

Open Meetings Subcommittee approves recommendations

Last week, the Open Meetings Subcommittee approved its' final recommendations to submit to the full Joint Study Committee on Open Government for consideration.

Summary the Open Meetings Subcommittee recommendations:

1. "Two or more" standard replaced with "more than four members of a governing body or a quorum, whichever is less"
2. Authorizes the imposition of a civil penalty for each violation, capped at \$1,000 or one-half the defendant's monthly salary for service on the governmental body, whichever is less.
3. Codifies current attorney-client privilege provided for in case law
4. Governing bodies authorized to meet in "executive sessions" provided:
 - A) The body reveals the general purpose of the executive session
 - B) A majority of the body approves meeting in executive session,
 - C) The issues to be discussed are among the authorized uses of executive sessions; including:
 - 1) To discuss general reputation and character, physical condition, professional competence, or mental health of individuals, or the job performance of public employees. However, the salary, compensation, benefits and job performance of elected and appointed public officials may

not be discussed in executive session;

- 2) To consider the discipline or dismissal of, or to hear formal written complaints or charges brought against a public employee;
- 3) To discuss the consideration the governmental body is willing to offer or accept when considering the purchase, sale, exchange, lease, or market value of real property. Provided, however, the material terms of any contract to purchase, exchange, or lease real property shall be disclosed in the public portion of a meeting prior to the execution of the contract. May not meet in executive session if any member of the body involved in the transaction has a personal interest in the transaction and attends or participates in the executive session, or a condemnation action has been filed to acquire the property; and,
- 4) To discuss strategy in preparation for negotiations between the governmental body and a group of public employees.

The full committee will meet Nov. 28-29 to consider recommendations from both subcommittees before presenting their final recommendations to the General Assembly when it convenes in January. All recommendations must be adopted by the Legislature before becoming law.

Committee makes BEP 2.0 phase-in top priority

BY DENISE PAIGE
TML Government Relations

In accordance with state law, the Basic Education Program (BEP) Review Committee has submitted its annual report to Gov. Bredesen, the Select Oversight Committee on Education, and the State Board of Education. The report, which recommends changes within the state's school funding formula and sets forth immediate and extended priorities, makes the phase-in of BEP 2.0 this year's top priority.

BEP 2.0 is designed to correct the inequities in state and local government funding obligations. Coupled with an increase in the state's cigarette tax (40 cents of the 42-cent increase), the plan is estimated to generate more than \$500 million for education once fully implemented.

Other immediate priorities identified by the committee include reducing the class size ratios used to generate instructional positions by at least 2-3 students in grades 7-12; establishing new BEP components for professional development and mentoring; and increasing funding

for teacher materials and supplies from \$200 to \$300.

Extended priorities include reducing instructional positions generated outside the BEP in grades K-6; increasing pay for teachers, principals, and assistant principals to a level that is reasonably comparable to the Southeastern average for each respective position type; and convening a committee to examine general and instructional technology support for the classroom.

The committee also analyzed total teacher salary disparity, examined maintenance of effort issues, and reviewed the accountability provisions relating to BEP 2.0.

The committee, established by statute in 2004, is required to meet at least four times a year to regularly review the BEP components and prepare and submit an annual report on or before Nov. 1 annually. The makeup of the committee includes legislators, representatives of state government, city and county school systems, TACIR, and local governments.

The entire 2007 annual report can be viewed at http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/BEP/2007_BEP_RevComm_Report.pdf

Workshops scheduled on senior property tax freeze

TML will conduct four meetings across the state in November and December on the new seniors' property tax freeze program. Each meeting will be conducted primarily by Tom Fleming, assistant to the State Comptroller for Property Assessments and will last approximately 90 minutes.

In November 2006, Tennessee voters approved a constitutional amendment providing for local property tax relief for homeowners 65 years of age and older. Last session, legislation was formulated authorizing the seniors' property tax relief program. TML and the Tennessee County Service Association were consulted throughout the process and, collectively, the two organizations shared concerns regarding the administration and implementation of the tax freeze program.

Ultimately, the General Assembly adopted Public Chapter 581 that enacted the "Property Tax Freeze Act." On Sept. 26, the State Board of Equalization adopted the final regulations that will govern the administration and implementation of the tax freeze program.

With more than 80 percent ap-

proval rating, there is an expectation among the senior population that they will realize the benefits of this relief beginning this tax year. Elected officials will likely be contacted around tax time by folks inquiring about the freeze, particularly as the press begins reporting on seniors' tax relief efforts in those counties that have already passed resolutions opting into the program.

Considering the complexity of the regulations, the administrative requirements, the potential for large shifts in the tax burden, and the long-term fiscal impact on communities that elect to participate in the seniors' property tax freeze; the workshops are designed to provide city officials with a better understanding of the program's requirements and the impact these requirements will have on each municipality and its citizenry.

In addition, Fleming will discuss some of the other less costly and less burdensome options that are available to those municipalities seeking to provide tax relief to seniors.

If you have any questions con-

See **FREEZE** on Page 4

Traffic cameras reduce fatal crashes

BY CAROLE GRAVES
TML Communications Director

Automated traffic light cameras have proven to be an effective tool in reducing fatal intersection accidents, according to testimony provided earlier this month to members of a Joint Transportation Study Committee.

Municipalities currently utilizing traffic light cameras as well as any city considering deploying such cameras were invited to testify before the eight-member committee that includes Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Jim Tracy, and Sens. Tommy Kilby, Jack Johnson and Jerry Cooper; and House Transportation Committee Chairman Phil Pinion, and Reps. Vince Dean, George Fraley, and Bill Harmon.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Germantown, Murfreesboro, Mount Carmel, and American Traffic Solutions all provided testimony on how the automated technology has played a significant role in public safety by providing more effective and efficient means for enforcing the law.

"Automated enforcement, whether red light enforcement or speed enforcement is just one of the many tools local governments and state agencies utilize to reduce

the number of severe injury and fatal crashes," said Paul Diggs, TDOT engineer. He reported that in Tennessee, 16 percent of all fatal crashes are intersection related.

Research conducted by the National Highway Safety Institute shows that automotive enforcement is a good method for reducing fatalities. According to the study, when drivers perceive that there is a risk of getting a ticket, it strongly influences motorists' choices.

"Citizens have said that they don't know which traffic

lights have cameras and which ones don't. So now they stop at all yellow lights," said Sterling Owen, Knoxville police chief.

Knoxville has had traffic light cameras in operation for two years at 15 of the city's busiest intersections. During that time accidents have continued to decline. From January to September 2007, there has been a 39 percent reduction in "T-bone acci-



Chattanooga uses camera enforcement on a dangerous one-mile stretch, where four fatalities occurred in 2002.

dents" - where one car crashes into the side of another - and a 14 percent reduction in rear-end accidents. In 2006, there was a 17 percent reduction in total accidents at intersections where surveillance cameras are located.

Chattanooga is the first city to use cameras for speed enforcement on a dangerous one-mile stretch. See **CAMERA** on Page 6

Jail decertifications a precursor to liability

BY VICTORIA SOUTH
TML Communications Coordinator

Placing prisoners under lock and key can be as costly as the failure of state jails to meet minimum certification standards determined by the Tennessee Correction Institute Board of Control (TCI).

