hanson, Memphis Deputy Chief Financial Officer Andre Walker and TMBF President and CEO Wade Morrell.

The City of Portland has used the TMBF loan programs 16 times beginning in 1999 with the latest loan being a fixed rate public building authority draw loan in

The City of Portland has used the TMBF loan programs 16 times beginning in 1999 with the latest loan being a fixed rate public building authority draw loan in the amount of \$5 million to finance water and sewer system improvements. First Federal Bank in Dickson provided the financing. Pictured are Portland Finance Director Rachel Slusser, TMBF Marketing Representative Kevin Krushenski and Portland Mayor Mike Callis.





TML Policy Committee members meet to discuss legislative priorities for 2024 session

Members of TML Policy Committee met in Nashville last month to discuss proposals to be included in TML's legislative agenda for the upcoming 2024 session.

Considerable discussion also focused on issues over the horizon that may not be considered by the current General Assembly but will most likely be addressed in the next couple of years.

Committee members met again Oct. 5 to further vet their recommendations to be approved by the full TML Board at its Nov. 2 meeting.

At the top of the list is the continued push to return 100% of state shared sales tax revenues to cities. Other issues considered include an increase in annual business license fees, and state remimbursement for CMFO training for those who were certified prior to July 2022 and have remained for three or more years employed with a municipality.

Discussion also focussed on a potential property tax cap placed on local governments and a plan to increase the frequency of county property reappraisals backed by the TN Comptroller.



Chad Jenkins, (standing) TML deputy executive director and senior director of Government Relations, helped facilitate discussion on key issues city officials will need to address during the upcoming legislative session.



(L to R) Kingsport Alderman Darrell Duncan, Maryville Assistant City Manager Roger Campbell, and Knoxville Legislative Affairs Director Fiona McAnally

The TML Policy Committee is charged with the responsibility of exploring issues, addressing challenges and concerns, reviewing proposed legislation and executive actions, formulating positions, and developing and proposing initiatives for the TML Board's consideration.

Policy Committee Members Chair

- Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown, TML 1st Vice President
- Vice Chair
- Germantown Mayor Mike Palazzolo
- Representing District Directors
 Alderman Darrell Duncan,
- Kingsport, District 1 Director

 Mayor Blake Lay Lawrenceburg
- Mayor Blake Lay, Lawrenceburg, District 6 Director
- District 6 Director

 Alderman Bethany Huffman,
 Millington, District 8 Director
- Representing Municipal Advocacy Committee • Alderman Michael Baker, Erwin
- Roger Campbell, Assistant City
- Manager, Maryville
 Alderman Mary Anne Gibson,

Germantown East Tennessee (At-Large)

- Mayor Kevin Brooks, ClevelandMayor Trey Dykes, Newport
- Mayor Trey Dykes, Newport
 Mayor Cal Doty, Greeneville
- Daniel Estes, City Manager, Elizabethton
- Fiona McAnally, Legislative
 Affairs Director, Knoxville
- Affairs Director, Knoxville
- West Tennessee (At-Large)
 Mayor Ronnie Neill, Somerville
- Councilman Johnny Dodd, Jackson
 Kim Foster City Manager Paris
- Kim Foster, City Manager, ParisJim Garland, City Recorder,
- Henderson
 Molly Mehner, Town Administrator,
- Collierville
 Middle Tennessee (At-Large)
- Mayor Ray Knowis, TullahomaThad Jablonski, Assistant City
- Manager, ColumbiaMayor Mike Callis, Portland
- Jennifer Moody, City Manager, Belle Meade
- Brian Hercules, Town Manager, Smyrna



(L to R) Germantown Alderman Mary Anne Gibson, Erwin Alderman Michael Baker, and Henderson City Recorder Jim Garland



(L to R) Millington Alderman Bethany Huffman and Collierville Town Administrator Molly Mehner

Tourism generated nearly \$29 billion for Tennessee in 2022

Tennessee tourism generated \$29 billion in direct visitor spending and saw 141 million visitors to the state in 2022, according to newly released data from Tourism Economics. Tennessee

Gov. Bill Lee and Department of Tourist Development Commissioner Mark Ezell announced the news at Hospitality TN's Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism in Knoxville.

The final report is good news for the state, showcasing numbers even higher than the preliminary report revealed in May 2022, which already showed the state at historic highs. All 95 counties saw an increase in visitor spending in 2022, and 63 counties outpaced inflation.

"Tourism drives a strong economy, creates jobs and builds a better quality of life for all Tennesseans," said Gov. Lee. "We continue to welcome visitors to see all Tennessee has to offer, from the Mississippi River to the Great Smoky Mountains."

"Tennessee is thriving as tourism is soaring," said Mark Ezell, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development.



Tourism generated \$28.9 billion in Tennessee last year, showing the state's tourism industry is outpacing growth in the rest of the nation. International travel has nearly rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

"Our industry's hard work is paying off with record levels of visitor spending and significantly outpacing inflation."