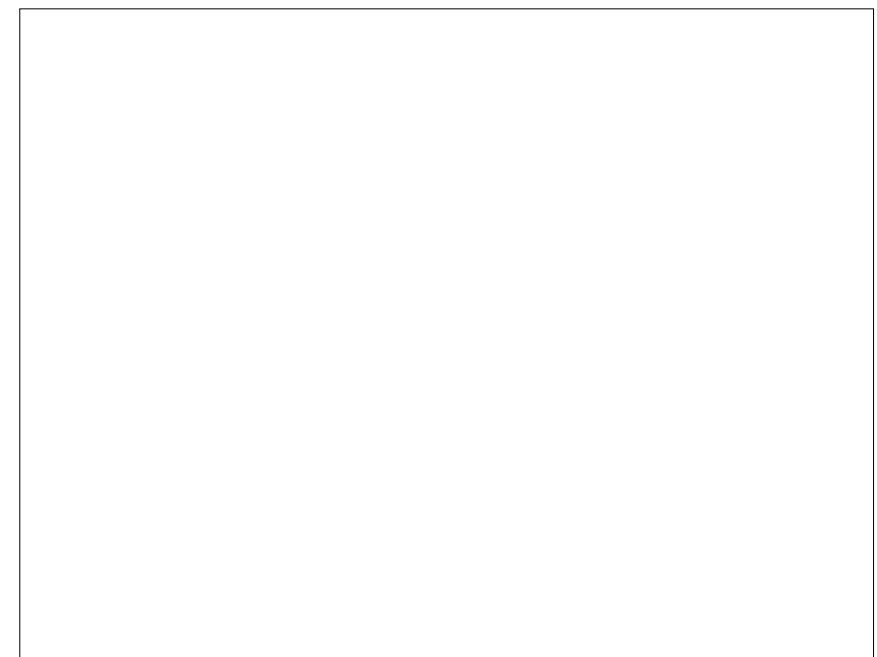
In 1980, when the state legislature gave TCI the responsibility to inspect every aspect of the workings of Tennessee's jails, lock-ups, workhouses, and detention facilities, at least 30 pages of standards were developed by TCI and are checked for compliance during annual unannounced inspections. The standards cover a variety of jail conditions from physical plant operations to the supervision of inmates.

"When you're taking away someone's liberty it's like taking care of a newborn," said Collierville police Chief L.E. Goodwin. "Everything must be done to insure that person's safety from feeding to administering medicine, just like a child."

The Collierville jail, a 72-hour holding facility, was recommended for certification as well as the Gatlinburg jail, a 12-hour holding facility, during TCI's recent inspections.

As of September 2007, at least 23 of the state's jails did not meet certification standards, according to a report by the Jail Cost Study Committee.

Non-certified facilities become less defensible in a lawsuit and run the risk of losing liability insurance coverage after the decertification status is reported to the insurance



Overcrowded conditions and aging facilities often impede the certification process each year for jails across the state

carrier by TCI. If the county uses the same carrier, their premiums can increase as well as lead to local tax increases.

Additionally, loss of certification threatens a jail with loss of state funding for maintenance as well as rights to house state prisoners and the funding coming along with them.

Certification barriers often can be attributed to overcrowding or aging facilities with leaking pipes and faulty plumbing. Safety issues also become more prominent as county jails become overfilled and inmates charged with violent crimes are incarcerated alongside those facing less serious offenses.

"Overcrowding can increase the potential of lawsuits against county

jails for violation of the Eight Amendment (banning cruel and unusual punishment) and the Fourteenth Amendment (guaranteeing due process rights)," said Dr. Harry Green executive director of the Tennessee Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR).

"Additionally, overcrowding has detrimental affects on safety, food service, medical care, recreation, and sanitation in jails."

In March 2007, TACIR released its findings and recommendations concerning the status of Tennessee's jails in a detailed report "Beyond Capacity: Issues and Challenges Facing County Jails."

See **JAILS** on Page 6

Prehistoric treasures find home in Tennessee



The skeletal remains of a 12,000 year old woolly mammoth unearthed in Russia are currently on display at the Obion County Museum in Union City — Story on Page 3.

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



BY TML STAFF REPORTS

ATHENS
Voters in Athens soundly rejected a proposal to increase the city's sales tax rate by a half-cent in a referendum. The plan was to use \$8 million to be generated from the proposed increase for the first phase of city school projects with an additional \$5 million to go to the city council to pay off the debt incurred in the recent \$6.3 million in school renovations. A majority of the voters at each of the city's five precincts voted against the referendum. The proposal would have increased the combined local and state sales tax from the current 9 percent to 9.5 cents. The tax increase was defeated 961-513 placing city schools "back to square one" on funding, according to Athens Mayor John Proffitt.

CLEVELAND
The Bradley Co. Sheriff's Department currently allows inmates to collect litter with the Road Department through a grant program; however Sheriff Tim Gobble said he wants the department to have several more work crews to provide labor for non-profit organizations, churches and schools. Inmates earn two days off their sentence for each day of work. Only nonviolent offenders are considered for work detail. Many counties and the states currently use inmates for community projects. Inmate jobs coordinator Jerry Haston said prisoners can earn up to 16 days off their sentence each month for exemplary work. All of the work is done free of charge except for materials.

GALLATIN
Samick Music Corporation recently broke ground on its new corporate headquarters in Gallatin. The company, which makes pianos and guitars, will invest \$5 million in its new facilities through construction of a 14,000-square-foot headquarters building that will be adjacent to a 200,000 square-foot manufacturing and distribution facility within the Gallatin Industrial Center. The company has also purchased an adjacent second tract of land for future expansion. Once in full production, Samick will become the largest North American producer of pianos. Some 30 employees will relocate to Gallatin. The company plans to hire 50-70 people from its new home's labor pool at start-up. A three-year forecast provided by the company anticipates about 25 additional hires each year. The Gallatin Economic Development Agency began working with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development and regional organizations to recruit SMC in November 2005.

MEMPHIS
Shelby County schools are studying the pros and cons of year-round school. Parents from Knoxville, Clarksville, Franklin and elsewhere have organized under the banner "Save Our Tennessee Summers," asking the Legislature to block schools from opening earlier than the week prior to Labor Day and from closing later than the week after Memorial Day but face opposition from most of the statewide education organizations, which want to retain flexibility for local school boards to

set their own school calendars. A bill with those parameters failed last year. Sixty-seven of Tennessee's 136 school districts opened this year between Aug. 1 and Aug. 7. Most others started the week of Aug. 13. Sevier County had the latest start, Aug. 20. Memphis and Shelby County schools opened Aug. 13 and are scheduled to close May 23.

MONTEAGLE
A utility district atop the Cumberland Plateau has sent a 30-day notice that it plans to stop providing water to the city of Monteagle, according to utility officials. Monteagle is short of water because of the drought and has been buying all its water from municipal utilities in Sewanee, Altamont and Tracy City, Tenn. Monteagle Mayor Charles Rollins said his city has spent about \$45,000 buying water from other utilities. Ben Beavers, general manager for Sewanee Utility District, said the decision was made after finding that Monteagle's water supply in its reservoir was almost at the same level as Sewanee's. Sewanee city engineers have estimated their reservoir holds about a 90-day supply. Rollins said city officials have worked to install a water line to a quarry between Monteagle and Sewanee. A second line is being planned from another area lake.

MURFREESBORO
Murfreeseboro's Cable Television Department/Cable Channel 3 received a national award during the 22nd annual Government Programming Awards presented by the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA). The winners were announced at a Gala event Oct. 5 in Portland, Ore. Murfreeseboro's government television station brought home an honorable mention in the highly competitive Excellence in Government Programming category, an award made "not on a single program," but on the agency's variety of programming quality throughout the year. A national trade association based in Alexandria, Va., NATOA, represents local government jurisdictions and consortiums, including elected and appointed officials and staff, that oversee communications and cable television franchising.

MURFREESBORO
L&W Engineering Co., a supplier of automotive stampings and welded assemblies, announced it plans to open a location in Rutherford County creating 152 new jobs. L&W's facility will be located in Panattoni Development Co.'s newest industrial park, Elam Farms, off Interstate 24 at Joe B. Jackson Parkway. L&W is the first tenant in Elam Farms and will occupy approximately 145,000 square feet of the first 363,500-square-foot building. Elam Farms is designed to include a total of six buildings, ranging in size between 363,500 square feet to 750,000 square feet and totaling over 2 million square feet. The buildings are divisible to accommodate multiple tenant types and uses.

NASHVILLE
The Metro Nashville school system plans to become the first in the nation to use security cameras that spot

intruders by using controversial, cutting-edge, face-recognition technology. Starting Dec. 1, the 75,000-student district will equip Harpeth Valley Elementary, Gra-Mar Middle and Antioch High School, and an administration building with cameras that sound alarms when they detect an unfamiliar face or someone barred from school grounds. Nashville will take digital photos of students and workers at the three test schools and store them in the new camera system. When a camera spots a face in a school that it cannot match to a stored photo, it will alert security. A successful test in Nashville could prod other schools to try the technology, according to Peter Pochowski, executive director of the National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers.

NASHVILLE
The number of children in Metro schools considered to be "economically disadvantaged" has climbed dramatically since the 2005-2006 school year, as indicated by figures released by the Tennessee Department of Education. A total of 81.4 percent of current Metro Nashville Public School students met qualifications to be considered "economically disadvantaged" in the 2006-2007 school year, up from 69 percent the year before. That's an increase of 14,467 students, according to information from the state. The term "economically disadvantaged" refers to students receiving free or reduced lunches from the federal government, in the eyes of both Metro and the state of Tennessee. According to Woody McMillan, spokesperson for MNPS "a prime factor" in the increase is likely the rapid rise of ELL (English as a Learned Language) students, which includes immigrants from Latin America, Asia and Africa.

KNOXVILLE
Five Town Hall Forums were hosted by The University of Tennessee, Middle Tennessee State University and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development recently as pre-planning sessions leading up to the first Great Smoky Mountains Sustainable Tourism Summit, April 28-29, 2008 in Knoxville. The forums addressed the critical issue facing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and its gateway communities including Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Sevierville, Alcoa, Maryville, Townsend, Knoxville, Newport, Cosby and Pittman Center on how to sustain strong economic growth while sustaining the natural beauty and heritage that makes the area appealing to both residents and visitors.

RIPLEY
Gov. Phil Bredesen met with leaders from several West Tennessee counties at the University of Tennessee Martin's Ripley campus for a roundtable discussion to focus on strategies to spur economic growth in rural communities. The Rural Opportunity Initiative, which provides a \$4,500 Jobs Tax Credit with 15-year carry forward and an additional \$4,500 for three years to industries that provide new jobs, was one of the strategies discussed for helping economically distressed counties. Bredesen also took an aerial tour of the Stanton megasite in Haywood County and toured the American Greetings plant in Ripley.



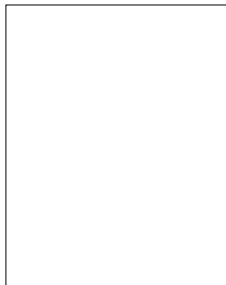
Samick Music Corporation recently broke ground on its new corporate headquarters facility in Gallatin. At hand for the ceremony are Rep. Mike McDonald, Gallatin Mayor Jo Ann Graves, ECD Commissioner Matt Kisber, Gov. Phil Bredesen, Rep. Debra Maggart, and representatives from Samick Corporation.



PEOPLE

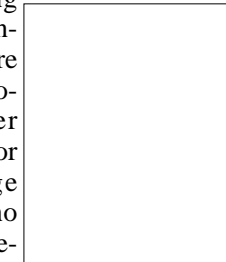
BY TML STAFF REPORTS

State Rep. **John Hood** has decided to not seek reelection to the Tennessee House of Representatives in 2008. The longtime public servant, who is currently in his sixth term representing the people of the 48th district, which is heavily comprised of Murfreeseboro residents, will step down after elections in November 2008. In a statement, Hood said he is making his decision known early to encourage other well-qualified individuals to consider a run for public office.



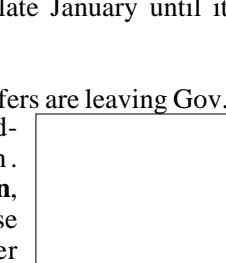
Hood

Milan elected state Rep. **Chris Crider** as the city's new mayor. Crider earned 63.5 percent of the votes defeating three other candidates who were vying for the position. Crider will take over for Mayor George Killebrew, who did not seek reelection. Crider, represents District 79 in the state legislature. He will continue to work three days a week in that position from the start of the session in late January until it ends.

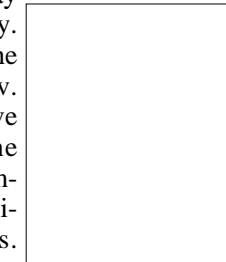


Crider

Two senior staffers are leaving Gov. Bredesen's administration. **Kim McMillan**, a former House majority leader and currently a senior adviser to the Democratic governor, is leaving to work for Austin Peay State University. She joined the school on Nov. 12 as executive director of the Center for Community and Business Relations. **Robert Gowan**, the governor's



McMillan



Gowan

top policy adviser, said in a resignation letter that he planned to leave the governor's office Nov. 15. Gowan was responsible for shepherding Bredesen's agenda through the Legislature.

Longtime Franklin Special School District Board Chairman and former real-estate developer **John Schroer** won a resounding victory over incumbent Mayor Tom Miller to become Franklin's new mayor. Schroer, 55, won a 63 percent majority with 4,439 votes. Miller, elected in 2003, got 2,483 votes, or 35 percent. Schroer and the four new aldermen will be sworn into office in November. Voters chose Ken Moore, Ann Petersen, Clyde Barnhill and Pearl Bransford as at-large aldermen.

Former Metro Councilman **David Briley**, 43, has joined Nashville law firm Bone McAllister Norton. Briley, a Nashville native who ran unsuccessfully for mayor this year, has been an attorney in private practice since 1995. Briley received his law degree from Golden Gate University in California and served in the Metro Council from 1999 through this year's elections.

Civil rights pioneer **Benjamin L. Hooks** received the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a ceremony in Washington D.C. Nov. 5. Hooks, 82, an ordained Baptist minister and lawyer, is a former national president of the NAACP and current chairman of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. In 1965, he became the first black judge of a state trial court in Tennessee. Hooks received one of eight presidential medals awarded. The medal is the highest civilian award bestowed by the U.S. president. Sen. Lamar Alexander hosted a luncheon for Hooks after the award ceremony.



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Area museums showcase prehistoric treasures

BY VICTORIA SOUTH
TML Communications Coordinator

Some cities are digging a lot deeper these days and taking natural preservation to whole new levels. Prehistoric artifacts in Tennessee are generating worldwide interest while leaving an indelible mark on the communities that showcase them.

It was a twist of fate in 2000 that brought a 33,000-square-foot state of the art fossil museum and visitor center to Gray, Tenn., located in East Tennessee. A TDOT road crew hired to widen and straighten a section of State Route 75, hit pay dirt—literally when their equipment became mired in a five-acre plot of sticky charcoal colored soil.

"Eighteen to 20 feet in, they couldn't get their tractor tires out. Then they started digging up bones," said Jeanne Zavada, director of the new East Tennessee State University and General Shale Brick Natural History Museum located on state Highway 75 about one mile from Interstate 26.

The crew had unwittingly stumbled upon an entire Miocene period ecosystem housing the remains of Appalachia's earliest inhabitants; one of the richest, deepest fossil sites ever discovered in the world dating 4.5 to 7 million years old. Experts predict 100 years of excavation would only scratch the surface of the fossil rich soil which extends 140 feet straight down.

"This is not something we could have done on our own and been as successful," said Zavada.

With the initial support of

lab, snack bar and gift shop, fossil storage area, reconstruction workshop and preparation lab where scientists spend countless hours reconstructing bits of crushed and broken bone.

"We're already out of room," Zavada said, who has been hard at work designing outreach programs and activities that will "make science fun and enjoyable for one and all."

"With bookings for birthday parties, social events and memberships, we'll be self-sustaining in 3-5 years," Zavada said proudly. "We've had 25,000 visitors since the Aug. 31 opening."