Key Highlights from Economic Impact of Travel 2022 report

- Tennessee Tourism generated \$28.9 billion in direct visitor spending in 2022, up 19% from 2021.
- International visitation is
- quickly returning, as spending reached \$670 million, a 278% increase from 2021 and near pre-pandemic levels (72% recovered to 2019).
- Tennessee saw 141 million visitors in 2022, up 10.5% year-over-year. Travelers in Tennessee spend an estimated \$79 million per day.
- Visitor spending generated \$2.9 billion in state and local tax

- revenue. Without tourism, each Tennessee household would have to pay an additional \$1,100 in taxes each year.
- Tennessee ranks 11th in the nation for travel spending, the highest rank ever and the fastest-growing state in the top 40 since 2018.

County Success Stories

- Nashville visitor spending increased 35% year-over-year.
- Sevier Co. held on to pandemic gains in visitor spending with a 9.4% year-over-year increase.
- Davidson Co. and the six contiguous counties (Cheatham, Robertson, Sumner, Wilson, Rutherford, Williamson) saw a 19.5% year-over-year increase in visitor spending.
- Shelby, Tipton and Fayette counties combined for a 9.75% year-over-year visitor spending increase.
- Knox Co. and contiguous counties experienced an 11.9% year-over-year increase in visitor spending.
- Hamilton Co. and contiguous

- counties saw a 9.6% yearover-year increase in visitor spending.
- Tri-Cities (Kingsport, Johnson City and Bristol) saw an 11.4% year-over-year increase in visitor spending.
- Six counties met or exceeded the state average year-over-year increase in visitor spending:
- Davidson, Cheatham, Cannon, Van Buren, Sequatchie, Wilson
- Two counties that recently moved off the distressed county status (Grundy and Morgan) saw a 17% and 18.5% year-over-year increase respectively in direct visitor spending

Partners and media can utilize the <u>online interactive dashboard</u> for the latest state and county information of the

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development works with the Tennessee Tourism Committee, local convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, city and county leaders, tourism attractions and the hospitality industry in all 95 counties to inspire travel to the state.

State August revenues \$39.4M less than budgeted estimate

Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson reported that August revenues were less than the budgeted estimates for the first month of the state's fiscal year, as growth rates continue a return to normalcy.

August revenues were \$1.5 billion, which is \$39.4 million less than the budgeted estimate and \$1.7 million less than August 2022. All combined tax growth in August was flat at negative 0.11% with most of the decline driven by a drop in

volatile Franchise and Excise tax collections.

"As anticipated, August revenues were slightly lower than budgeted estimates but were generally level with receipts received in August 2022," Bryson said. "Sales and use tax revenues, reflecting consumer activity from the month of July, outperformed estimates and continue to reflect strong growth for the state. Corporate tax revenues for August, a small collection month, were lower than estimated due to a \$15 million one-time tax refund and lower quar-

terly estimated payments. Also, privilege tax collections continue to remain under pressure as high interest rates persist, subduing realty transfer and realty mortgage tax collections. While the start of this fiscal year is proving to be a challenge, we remain cautiously optimistic and will continue to monitor economic activity and revenue trends."

On an accrual basis, August is

On an accrual basis, August is the first month in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

General fund revenues were \$44 million less than the August estimate while the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$4.6 million more than the estimates.

Sales tax revenues were \$25.4 million more than the estimate for August. The August growth rate was 3.17%. Franchise and excise taxes combined were \$47.8 million less than the budgeted estimate of \$99.6 million and the growth rate was negative 43.30%.

Gasoline and motor fuel revenues increased by 0.69% from August 2022 and were \$2.6 million more than the budgeted estimate of

\$107.1 million. Motor vehicle registration revenues were \$3 million less than the August estimate of \$30.8 million.

Tobacco tax revenues for the month were less than budgeted estimates by \$2.4 million. Privilege tax revenues for August were \$13.3 million less than the month's estimate of \$48.7 million.

Business tax revenues were \$0.8 million less than the August estimate of \$11 million. All other tax revenues were less than estimates by a net of \$0.1 million.

STATE BRIEFS

A new national wildlife refuge will soon cover 87 acres of land in Franklin County. The Paint Rock River National Wildlife Refuge near the Tennessee-Alabama border will preserve the land along the Southern Cumberland Plateau donated by the Niedergeses family. The property adjoins the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's Bear Hollow Mountain Wildlife Management Agency and will help protect the ecological diversity of the Cumberland Plateau. The protection of the property will also protect the headwaters that make safe recreation downstream possible. Biodiversity in the area includes more than 100 species of fish, mussels, and plants, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. The property will be open to hunting, fishing, hiking, photography, and wildlife viewing.

A TVA grant will provide more access to Tennessee State Parks for visitors with disabilities. The \$136,000 grant will finance all-terrain wheelchairs for Radnor Lake and Tims Ford State parks, an accessible kayak launch at David Crockett State Park, and transportation costs to help Title 1 school students visit parks as part of the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy's Kids in Parks Program. The all-terrain wheelchairs at Radnor and Tims Ford will double the number of parks with all-terrain wheelchairs, which also includes Rocky Fork and Henry Horton State Park. The accessible launch at David Crockett will be the third in the system with others at Booker T. Washington and the Meeman-Shelby State Forest Park. For more info, click here.