Museum information is available by calling 423-439-3640 or by calling toll free 1-866-202-6223 or info@grayfossilmuseum.com.

For cities that have not yet struck paleontological gold, hosting prehistoric discoveries from other parts of the country can be equally successful. This year, the Obion County Museum in Union City became the temporary resting place for a 12,000-year-old woolly mammoth skeleton from Russia.

With only 5 percent of the world's population predicted to see a complete skeleton of a woolly mammoth, "Mr. Woolly," as he is affectionately called, took three years of painstaking excavation before his trip to Tennessee.

"He arrived in crates and it took two men to lift one tusk," observed museum board member Marti Doss. "The head bone alone weighs 200 pounds."

Becoming extinct around 10,000 years ago, mammoths ranged in size from nine feet to more than 15 feet tall with straight or curved tusks



The exhibition hall at the new East Tennessee State University and General Shale Brick Natural History Museum reveals prehistoric creatures of the Miocene period from the Gray Fossil site along highway 75

In preparation for the projected tourism the huge development is expected to attract, the Union City Council voted to construct a city funded convention center.

Gov. Phil Bredesen and TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely have also entered discussions with Discovery Park coordinators regarding assistance and support for the project along with other government officials on federal, state and local levels.

"We have a huge Goodyear Plant and some other fine developments. We've been fortunate, and this development can only add to that," said Mayor Terry Hailey.

"The city will cooperate and has pledged \$2.5 million to build the new 800-1000 seat civic center."

"The Discovery Park of America is a fantastic development for not only Northwest Tennessee, but for the continent, even the world," said Jim Polk, Community

Education coordinator at the Cohn Adult Learning Center & Senior Renaissance Center.

"This new park will highlight an area where the "movers and shakers" mammoths, earthquakes and Tecumseh have stirred the crust of the American pie," Polk continues. "At the halfway point on the new Interstate 69 between Windsor, Canada and Neuvo Laredo, Mexico, the Discovery Park will join the futures of the nations and peoples of North America."

Photo by Jeff Supplee and Steven Wallace

ETSU scientists spend long, painstaking hours cleaning and reconstructing bits of broken and crushed bone in the preparation lab at the new Gray Natural History Museum. The skeleton of a Rhinoceros (Teleoceras) is assembled for evaluation prior to molding and casting

Students of the ETSU Governor's School Paleontology program wet sieving and picking through processed sediment for fossils at the Gray Fossil site

former Gov. Don Sundquist, an \$8 million federal transportation grant through TDOT, and East Tennessee State University at the helm of science and excavation, the resulting museum and visitor's center has become one of the few in the nation built adjacent to an active fossil site.

Zavada also applauds collaborative contributions from the University of Tennessee, Tusculum College, Appalachian State University, Harvard University, "Save the Gray Fossil Site" group, "Friends of Roan Mountain," the Johnson City Chamber and the city of Kingsport.

"ETSU is entrusted with a rare opportunity and important responsibility to teach generations of students and visitors lessons about the earth and its inhabitants firsthand," said ETSU President Paul Stanton.

"The potential for regional tourism and worldwide recognition for the work going on at Gray is tremendous," he continued.

On any given day, paleontologists and students can be observed with picks and brushes painstakingly searching for buried treasure. They've been rewarded with the recovery of several large mammal species including the short-tusked elephant, saber-toothed cat, short-faced bear, Eurasian badgers, horse, red panda, ground sloth, rhino, and the world's largest collection of fossilized tapers.

The museum houses an education center, exhibit halls, computer

measuring up to 17 feet long used for protection, mating rituals and digging vegetation in the harsh winter snow. The mammoth in Obion County, discovered in 2000, is 14 feet tall with 7-foot curved tusks.

"The kids have a fit over him and that tickles me pink," said Doss, a former school teacher. "The original idea was to not have anything other than exhibits from Obion County," continued Doss. "Then the board changed their minds, decided we'd be hurting ourselves. Since the mammoth's arrival, crowds have been pouring in from everywhere: Jackson, Memphis, Nashville, Huntingdon, Kentucky."

Woolly's visit, arranged by a friend of the museum, precedes incredible news for Obion County. Long time residents the Robert E. and Jenny D. Kirkland Foundation have pledged millions of dollars toward building a 50-acre, \$100 million project that will be known as Discovery Park of America. Scheduled for completion in 2010, the site for Discovery Park will be on the west side of North Everett Boulevard in Union City, with access from incoming I-69 and Highway 51.

With a world class museum as its centerpiece, Mr. Woolly, if he remains in Union City, will reside alongside rare Tennessee wildlife exhibits, an aquarium, an earthquake simulator, Reelfoot Lake exhibits, outdoor gardens and trails, amphitheatre, petting zoo, and many more displays from across the globe.

Union City anticipates Discovery Park of America

Deemed as a "celebration of life," Discovery Park of America developers are aiming to take the lead in celebrating the progression of art, nature, and mankind. The project's benefactors, businessman Robert E. Kirkland and Jenny D. Kirkland have been residents of the community for three generations and have committed their foundation to efforts that support education and quality of life issues in Obion County.

The Kirkland Foundation has underwritten \$20 million to purchase land, secure the architect, and build the museum, the centerpiece of the 50-acre learning park in Union City.

Another \$20 million, (distributed at the rate of \$1 million per year) is being donated from the Kirkland Foundation to purchase artifacts and rent stellar exhibits. The Kirkland's have pledged yet another \$20 million toward keeping the project solvent for the first 20 years.

The planned conference and convention center will be located in the main building and project representatives have petitioned the state to become involved by building a planned tourism center along the property.

"We have so much to offer here," said Jenny Kirkland. "Children in our community have unbelievable opportunities to learn, to pursue any educa-

tionally renowned Canadian architects Douglas Cardinal Architect Inc. have been selected to design Discovery Park of America. Pictured left to right are company Vice President, Bret Cardinal, President, Douglas Cardinal, and Senior Project Manager, Mark Conley.

Native American artifacts, taxidermy displays of indigenous species such as eagles, deer, foxes, coyotes, waterfowl, mountain lions, a pioneer village, botanical gardens, and much more.

Canadian architect Douglas Cardinal has been contracted to design Discovery Park whose previous credits include the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

Possible displays will depict regional history such as Reelfoot Lake and an earthquake simulator, an aquarium with native fish and 3-D topographical models, an interactive alternative energy section, natural history displays of area fossils, gems, bones and rocks and

According to Doss, the outpouring of community interest has been overwhelming.

"Mr. Kirkland has pulled everyone he can into this. There are at least 200 people working on committees."

With the input of future investors, project costs are expected to total \$100 million with a projected completion date of 2010.

STATE BRIEFS

BY TML STAFF REPORTS

About 2,000 acres in the **corridor between Fall Creek Falls State Park and Scotts Gulf were purchased for just under \$2 million with a matching federal grant**, making the Cumberland Plateau land available for hiking, bird watching, fishing and other activities. The Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation is one of the groups that worked to secure the funding along with Bill Latimer, who donated \$4 million to the Middle Tennessee Council of Boy Scouts of America to pay for 1,500 acres of wilderness in the Cumberland Plateau. The area's many inhabitants include the threatened Indiana bat, the Southern heart leaf plant and the hellbender, a salamander that can reach up to 2 feet long and requires cool, clean waters to survive.

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) **has been selected to receive a state innovation grant from the Environmental Protection Agency** to fund the first phase of Tennessee's Construction Storm Water Excellence Initiative. This national award will provide \$200,000 for a four-year storm water project to help local municipalities establish an integrated approach to water resources management for the benefit of water quality. The grant will help TDEC to work with local communities to integrate education, low-impact development and storm water management techniques in ways that will enhance water quality. Storm water

runoff can affect the quantity and quality of water far from its source. As storm water flows through streets, residential lots and open spaces, it carries dirt, oil, pesticides and other substances to nearby waterways. The effects of this process are heightened when storm water runs through construction sites, where large quantities of soil, and even building materials and potentially hazardous chemicals can be washed away. These substances can pose a significant threat to Tennessee's water resources, damaging wildlife habitats and affecting drinking water sources.