More than \$31 million in federal dollars will be coming to Tennessee for two railroad improvement projects. The Biden administration announced that the state will share in \$1.4 billion of funding through the 2021 infrastructure law that will finance 70 rail improvement projects across 35 states. Of the funds, more than \$23 million will be provided for the Tennessee Short Line Bridge Bundle Project, which will upgrade or replace 42 bridges along 10 different short-line railroads. Another \$7.3 million will fund the Tennken Revitalization and Safety Improvement Project, which includes final design and construction for various track improvements on the TKEN Mail rail line in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Tennessee's statewide unemployment rate for August 2023 remained at the state's all-time low rate of 3.1%, according to new data released by the Department of

Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD). The state reached its lowest unemployment rate in July, besting the previous record of 3.2%. The new jobless number was 0.2% lower than the state's rate from August 2022. Unemployment numbers for the state have been at or below 3.5% since January 2022. Nationally, unemployment increased in August. The new seasonally adjusted rate is 3.8%, which is an increase of 0.3 of a percentage point from the July unemployment rate. An in-depth analysis of Tennessee's August 2023 unemployment data is available here.

Tennessee's poverty rates are on the decline, but stagnated compared to the national average, according to new data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Tennessee poverty rates typically follow a pattern where they drop below the U.S. national average for two years then stagnate for one. Overall, Tennessee has a 17.6% rate of children who live in poverty, above the national average of 12.4%. The national poverty rate is also at 12.4%, while Tennessee's rate is 13.3%. The U.S. Census Bureau found the national poverty rate increased to 12.4% in 2022 from an average of 7.8% in 2021 due to the expiration of government assistance programs. The U.S. Census Bureau classifies poverty as a family of four whose income is below \$29,678 per year or an individual earning below \$14,800 this year. Federal relief funds during the pandemic helped lower poverty rates for the past two years, but the expiration of these funds – combined with the cost of living increases - are expected to create an increase in poverty rates.

Tennessee has seen a 2.2% increase in college enrollment between the fall 2023 and fall 2022 semesters. the Tennessee Higher Education Commission announced 214,476 students have enrolled in community colleges and public universities across the state, an increase of 4,528 students over the previous year. The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) reported that 72,289 students enrolled in community colleges this fall, with the system experiencing 2.8% growth in headcount over last year. The University of Tennessee (UT) system experienced the largest gains in enrollment, increasing 4.8% over last fall. Among locally governed institutions (LGIs), headcount increased the most at Austin Peay State University and Tennessee Tech University. THEC's research, data, and statewide higher education reports, please visit www.tn.gov/ thec/research.

Comptroller's office makes key municipal data available

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has created new resources that make it easier than ever to quickly view key demographic information about all 95 Tennessee counties, 342 cities, and 132 state legislative districts.

The new <u>Community Demographic Profiles</u> can be viewed on the <u>Comptroller's Maps</u> webpage.

"These demographic profiles are an excellent resource for anyone looking to learn more about Tennessee and its communities," said Comptroller Jason Mumpower. "The profiles can also help state and local government leaders plan for the future by understanding trends, and they help them determine where to allocate resources based on population needs."

Each profile contains information regarding a specific community's population, housing data, types of jobs, business information, educational attainment, commute time, number of veterans, household income, and much more. The online demographic profiles are also fully interactive.

Nearly every category on the main dashboard can be clicked on to view even more data. The information contained on the profiles is provided by a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The demographic profiles will be updated at least once a year as new data becomes available.

SixTennesseeschoolsnamed 2023 Blue Ribbon winners

Six Tennessee schools have been named 2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.

Only 353 schools across the nation were recognized for this honor, which is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups on assessments.

Winners in Tennessee included Brentwood's Brentwood Middle School, Clarksville's Middle College at Austin Peay State University, Collierville's Crosswind Elementary School, Johnson City's Fairmont Elementary School, Oak Ridge's Linden Elementary School, and Signal Mountain's Nolan Elementary School.

With its 40th cohort, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,700 schools.

The National Blue Ribbon School award affirms and validates the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in striving for – and attaining – exemplary achievement.

National Blue Ribbon Schools represent the full diversity of American schools and serve students of

every background.

Learn more about the <u>2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools here.</u>

Gov. Bill Lee, Three Way officials tour new Middle Forks Bottom State Park



Officials with the town of Three Way, Gov. Bill Lee, and the new park ranger over the new Middle Fork Bottoms State Park toured the facility as part of the governor's statewide conservation tour. Middle Fork Bottoms opened as a recreation area in 2022 and was recently named one of four new state parks by the governor. Officials discussed the economic impact of the new park on the nearby community of Three Way, increasing accessibility at state parks, and future amenities planned for the 800-acre park with six lakes.

Five cities, development districts to share in \$1.1M in federal historic preservation funds

Five cities are among the 37 entities awarded a share in \$1.1 million in Federal Historic Preservation Fund grants from the Tennessee Historical Commission and State Historic Preservation Office.

The Federal Historic Preservation Fund provides funds for non-profits, municipalities, universities, and civic organizations across the state to support the preservation of historic and archaeological resources. The municipalities of Bell Buckle, Chattanooga, Franklin, Nashville, and Rutledge were among those who received grants.

"Our Federal Historic Preservation Fund grant program is one of the main ways that the Tennessee Historical Commission makes meaningful contributions to the protection and study of our state's treasured historic places," said Patrick McIntyre, State Historic Preservation Officer and Executive Director.

The town of Bell Buckle received a \$4,800 grant for the restoration of the exterior to the Bell Buckle Town Hall. Chattanooga received a \$70,000 grant to update local residential historic district guidelines and create local landmark guidelines.

Franklin received a \$24,000 grant for the development of a preservation assessment and maintenance plan for the city's historic Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery while the Nashville Metropolitan Historical Commission received \$400,000 to fund the third phase of its countywide cemetery survey and preservation plant and a \$15,069 grant



Rutledge's historic Nance House was constructed in 1840, and is one of few remaining pre-Civil War buildings in Grainger County. Throughout its history, the building as served as a residence, tavern, general store, restaurant, and historical and cultural museum.

to fund a neighborhood survey and preparation of a National Historic Register nomination.

The town of Rutledge received \$29,000 to fund the restoration of the exterior of the Nance House.

Other grants will assist in funding preservation planners in seven of the state's development districts, in facilitating archaeological surveys, and helping obtain design guidelines for historic districts. Several other grants are for the rehabilitation of historic buildings, for posters highlighting the state's archaeology, and training for historic zoning staff or commissioners.

These grants include \$54,000 for the Southeast Tennessee Development District; \$50,000

for the South Central Tennessee Development District; \$44,000 for the Southwest Tennessee Development District; \$40,000 for both the East Tennessee and Upper Cumberland Development Districts; \$38,000 for the Northwest Tennessee Development District; and \$35,000 for the First Tennessee Development District.

The Federal Historic Preservation Fund reimburses 60% of the project costs with a 40% match of project funds from the grantee. Properties that use the grant funds for restoration projects must be listed in the National Register. A complete list of grant winners can be found here.

Applications for the next round of grants will open in December 2023. Learn more here.

State accepting water quality grant proposals

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) is accepting grant proposals for projects that will help improve water quality by reducing nonpoint source (NPS) pollution in the state.

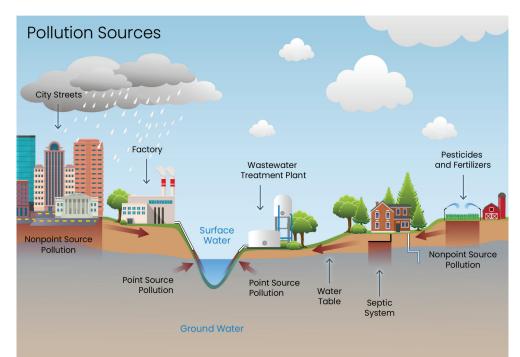
"This conservation funding will directly benefit water quality," Commissioner Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M. said. "Initiatives that reduce pollutants in Tennessee's natural water resources help the environment and sustain human and wildlife health. The cost share focuses on watershed restoration and projects that educate people

about nonpoint source issues."

NPS pollution can be sediment, urban runoff, excess fertil-

ment, urban runoff, excess fertilizers or insecticides, chemicals or other contaminants that contaminate surface and ground water.

Local governments, regional agencies, soil and water conservation districts, state universities, and private nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. The deadline for submissions is Dec. 15, 2023.



The Tennessee Department of Agriculture is accepting grant proposals to reduce pollution and improve water quality.

This federal grant funds installation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to stop NPS pollution, training and education, and monitoring water quality. This year's grant offers five additional BMPs for incentives.

Grant program priorities, incentives and evaluation criteria are provided in the Request for Proposals packet which can be found at www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/agriculture/documents/

landwaterstewardship/rfp/2023/ FY2024%20319%20RFP.pdf. Contact Dr. Sam Marshall at

Contact Dr. Sam Marshall at 615-837-5306 or sam.marshall@tn.gov with questions.

The Nonpoint Source Program was created in 1987 as part of the Clean Water Act. TDA's Land and Water Stewardship Section manages the Tennessee NPS Program on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Adaptability, unique experiences, and technology can help downtown business

DOWNTOWN, from Page 1

downtown business. You have to find ways to make sure people go into the businesses instead of just parking out front and staying in the festival area."

Morgan said some of the events they have offered include scavenger hunts in local businesses, a Small Business Saturday event where residents give out "Main Street Bucks," and a "Shark Tank" competition where local high school students pitch business ideas to downtown business owners. She said the Shark Tank competition has even inspired some new businesses downtown.

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Another way Sweetwater had worked prior to the pandemic to educate residents and send positive messaging to entrepreneurs as part of an effort to make sales tax revenue their primary revenue stream rather than property tax. Since the pandemic, Morgan said the unique experience these retailers provided has kept businesses afloat.

"The number one word that gets used about Sweetwater is 'charming," Morgan said. "Our business owners are excited you're in their store. They're going to give you an experience not just a place to spend your money. I think that will be one of the keys moving forward is to make retail an experience. Why else are they going to come if not for the experience?"

Smith said he has also seen a trend of visitors and locals both wanting to go and have unique experiences.