The Tennessee Air National Guard's **118th Airlift Wing has been selected for the proposed stand-up of a C-130 transport aircraft Formal Training Unit**. The unit will conduct day-to-day peacetime training of international airmen in preparation for the wing's federal wartime mission. The mission will utilize the qualified pilots, navigators, air crews and maintenance crews now assigned to the 118th to train international airmen to safely fly and effectively employ C-130s while simultaneously ensuring the wing's readiness for its federal wartime mission. Once fully operational, the 118th could train as many as 150 international partner military students annually on C-130E/H model aircraft. The first class of students is tentatively scheduled to begin in mid 2008.

Tennessee's legislators have made **littering of cigarette butts a punishable offense**. The amended law,

which went into effect July 1, determines punishment based on weight. Tossing out litter that weighs less than 5 pounds is a Class C misdemeanor and is punishable with a \$50 fine and up to 40 hours of collecting trash along highways and parks. Tossing trash exceeding 10 pounds is aggravated criminal littering, which is a Class A misdemeanor punishable with up to 160 community service hours. The aggravated littering offense can become a Class E felony if it's the third littering conviction exceeding 10 pounds or the second conviction exceeding 1,000 pounds in commercial waste.

The state's **unemployment rate for September was 4.7 percent, up 0.7 percent from August**, according to the state Department of Labor and Work Force Development. The department said the hike is due to a rise in the state's labor force. August to September gains were seasonal, with government jobs increasing 13,600. Administrative support and waste services, which are primarily temporary workers, increased by 2,500. Educational services increased by 2,400. Month-to-month declines included leisure and hospitality down 4,900 and decreases in manufacturing down 1,100. Retail trade was also down 900. Major employment declines over the year were in manufacturing, down 10,700, and in clothing and accessories stores, down 1,600. The leisure and hospitality sector led those areas doing well over the year, with gains of 8,300. Construction showed the strongest employment growth, increasing by 7,300.

Economic growth has slowed in Tennessee this year but is staying resilient despite the falling housing market, according to a report released by the University of Tennessee's Center for Business and Economic Research. Tennessee's economy should pick up by this time next year, according to the report, which analyzes factors in the state and across the U.S. and provides economic forecasts through 2009. Tennessee's job and income growth has slowed, with a state unemployment rate of 4.7 percent in September. The report states the unemployment rate is expected to rise to about 4.9 percent in 2008, just below the national average of 5 percent. Fewer building permits have been filed in the state's major cities, indicating a weakening in the state housing market. Morristown and Cleveland have shown the smallest declines in building permits, while Chattanooga and Clarksville have seen the largest declines. Subprime mortgages make up a large portion of the overall mortgages in Tennessee. Memphis has the highest share of subprime mortgages, with 24 percent, the report stated.

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State's public infrastructure needs continue to increase

According to a new report released by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), Tennessee needs at least \$28.3 billion of public infrastructure improvements to be in some stage of development during the five-year period of 2004-2009.

Information about the availability of funding to meet Tennessee's public infrastructure needs indicates that in dollar terms more than half may go unmet. Of the \$23.2 billion in needs for which the availability of funding was reported, local officials are confident of only \$9.0 billion of that amount.

The current report, which is based on information provided by state and local officials, shows an increase in needs of \$14.7 billion (up 107 percent) since the first inventory was published six years ago and an increase of about \$3.9 billion (16 percent) from the October 2005 report. These needs fall into six general categories:

- Transportation and Utilities: \$14.6 billion
- Education: \$5.7 billion
- Health, Safety, and Welfare: \$5.2 billion
- Recreation and Culture: \$1.8 billion
- Economic Development: \$669 million
- General Government: \$426 million

Harry Green, TACIR's executive director, noted, "TACIR now has the most comprehensive inventory of infrastructure needs in the project's nine-year history. This report is the second to provide information about the availability of funding. It should concern us all that local officials are only confident of less than half of the funds necessary to meet the needs they have identified."

The largest increase is in the Transportation and Utilities category, which remains the single largest overall. This category increased from \$10.4 billion to \$14.6 billion. Transportation needs alone represent \$13.7 billion (48.2 percent) of the total infrastructure needs. Most of the rest of the increase from the previous inventory was in non K-12 education with an increase of \$535 million; public health facilities with an increase of \$99 million; law enforcement, an increase of \$93 million; and K-12 existing schools improvements, an increase of \$54 million.

This project is the only source of statewide information on the condition of public school buildings and what it would take to get them all in good or better condition, and the news is good: According to local school officials, 91 percent of local public schools are now in good or excellent condition. They estimate the cost to put the remaining 9 percent in good or better condition at \$608 million, which is a \$571 million decrease from the cost reported in the previous report. They also report that 82 percent of all school systems have sufficient space to house the teachers and classrooms

required by the smaller class-size standards imposed by the Education Improvement Act (EIA) in the fall of 2001. The rest use portable classrooms, non-classroom spaces such as libraries and cafeterias for teaching classes, and classrooms that are empty when other teachers have planning periods.

TACIR estimates the cost of the remaining classrooms needed to house these teachers at almost \$69 million statewide, which is also a huge drop (about 86 percent or \$410 million) from the cost estimate in TACIR's last report. Rep. Randy Rinks, TACIR's chairman, had this to say about the declining costs:

"School officials are to be commended for their continued progress toward providing permanent classrooms for the teachers needed to meet the EIA class size mandates. But systems with high enrollment growth still face challenges. The amount needed for enrollment growth and replacement schools increased from \$1.3 billion in last year's report to almost \$1.5 billion currently."

Other Highlights include:

- Total education infrastructure needs increased from \$5.3 billion to \$5.6 billion (about 7 percent) since the last report. This was the second largest increase among the six categories. Needs at the state's public post-secondary schools grew \$535 million (about 35 percent) since the last report and are expected to continue to grow because of lottery scholarship-driven enrollment growth

- Health, safety, and welfare at \$5.2 billion is the third largest cost category and accounts for 18.3 percent of the state's public infrastructure needs. Water and wastewater needs alone total almost \$3.2 billion or over 11 percent of the grand total and 62 percent of this one category. Water and wastewater, transportation, and local public education combined represent more than 70 percent of total reported needs.

- The economic development category, which includes business districts and industrial sites and parks, had the largest percentage change as needs decreased by \$442 million (40 percent) from the previous report. Business district development needs decreased \$342 million, with more than half of that decrease attributable to a reduction in the estimated cost of a project in Nashville.

- Conventional wisdom holds that population density should produce lower infrastructure costs because of economies of scale. This relationship is not borne out by TACIR's infrastructure inventories based either on comparisons of counties that rank high and low for population density or on statistical analysis. The most likely explanation is that urban development requires more infrastructure per capita than rural development does.

The full report can be found on TACIR's web site at <http://www.state.tn.us/tacir/infrastructure.htm>.

Tax freeze workshops set

FREEZE from Page 1
cerning these meetings, please contact John Holloway at jholloway@tml1.org or (615) 255-6416.

Wednesday, November 28
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Carnegie Center for Arts & History
305 East College Street
Jackson, TN 38301

Thursday, November 29
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
TML Banquet Room

226 Capitol Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37219

Wednesday, December 5
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
MeadowView Conference Resort
1907 Meadowview Parkway
Kingsport, TN 37660

Thursday, December 6
9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Cleveland-Bradley County Chamber of Commerce
225 Keith Street Southwest
Cleveland, TN 37311

TML Board to meet Dec. 4 in Nashville

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Municipal League will meet in regular public session on Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2007, at 12:30 p.m., local time, in the TML Board Room at the street level of 225 Capitol Boulevard Building, in Nashville, Tenn., for the purpose of considering and transacting all business that may properly come before said board. If reasonably possible, an agenda will be available on Thursday, Nov. 30, 2007, at the offices of the Tennessee Municipal League, 226 Capitol Blvd., Suite 710, Nashville. Additional information concerning the above may be obtained from Mona Lawrence at 615-255-6416.