"In a small town like Greeneville, we don't have a major sports team, a large museum, or a big natural attraction," Smith said. "We made a decision about 10 years ago that our experience needs to be aligned with our public infrastructure and the look of our downtown. We replaced all of our utilities underground, developed streetscapes and landscapes, created a decorative street top, and added some bollards we can move in and out for festivals."

Smith said the decorative street top they incorporated into the Depot Street Revitalization both creates a "wow" factor and allows the city to block off the street to traffic easily when there is an event then reopen it afterwards. Smith said "below ground" or utility investments may not be as visible as beautification on the street level, but without those investments there is no business or residential downtown at all

Early in the design process, Smith said a lot of the "blue sky" dreaming came from around 10 public feedback sessions inviting members of the community, Main Street business owners, and the local chamber of commerce. The result of the city's investment in downtown has encouraged a major downtown property owner to open up more residential spaces in downtown, which can also further increase opportunities for downtown business.

"At the end of the day, we can go back to the community and say this is your design," Smith said. "The one key factor we learned is that we shouldn't inspect the private sector to make an investment in our town unless we are ready to make an investment in our town. We want to be the first out there to make an investment."

Beautification can also be a low-hanging fruit project to help create a one-of-a-kind downtown



Visitors on Depot Street in Greeneville. By supporting technology needs as well as using technology themselves, cities can gather important demographic data and provide necessary infrastructure and support for downtown.



Being flexible and removing old rules that may be harming the way downtown's do business today are some ways cities can make their downtown a more business and visitor-friendly place.

space. Morgan said Sweetwater has employed a full-time landscaper focused on the downtown for years, and the city often gets asked where they get their flowers and plants.

"Landscaping by itself is a huge component," she said. "It can make your town more welcoming and inviting, and people want to stay there longer. Even if you don't really have a green space downtown, build some planters. Put some planters downtown and some string lights. Make it feel like it's a green space."

Cleaning up less than attractive areas of downtown call also be a boost.

"Before we created our openair market, it was an abandoned used car lot that was leased from the railroad," she said. "Before we turned it over, there was an RV that had been sitting there for about six months that someone had spray painted 'F--- the police on.' Quite frankly, I will take that \$9,000 lease from the railroad to keep it from being that parking lot again. That was the entrance to our downtown. That was what people saw first when they came in. That was the messaging they were getting. Whatever investment we made in that was worth it."

Carrier said one struggle for many communities is that they don't have a specific "downtown" area or their downtown area is not convenient to access. Many of these communities are seeking to recreate the downtown experience.

"A downtown is more the heart of the community," she said. "You always have your big box retailers on the outskirts of the community, but you need to have that heart. You need that center where you can have special events, where people can walk around and see each other, and have your food trucks show up. If you don't have a downtown, you can create a town center type environment; you just have to plan for it. A lot of communities are putting masterplans together to see how they want it to look like aesthetically. It can be done, and the city itself can do that with hotel/motel dollars. You need to think outside the box."

CHANGING WITH THE

Adaption has been key for successful businesses and communities post-pandemic. With more people wanting to work and shop closer to where they live, municipalities may benefit from looking at ordinances and rules on the books that may actually be harmful to allowing people to live downtown or that are no longer in sync with the way business is done in the Digital Age.

Parking has been a concern in Greeneville, Smith said

"People want to park down-town right in front of the front door of the business they want to visit, but they'll park at Walmart all the way in the back and walk," he said. "One of our solutions was to create a Parking Authority that patrols our lots and enforces limits. We had a two-hour parking limit downtown, which becomes a source for a lot of complaints. We have a lot of small businesses that offer quick in-and-out services. We created 15-minute

spaces in front of those businesses where someone may just want to go in, pick up a coffee, and go."

Smith said they have also found it valuable to work with developers from the start, bringing in together local utility, telecommunications, city codes and permitting officials, and others to both help anticipate roadblocks and provide advice.

Morgan said when Sweetwater's Main Street Program got started, they found a local ordinance was keeping many people who wanted to live downtown from doing so.

"We had a law on the books that said you had to own a parking spot to be able to live downtown," she said. "Obviously, having residents is a key to downtown nightlife, to having people on the sidewalks after five o'clock. We repealed that. We also created an open-air market space, which did create some pushback from our brick-and-mortar stores. They said food trucks don't have to pay as much in taxes as they do, so we suggested they started a food truck too. We found it is important to give more flexible opportunities where small businesses, especially since the pandemic, can find secondary revenue streams."

An example of this flexibility is how Sweetwater worked with a local coffeeshop to prevent them from leaving downtown.

"She wanted to move out on the highway because there was a building out there that had a drive-thru," she said. "It wasn't that zoning didn't allow that downtown; there just wasn't space for it. We joined with our local business owners, closed down a local alley, and took a \$1,000 grant from the state to cover her app costs. We cleaned up the alley, repainted it, and opened it up as a drive-thru for all those businesses. The approach shouldn't be 'oh, we don't allow that;' It should be O.K., there's a problem so how do we fix it?"

USING TECHNOLOGY

The app being used by the coffeeshop for its local drive-thru also provided valuable data for all of downtown Sweetwater. Morgan said the app showed there were 400 users the first time it was opened. As a result, Sweetwater began using Placer AI data to see how many people were downtown on any giv-

en day and if they were local or not.