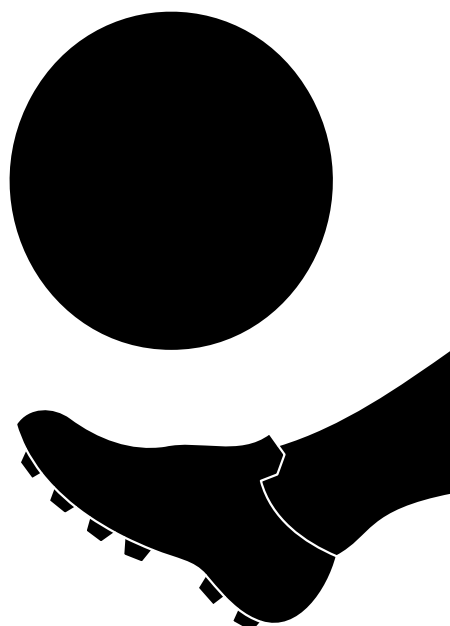
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Storm clouds ahead for city finances

The fiscal condition of the nation's cities for 2008 looks cloudy with city officials predicting a slowdown in revenues and increased spending pressures, according to a new report released by the National League of Cities (NLC).

Concerns about the health of real estate markets and their potential impacts on property tax revenues, combined with increased calls for property tax relief from homeowners and residents, will cloud the picture in 2008. Health care and pension costs, in particular, are increasing at a faster rate than city revenues.

The NLC report found that when adjusted for inflation, city revenues grew only 1.1 percent from 2005 to 2006, while expenditures grew by 1.2 percent. Looking at 2007, revenue growth is expected to be less than 1 percent while expenditures are increasing by 3.5 percent, creating a revenue gap of 3.1 percent that cities would have to close by cutting services or raising revenue.

"City officials are going to be facing difficult choices in the coming years both to plan for the future and to fill gaps in revenue and spending levels," said NLC Executive Director, Donald J. Borut.

"The purchasing power of cities and towns is under tremendous pressure with increasing costs for such staples as public safety and infrastructure as well as increases in health insurance and pensions for public employees. Cities are doing the people's business, getting commuters to work, picking up the trash, keeping libraries open, making sure their streets are safe. City leaders are being innovators. But, it's getting more difficult every year in the face of increased demands for more services from their constituents."

Given the gap between revenues and expenditures, nearly half (45 percent) of all responding city finance officers reported they have increased fees and charges for services. Twenty-nine percent reported that their city opted for increasing property tax rates, while 17 percent reported reducing property tax rates. Increases in sales tax, income tax, and other tax rates have been much less frequent.

Overall, sales tax receipts improved in 2006 over previous year receipts, increasing by 3 percent, adjusted for inflation. Property tax revenues increased in 2006 by 4 percent when adjusted for inflation, and projections for 2007 indicate that they will continue to grow by 5.5 percent, reflecting historical highs and the recent strong real estate market. The current housing downturn, however, will likely affect cities' revenue collections in the next few years as assessments catch up with market changes.

On the spending side, three in four city finance officers report increases in public safety spending in 2007, while 59 percent are increasing spending for infrastructure or

capital projects, 52 percent are increasing the growth rate in their operating budgets to support a variety of new and existing services, and 39 percent report increases in human services spending, often referred to as social services programs.

Eight in 10 city finance officers cite prices and inflation, employee wages, and the cost of employee health benefits as having negative impacts on their budgets. Rising costs for public safety, infrastructure, and employee pensions are also affecting their bottom line. One in four city finance officers also say that changes in the amount of federal and state aid to cities are having a negative impact on city budgets.

According to the survey of city financial officers conducted between April and June 2007, the generally positive financial picture was reported by cities regardless of whether they relied on property, sales or income taxes or what size they were. Officials in the Midwest (51 percent), however, were less likely to say their cities were better off in 2007 than city officials in the South (79 percent), Northeast (74 percent), and West (73 percent).

NATIONAL BRIEFS



For the first time ever, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is reporting a **12 percent decrease in the number of homeless persons living on the streets.** HUD's analysis found that more than 20,000 persons moved from the streets into transitional and permanent supportive housing between 2005 and 2006.

HUD found that out of 3,900 cities and counties across the country, more than 1,500 communities reported a reduction in the number of long-term homeless persons over a

one-year period. There were 155,623 homeless individuals in 2006, down from 175,914 from the year before - an 11.5 percent decrease

The reduction can be directly attributed to the investment HUD and local "continuums of care" are devoting to create more permanent supportive housing units.

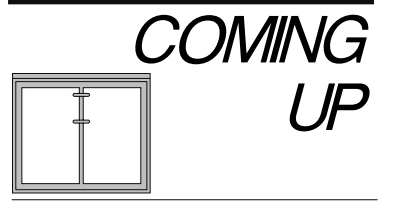
In addition, better data collection and reporting methods are giving local communities a more accurate sense of the scope of homelessness in their own areas.



TENNESSEE FESTIVALS
Let us know the particulars about your most important festivals at least six weeks in advance of the event. E-mail GaelStahl at gstahl@TML1.org or fax to 615-255-4752.

Dec. 1: Victorian Christmas
 Savannah Arts Commission. Historic Homes open their doors. Self guided tours from 5-8 pm. Witness the nostalgia of Christmas past on the Candlelight Luminary Tour. For information, contact Hardin County Chamber of Commerce 731-925-2363.

Dec.7-8: 3rd Annual Christmas in the Park and Holiday Mart
 Presented by Pickwick Landing State Park and Hardin County Chamber of Commerce. Saturday breakfast with Santa. Tour of lights, horse drawn carriages, trolley/train rides, bedtime stories by Santa's elves Friday & Saturday nights. Free admission, but donations welcome. Holiday Mart features gift items by local retailers & crafters. For information, contact the Pickwick Landing State Park Inn at 1-800-250-8615.



Dec.7: 22nd Annual Symposium American Society for Public Administration Tennessee Chapter and Tennessee State University's Institute of Government. Willis Conference Center, Nashville. Registration online at www.aspaonline.org/nashville/.

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TENNESSEE TOWN & CITY
 (ISSN No. 0040-3415) Publication No. 539420
 — Official publication of the Tennessee Municipal League. **Publisher:** Margaret Mahery (mmahery@TML1.org); **Editor:** Gael Stahl (gstahl@TML1.org); **News briefs:** Carole Graves (cgraves@tml1.org); **Phone:** 615-255-6416. **Advertising:** Publisher reserves the right to reject any advertising deemed unacceptable. Fax classified ads to *TT&C*: Attention Mona Lawrence at 615-255-4752, or e-mail mlawrence@TML1.org. Fax advertising copy to *TT&C*: Attention Debbie Kluth at 615-255-4752, or e-mail to dkluth@TML1.org. Opinions expressed non League officials or staff do not necessarily reflect policies of TML. *Tennessee Town & City* is published, semi-monthly, 20 times per year at 226 Capitol Blvd., Suite 710, Nashville, TN 37219-1894. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, TN. Subscription rates: \$6 per year to members, \$15 to nonmembers, \$1 a copy. **Postmaster:** Send changes of address to Tennessee Town & City, 226 Capitol Blvd., Suite 710, Nashville, TN 37219-1894.

CAT AD

Chattanooga's Linda Bennett champions quality, affordable housing

BY GAEL STAHL
Editor

Linda Bennett is a good example of what it was like growing up in what has become one of America's most livable cities. When she moved into her North Chattanooga house 25 years ago, the neighborhood had been in slow decline. She arrived just in time to live through the revitalization of one of the city's fastest growing and prospering neighborhoods. Ironically, now, too much of a good thing has raised concerns that the area may soon become too expensive for teachers, nurses, police and the other essential middle-class professionals to move there and live where they work.

Bennett's home is on the North Shore of the Tennessee River overlooking downtown. From her house she can see the lights on the Walnut Street pedestrian bridge and the Tennessee Aquarium on a clear night in the winter and watch the fireworks at Coolidge Park or AT&T Field, home of the Chattanooga Lookouts baseball team.

Those who knew Chattanooga 35 years ago and visit it today find the changes dramatic. Even a decade marks a difference. Bennett cites a group of municipal leaders from Roanoke, Va., who toured Chattanooga just 10 years ago. They returned earlier this month to marvel at the difference in the renewed downtown area.

Now, as a member of the Chattanooga City Council, Bennett wants to help others enjoy such quality of life enhancements by making the creation of more affordable, quality housing a top priority.

Bennett grew up north of the Chattanooga city limits in the small unincorporated community of Falling Water between Red Bank and Soddy Daisy. She graduated from Red Bank High School in 1971. The northern part of the council district she represents covers much of the bus route she took to and from high school. The farmland she saw then is now one of Chattanooga's suburban communities.

Both her father's and mother's families are Chattanooga natives. Her maternal great grandparents were Cherokees. They lived in the Suck Creek community on the Tennessee River, now part of the city's waterfront development and also part of the council district she represents. When the families moved to Falling Water, no one worried about kids playing outside past dark. She remembers how her grandparents gardened, grew vegetables, had a cow for milk, butter, and cream; hens for meat and eggs; and a pig to eat the slop scraps. They grew their own vegetables, found it perfectly natural to dine on what we call organic food daily.

Bennett, shy as a youngster, gained confidence by getting involved in business clubs and a function at the state legislature. She had won a DAR essay contest in elementary school. Neither activity interested her in politics except to reveal an underlying interest in civic affairs that would mature.

Bennett's main high school interests were English literature, business and psychology classes. She did volunteer work with the local mental health hospital after graduation with plans to make psychology her college major. Although that goal was never realized, her interest in mental health issues has followed her as she continued to do volunteer work for Moccasin Bend Hospital therapy programs and co-chaired the Mental Health Task Force. Most recently, she has chaired the Committee on Homeless Issues.

Bennett began college, married young, and stopped to raise her son and daughter, Chevy and Robert. After seven years, she became a single parent for seven years while working in marketing, and then remarried.

Her 25 years in sales and marketing began when her first employer told her that her customer service job was going to be eliminated. He gave her a good referral at a start-up company looking for a sales rep. Tela-a-Train produced training programs for maintenance men and engineers. The founder of the company, Perry Lane, developed programs with equipment manufacturers like Parker Hannifan. Its target market was Fortune 500 companies. With 100 applicants to choose from, only Bennett and another woman were hired to establish the company's marketing and sales department. As the company grew to be of the largest successful training companies of that time,

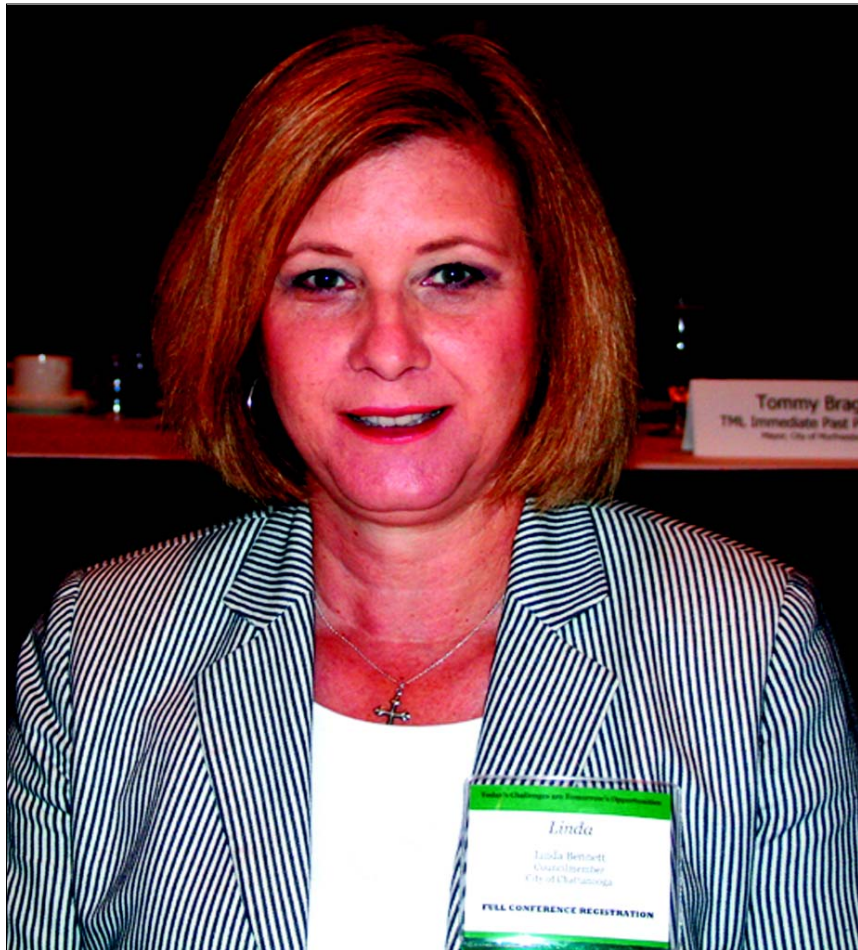


Photo by Gael Stahl

Chattanooga Council Vice Chair Linda Bennett shortly after her election to the TML Board of Directors.

Bennett managed seven states and was promoted to national technical sales manager.

After 7 years on a career fast track with increasing travel and responsibility and with two children in grade school, she chose to trade in that success and stress to remarry, stay at home, and blend a family. With an eye to work from home, she became a Mary Kay consultant. She grew that home-based business to where she had approximately 75 consultants and 500 customers and earned five career cars – a very big deal in the cosmetics profession.

At the same time, she was doing volunteer community work, got involved in leadership roles, and by 2005, was elected to the city council. In April 2007, she was elected vice chair of the Chattanooga Council and in June, to the Tennessee Municipal League Board of Directors.

TT&C: What were some of your more meaningful community involvements?

LB: I served on the board of the Northside Neighborhood House. That is our local agency that provides a full range of social help for the community. They have community based programs for seniors and children. They help needy individuals with utility bills and food. Also, since I wanted as much as possible for my children, I worked as a school volunteer and tried to participate in and support church, school, and community efforts.

TT&C: When did that begin to edge toward elective politics?

LB: It grew from some zoning issues in the neighborhood about 10 years ago. If you'd asked me in 1997 what council district I lived in or who my council representative was, I'm not sure I could have said. A zoning proposal affected our single family residence neighborhood in that it would allow a large complex of apartments to be built at the end of my street – not a good fit for the neighborhood. I came to realize how zoning determines what can be built in your community. That learning experience became my entrée into neighborhood organization and into the creating and leading of a neighborhood association for about seven years – before I ran for office.

TT&C: Did you run due to any special issue?

LB: No, it was a result of years of building relationships and realizing that we are a commercial and residential mix that meshes well. I became involved with the North Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce where I made contacts and invested time and effort to serve on the chamber's board. That led to building relationships with city administrators. While learning about zoning and housing I learned how that connected with municipal departments that can bring resources into the neighborhood.

What caused me to run is that over the years I had been redistricted into different council districts three times. The 2004 redrawing brought a large portion of north Chattanooga into my district. The councilman representing it, one of the original com-

missioners, had been in office about 14 years but wasn't that familiar with our area. Actually, he'd never really represented this community before.