Carrier said the Placer AI data and similar tools can help smaller communities gather demographic information about their downtowns while still protecting the privacy of those who work and shop there.

"The Tennessee Retail Alliance did a few demos and decided to go with the same Placer AI Sweetwater has," she said. "They have tools where you can pull dates, and see where people came from into your community. I'm really excited about it, because it is something you can look at to get demographics and find specific areas you want to look at. It's really important to have accurate data and for communities to be informed about their specific properties, who is there, and where their citizens are going to get what they need."

Being able to come to retailers with specific details about demographics can help with recruitment.

"You need that data as a community to actually properly recruit businesses that are a good fit for you," Carrier said. "If you don't meet certain demographics for a company, there is no point in even going after them. They actually get annoyed by that, and you've hurt that relationship in the future. It does matter that you get in touch with them and show that your community wants them. Retail is not like it used to be. Walmart used to come in and other businesses followed. Now, that is not the case. Everyone does their own work, but they may miss something. If you can prove that you're a good fit, they will come to you."

Another thing Carrier said she has noticed is those businesses that have a savvy online presence are better positioned for the way people want to shop post-pandemic.

"Those retailers had an online presence prior to COVID were the ones that really succeeded," she said. "Now, people have gotten used to ordering their groceries online and getting them delivered to their houses because it saves them time. People's buying power and what they want have changed as well. Those companies that can adapt and do that thrive. Your Mom-and-Pop stores that started putting their merchandise on Instagram so people would order them online and get them shipped."

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Taking the lead: How city officials can stand strong against incivility

BY MATT LEHRMAN

The American ideal of government is rooted in the belief that reasonable people can work together to find solutions to shared problems. Compromise is not a weakness, and there is ample time to make community-informed decisions. While not everyone will always agree on the outcome, the process must be fair and thorough. Evervone should feel heard.

This ideal is being threatened by the prevalence of anger and outrage in American media, where clicks, shares, and engagement translate into profit. This business model has created a market for incivility and negativity that pervades our society, leading to polarization and divisiveness. It's a conundrum.

To counteract this, local leaders must actively promote collaboration, compromise, and constructive dialogue. Incivility demonstrates a lack of respect and consideration for others. It also creates a self-centered attitude that can leave others feeling hurt, disrespected, and excluded, with impacts that can extend beyond individual interactions. It's essential to strive for an environment that encourages civility and respectful engagement and helps restore the American ideal of government.

If you want to stand against incivility, you need to recognize and call it out when you see it, in particular:

Obstinance. Stubborn adherence to one's own opinion despite reason or persuasion.

• Demagoguery. Emotional and prejudicial appeals to sway public opinion, rather than engaging in rational argument.

Dogmatism. The inflexible adherence to a particular set of principles, beliefs, or ideology, without considering alternative viewpoints or evidence.

If you're looking for a quick fix, I'm sorry to disappoint, but there is no magic phrase or verbal jiu-jitsu that can instantly reverse an instance of incivility

A new study has linked edu-

cation rates to lifespan length

with Americans who have

college degrees outliving those

who don't. The new study from

Princeton found that the lifespan

gap between those with at least

a bachelor's degree and those

without is also widening. Ac-

cording to the study, the average

college-educated individual can

expect to live to 83 those with-

out college degrees can expect

to live to 75 years old. Those

without college degrees also saw

their average life expectancy

decline by 3.5 years during the

pandemic while those with col-

lege degrees only saw a decline

of one year. Between 1992 and

2021, the difference in lifespan

expectations for those with and

without college education more

than tripled. Researchers said

several factors probably help

NATIONAL BRIEFS



Matt Lehrman presented two workshops at the TML Annual Conference recently held in Nashville.

during a council meeting. The following is the civility that all local leaders need to get good at:

Energize obstinance. Find shared goals and values that underlie the debate. By identifying common ground, you can frame the conversation in a way that encourages compromise and collaboration. Bring in outside experts, facilitators, or neutral third parties to provide fresh perspectives and objective feedback.

 Counter demagoguery. Focus on presenting the facts and evidence that support the proposed course of action. By presenting data in a clear and compelling way, you can help to move the conversation toward rational, fact-based decision-making. Engaging in active listening and making space for the consideration of alternative solutions is vital.

Overcomedogmatism. Frame the debate in terms of outcomes rather than ideology. By focusing on the practical implications of different policy choices, you shift the conversation away from entrenched beliefs and toward pragmatic solutions. Building alliances and coalitions across ideological lines can also be an effective way to seek out common ground and work together toward shared goals.

You have a crucial responsibility to govern your community in a fair, equitable, and just manner. This requires standing strong against incivility and disrespect, even when it's being thrown at you. By modeling respectful behavior and promoting

account for the gap, but major fac-

tors include how college education

creates more access to healthcare,

safer living environments, and

The U.S. labor market remained

strong in September, adding

336,000 jobs. The U.S. Labor

Department said the increase was

almost double economists' ex-

pectations and is a confirmation

of the market's vitality. The un-

employment rate was unchanged

from the August rate of 3.8%,

near record-low levels. September

marked the 33rd month of consecu-

tive job growth though wages gains

were less than expected. Average

hourly earnings rose 0.2% from

the previous month and 4.2% from

September 2022. Unemployment

has remained at below 4% since

December 2021, a stretch not re-

peated since the 1960s.

better economic outcomes.

constructive dialogue, you set the standard for your community.

Remember that your mission toward constructive solutions.

Local leaders hold the power to shape decisions that impact people's daily lives. Making those decisions with integrity, fairness, and a commitment to the greater good is crucial. By bringing people together, bridging divides, and creating a better future for your community, you have a responsibility worth fighting for.

Matt Lehrman is the managing director of Social Prosperity Partners. He presented two workshops at the TML Annual Conference in Nashville.

Connecting, respecting, and listening

As a civic leader, you are the guardian of a thriving community, responsible for making decisions that impact the lives of your residents. Facing incivility and negativity during council meetings and community events can be disheartening, but giving up is not an option when it comes to civic leadership.

is to create a positive and inclusive environment for all. By prioritizing respect and collaboration, you set an example for others to follow and create a ripple effect that can spread throughout the community. Keep your focus on how people in your community deserve to feel about civic engagement - connected, respected, and heard. Find the motivation to push through challenging situations and work

The end of pandemic aid and

rising prices contributed to an

increase in the U.S. poverty

rate after two years of historic

decline, according to the U.S.

Census Bureau. The poverty rate

rose 12.4% in 2022 from 7.8% in

201. The poverty rate for children

more than doubled to 12.4% from

a record low of 5.2% the year be-

fore. Median income, adjusted for

inflation, fell 2.3% to \$74,580. The

expiration of programs like direct

payments to households from the

federal government, increased

rental assistance, and expanded

child tax credits may have contrib-

uted to financial hardships for a lot

of American families with poverty

rates returning to pre-pandemic

levels. Increasing prices of food

and rent despite average income

not keeping pace also created

Brownsville's historic Court Square. Oct. 21: Bean Station

Bean Station Harvest Festival The Town of Bean Station sponsors the festival to promote the town, bringing in local artisans, food vendors and the community.

FESTIVALS

Come enjoy a collection of artisans

and local vendors, a petting zoo,

The Knights of Columbus host this

event featuring traditional food,

Family-friendly event featuring live

music, arts and crafts, children's

activities, games and contests all on

great food, and family activities.

Oct. 20-21: Crossville

Crossville Oktoberfest

Oct. 21: Brownsville

Hatchie Fall Fest

music, and fun.

Casey Jones Village Festival

Oct. 14: Jackson

Oct. 21: Cleveland

Cleveland Apple Festival

This family friendly event includes a craft show live music, food booths, petting zoo, and more.

Oct. 21: Lexington Fall Festival on the Square

Come out for a kids' costume con-

test, pet parade, pumpkin painting, trunk or treat, dance performances, food trucks, vendors, and more.

Celebrate the legacy of the film "Oc-

Oct. 21: Oliver Springs <u>October Sky Festival</u>

tober Sky" with food, kids' events, music, crafts, and more.

Oct. 21: Portland <u>Portland Fall Festival</u> Downtown Portland hosts this free event with food and craft vendors, live music, pumpkin patch, games,

Oct. 28: Goodlettsville

GOODFest and Fall Market

activities, hayrides, and more.

The event is a free outdoor event held at Moss-Wright Par and is fun for all ages. The event joins several of the Goodlettsville Farmer's Market vendors with additional local artisans and sponsor vendors.

Oct. 28: Tellico Plains

Cherohala Skyway Festival The Charles Hall Museum and Her-

food, shopping, artisans, crafters, fund, music, and more.

itage Center hosts this festival with

Oct. 29: Morristown

Mountain Makins Festival An Appalachian Folk Life Festival

celebrating the unique culture of the Southern Appalachian Mountains Oct. 29: Huntsville

Fall on the Mall The seventh annual Fall on the Mall at the historic courthouse mall in

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downtown Huntsville brings music. games, and vendors. Nov. 4: Townsend

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

Former mayor's display brings Mt. Juliet history to life

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

As the WeGo Star pulls out of the Mt. Juliet station, bringing commuters into Nashville, another, smaller train is making its way around the bend nearby in the Mt. Juliet Community Center in the city's beloved Charlie Daniels' Park.

In the just over 50 years since it incorporated, the city of Mt. Juliet has seen its population grow from a little under 3,000 to nearly 40,000 with the city being labeled the "fastest-growing" in Tennessee from 2000 to 2015. While it may be hard to find traces of the sleepy, rural community Mt. Juliet was a century ago, this train display gives a younger generation of Mt. Juliet residents insight into the city's history.

The model train display depicts the city as it was before it was a city, when the unincorporated community of Mt. Juliet's economy was centered around the railroad tracks and most local residents knew each other by name.

Rocky Lee, director of Parks and Recreation for the city of Mt. Juliet, said the display is approximately 25 feet long and 12 feet wide with dual tracks.

"It's really cool; It's a running, functioning train track," Lee said. "It's been up and running, and we're glad to have the public come see it. We're going to try to keep it on public display. People have gone in there and spent hours. I love what we've got here."

How the display came to be is a part of Mt. Juliet history itself.