Being newly divorced, I had to decide what I was going to do financially and with my time. The main question I asked myself was: What do I really enjoy doing? The answer was twofold: my home-based business and my community work. I wondered how I could turn that into a job. So, my background in marketing and sales and an opportunity to run for elected office came together after years of laying the groundwork to run for office, especially in the north Chattanooga community.

TT&C: When did you move from zoning to other issues?

LB: My grass roots political work with community issues helped me realize that putting out fires is not a very productive way to address issues. Having a plan in place would be the most helpful guide for working through issues.

When the mayor announced a proposal to locate a homeless complex on the former Farmer's Market property, City Council Chairman Leamon Pierce formed the Community Advisory Committee on Homeless Issues (CACHI). He charged CACHI to review the needs of and services available to Chattanooga's homeless citizens. He asked me to chair the 12-member committee of residents, business owners, city staff and other downtown stakeholders. It wasn't altogether a new issue.

I had served a similar position with the Mental Health Task Force a few years earlier and learned how communities interface with mental health facilities to locate in the area by building those relationships. That helped me realize, with regard to the homeless, that not only do we need to make housing accessible and affordable for the homeless, we must insure that the housing is quality housing for everyone, no matter what one's earnings capacity is. Otherwise, affordable housing will quickly degrade. We now call low-income housing workforce housing with an eye to making it possible for workers to live near where they work.

TT&C: How close are you to preparing a plan?

LB: A few months ago, the Chattanooga Housing Authority organized a workforce housing roundtable that included local city and county officials, state officials and area people to focus on providing housing to the poor, for minimum wage workers, and for low to moderately paid professionals. Toward getting a plan, we are getting the people around the table to talk about what we as a community can do to improve the availability of quality housing. What happened to my neighborhood happened to a lot of communities such as downtown and waterfront housing. We agree that it's preferable that nurses and teachers be able to find affordable housing where they work.

TT&C: Chattanooga was quite the early leader in providing affordable housing in the 1980s.

LB: That continues. We learned a lot and continue to learn. Many public

housing developments built years ago concentrated too high numbers of poverty level residents. That is not good for a community. Our grassroots discussions are a beginning to educate and raise awareness of the need for balanced housing.

That's important for me because I live in a community that changed so rapidly in terms of property values. When the roundtable group toured my neighborhood, many who believed north Chattanooga to be totally affluent saw in driving through that there is a lot of cultural and economic diversity. We want to protect the balance there and promote it elsewhere. Ours is not an effort to gentrify or compartmentalize neighborhoods but to diversify them and protect existing diversity.

TT&C: What issues on the council's Economic Development Committee are you involved in?

LB: Two years ago, I attended the Governor's Economic Development Conference session on attracting retirees to your community. The state selected nine communities to be part of a pilot and a small interested group in Chattanooga decided to be one of those initial pilots. We've been working with the state to look for opportunities to bolster our successful tourism program with this viable form of economic development.

Chattanooga was the first community in the state to become an American Association of Retirement Communities certified community. We are the largest AARC-certified city in the country. The mayor named the members of the board. There are city and county representatives, realtors, and chamber people. We're to the point of having a budget this year so in the next few months we'll hire someone to eat, sleep, and work this initiative.

I'd say that as far as my being proactive with a particular new issue, my involvement with the Retire Tennessee initiative is the one that I take personally to attend to.

TT&C: Why is Chattanooga thinking about providing cable to citizens?

LB: The Electric Power Board informed us that the product has several folds. The technology gives the municipality an opportunity to provide greater and more efficient service. EPB can determine when there are outages and repair them internally and service them locally. The fiber to the home that we're being offered from EPB seems to us a great opportunity for economic development and to improve the level of service beyond anything that we've seen from any other vendor.

TT&C: The Chattanooga delegation went to Nashville to talk to your legislators about the AT&T state franchise bill. Was it beneficial?

LB: It made a difference having our legislators hear directly from us city officials, especially when we asked them to support the work TML was doing in our behalf.

TT&C: How is Chattanooga's regional development going?

LB: Due to our geographical situation we have to draw the lines more broadly with regard to economic development in the larger Chattanooga regional area. We have a workforce that lives in Chattanooga, in several Tennessee counties and in north Georgia and north Alabama. Those same people also come to the Chattanooga community to play.

As far as population growth, some recent census figures indicated that Chattanooga had lost 1 percent of population between 2000 and 2006. When Chattanooga contested those results, the Census Bureau took another survey and announced on Nov. 7 that Chattanooga had actually grown by 8.4 percent bringing our population to 168,293. That means that if Chattanooga grows by another 14,050 people, it would pass Knoxville to become the third largest city in the state.

This year, councilmembers have been getting some additional training in the area of growth and development. I would expect that we'll be setting priorities about our regional development in the near future.

TT&C: Most think Chattanooga will attract a major industry to its new, huge industrial park. It was one of the final three choices Toyota considered for its new automotive manufacturing plant.

LB: We have high hopes that a major industry will locate at Enterprise South, our mega industrial park site. There is plenty of space there for smaller industries to locate there, also. The dollars have been approved for training centers to be located there. Finishing the interchange connector to make that site operational is high on our list of projects. We have a beautiful exit off I-75 that doesn't quite go where it's supposed to go, but with a commitment from an industry, that would happen quickly.

TT&C: Chattanooga's abundant water supply during this record drought year has become quite a recruiting tool for the city.

LB: With all the water discussions we've had with our neighbor, the state of Georgia, we have come to realize how blessed we are to have the Tennessee River, America's fifth largest, running through the heart of the city. It constantly provides us adequate water supplies while our neighbors, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, have had to order reductions in water use. We're mindful about protecting that asset and being a good steward about maintaining the quality of the water.

TT&C: You hit the jackpot in your council committee assignments. You're chair of Finance, a member of ECD/Environment/Planning, and chair of Education/Arts/Culture.

LB: Among the new things we've done as chair of the Finance/Budget/Personnel Committee is attempt to improve the training available to councilmembers to make them more knowledgeable about and involved in the budget. We have set up a timeline. In the past, because of budget issues from the mayor, the council didn't always have a lot of interface with the budget before they received it. Now we have a timeline for getting information so that we are more engaged in the process.

TT&C: Last June, you were elected to the TML board of directors. How does TML's larger focus interplay with you and your city?

LB: It's important local elected officials connect with what's happening at the state level. If we don't have a means to be vocal about issues that have a direct impact on their quality of life, we are at the mercy of what happens. Well, TML is our connection – an organized way for local officials to be a player. TML is an important opportunity for us. We're a league of cities with a lobbying function and with a proactive function. Any means we have to improve those communications about issues is important to us.

TT&C: Have your TML District 3 municipal officials arrived at a stated agenda to focus on regional?

LB: At our first meeting in September, we sat down with the district legislators to chat informally about the challenges and how we can work together. That's the best way to communicate. We shared our cable franchise bill concerns with the legislators and discussed the impact of things happening in Nashville that trickle back to the local level.

The TML meetings, the workforce and housing roundtables, and my meeting with a representative from Sen. Corker's office led me to suggest that our district meetings are a great opportunity to invite our congressional delegation to relate to us whatever is happening at their Senate and House offices. They are excited about doing that.

TT&C: Any hobbies?

LB: I participate in the city's Bike To Work program. Since I work at home, I have to go to their gathering place and then bike back home to work. When the program first started we met at downtown Miller Park, now we meet at the end of the Walnut Street Bridge. We gather and share a snack before heading out to work.

Our Outdoor Chattanooga endeavor has been effective in getting people outside. The program is about encouraging people to live a healthy lifestyle and take advantage of the beautiful greenways we have. Chattanooga has so many outdoors offerings, parks, fountains, walking and biking paths and bridges. We're a big town with a community feel. That's one of the most attractive things about our town for many who visit. They want to come back. Statistics indicate those who return two or three times are most likely to want to stay.