MAKING HISTORY

Neland Carver "N.C." Hibbett was the first person ever elected mayor of Mt. Juliet following the incorporation of the city in 1973. He would go on to serve on the Mt. Juliet City Council from 1975 until 1977 and then as the city's historian. His wife, Jenny Bess Hibbett, would also later serve as the first female mayor of Mt. Juliet and was a fixture at the public library.

Long before his mayoral term, Hibbett had a long record of service to Mt. Juliet. A graduate of Mt. Juliet High School, he served in the U.S. Army before getting a degree in education and taught history, science and health and served as head coach for football, boys' basketball, and boys track at Mt. Juliet High School. He was also instrumental in the Tennessee Special Olympics.

Another of his passions was railroad history. Hibbett served as a member of the Nashville Eastern Railroad Board of Authority and with the Tennessee Central Railroad Museum. Down in his basement, Hibbett combined his love of railroad history and Mt. Juliet into a model train display depicting the community. It was a lifelong hobby for Hibbett, who painstakingly created buildings from the city's past, often based on surviving photographs and memory.

"He was a big train enthusiast," Lee said. "Down in his basement for 20 or 30 years he was replicating the city of Mt. Juliet. Everybody had heard about this for years. He added to it over the years. It's his last gift to the city. The Hibbett family has a lot of roots here in Mt. Juliet, and they are well loved. What N.C. did with this train is amazing."

In total, Hibbett created 75 individual buildings along two



A train display created by late Mt. Juliet Mayor N.C. Hibbett is now on display at the Mt. Juliet Community Center. The display depicts the community in the 1920s and 1930s based around the city's two raillines that are still centered near the intersection of North Mt. Juliet Road and Division Street that is the historic heart of the city.



N.C. Hibbett, late Mt. Juliet mayor

main train lines representing Mt. Juliet and West Wilson County as it appeared from the 1920s to 1930s. In addition to the old Mt. Juliet High School, stores, churches, and the city's historic bank building, homes of several well-known Mt. Juliet residents from the period are also included in the display.

After his passing, the Hibbett family decided to bring the display out of the basement and into the light where it could be enjoyed by the city as a whole.

"The family was looking for a place to put it on display," Lee said. "It so happened that we had a meeting room, and we told them we would put it there. We call it Hibbett Hall, and it's become a little museum because of this train. This display didn't need to stay in the basement."

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE

Robert Ealy, Geographic Information System (GIS) Department administrator for the city of Mt. Juliet, took particular interest in the display and helped with its transition to the community center. Ealy said it took several days to completely transfer the display from the Hibbett's home to the community center as well as set it up properly.

Ealy helps oversee the train and one of his duties has been connecting Hibbett's hand-drawn map of the display with the real buildings and sites they represent in the city. It hasn't been an easy task.

"We went through the buildings and less than 10% of them are still there," Ealy said.

Some of the few buildings still remaining is still on North Mt. Juliet Road - which is also Main Street. The former John Carver store and Mt. Juliet Bank Building are among the oldest existing commercial structures in the city and are now part of a business area known as Charlie's Place for the mural depicting longtime resident Charlie Daniels. They are still seen by train travelers heading to and from Nashville.

Information is also included about former buildings and sites in the display and where they are found today. This allows residents to orient the display with their knowledge of Mt. Juliet's historic city center where North Mt. Juliet Road bisects Division Street, the same road that still runs along the railroad tracks today.

To add to the history, Ealy has placed other items like newspaper clippings, local history books, and reference information to what is on the display in the room for visitors to enjoy.

"We also have a local resident here in Mt. Juliet who has been restoring some of the train cars and train tracks named Keith Wamsley, who has been instrumental in this," Ealy said. "We had a local artist, Kim Gregg, come in and paint a mural around the train that looks like what you would have seen out the windows if you had been riding on the train then."

Lee said the display is also bringing back memories for some of the older residents, which in turn is educating newer citizens.

"What we've found out when we brought out this display is that we've got 30-year-old men to 60-year-old men turning into 10-year-old boys," Lee said. "It's magnetic to them, this train. It's great to watch people come in, look through the books, and say that's

where my grandma lived. They will come in telling you about this house or that house. Or they will tell you old stories. This is a living, interactive piece of history. When you go in this room, you transition back to that time..."

Ealy said the display gives newer transplants a glimpse into the city's roots.

"Probably 80% of the city of Mt. Juliet didn't grow up here," Ealy said. "The display is important because people don't know where the old railroad tracks were located or what the city looked like in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s or even the

1970s because they weren't here. Kids today know Mt. Juliet as being a city of 40,000 people; they don't know that it was a community of 500 in 1940."

Now, a new generation is getting interested in city history thanks to the display.

"We want to share this with the citizens," he said. "The young people are the ones I brought it here for. Our history is being lost, and we need to preserve it so these kids can learn it. Every time you turn around, it seems something has been torn down and a new building is going up."



A close-up of the John Carver store and Bank of Mt. Juliet building Hibbett recreated. The structure is the oldest existing commercial struture in the city.



The store and bank building circa 1908, at what was then the commercial center of the community.



The historic John Carver store is still along the railroad tracks and is part of a complex known as Charlie's Place, featuring a mural of longtime local resident Charlie Daniels.