

Farewells precede changes

BY VICTORIA SOUTH
TML Communications Coordinator

Death, retirement, resignation, three political certainties sure to present challenges for incumbents, now factor into the state's political arena as 2009 draws to a close. Serving 11 two-year terms in office, U.S. Congressman John Tanner fired the first volley, announcing his intent to retire next year. Serving 23-years in the General Assembly, State Sen. Roy Herron followed suit by announcing plans to leave the governor's race to run for Tanner's seat in Tennessee's 8th district.

"I congratulate my long-time friend John Tanner for his service to the district, the state, and the country," said Herron, a Dresden attorney and businessman. "Tennessee and America are fortunate indeed to have had John in our service."

A former state lawmaker for 10 years and Union City attorney, Tanner, 65, was first elected to the 8th Congressional district, representing northwestern Tennessee and parts of Shelby County, in 1988 following the retirement of Congressman Ed Jones. Gaining the support of legislators from all 26 Nato-member nations, Tanner was elected president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in 2008. He is also well known as a co-founder and die-hard supporter of the conservative Democrats Blue Dog coalition formed in 1995 after Republicans gained control of Congress.

"The Blue Dogs' philosophy is the same as your family's," Tanner told *Tennessee Town & City* in a Feb. 2009 interview. "You live within your means, you pay your debts, and you invest in the future."

Also serving on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Ways and Means, Tanner is a former member of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army National Guard.

"Our nation faces many severe and unrelenting problems," Tanner announced in an official statement. "I will stay active on these matters and continue my efforts with the Blue Dogs and others of good will."

Tanner said his decision was made alongside his wife of 42 years, Betty Ann, as he looks forward to spending more time with his family.

See **FAREWELLS** on Page 6



Tanner



Herron



Kelsey



Turner

State economists say turning point is near, but not enough to plug \$1 billion shortfall

BY CAROLE GRAVES
TML Communications Director

Tennessee is slowly emerging from the recession, but no real meaningful revenue growth will take place until 2012, according to some of the state's top expert economists who recently provided revenue projections for the State Funding Board.

"I think the worst is behind us," said Dr. Bill Fox, director of the Center for Business & Economic Research at the University of Tennessee. "The economy is transitioning, but how rapid it does so is hard to predict."

Fox reported that the Gross National Product was positive for the third quarter of this year, which is the first time in six quarters the economy has shown any signs of growth; and November retail sales also saw a slight increase.

"Last year's economy was in a

free fall – no one knew how bad it was going to be," said Jim White, executive director of the legislative Fiscal Review Committee. "The silver lining this year is that we reached a level of stability over the last four or five months, that while it is very bad and collections are still very low, they never the less give us a firmer footing for estimates for the upcoming years."

The Funding Board, which is made up of Comptroller Justin Wilson, Secretary of State Tre Hargett, Treasurer David Lillard, and Finance Commissioner Dave Goetz, uses the projections to make budget estimates for each fiscal year.

All of the economists agreed that sales tax revenues will remain sluggish through the current fiscal year, but that the rate of decline should flatten out through the remaining eight months. Projections ranged from no growth for the current budget year to 3 percent growth

for next year.

"It's hard to imagine a year when zero percent growth is optimistic," said Dr. Jeff Wallace, senior research associate with the University of Memphis Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Wallace predicted that sales tax revenues will continue to under perform, but the gross receipts (TVA in lieu of taxes), the Franchise and Excise Tax, and the gas tax will be the state's source of strength.

Franchise and Excise combined collections for the first four months of the current fiscal year are already \$22.1 million above the budgeted estimate, leaving some to believe that the F&E could help make up some of the budget shortfall, but that it probably would still not be enough to plug a \$1 billion gap.

"F&E over collections may help soften the blow of the weak sales tax revenues," said White.

See **ECONOMY** on Page 5

Unemployment trust fund still not stable

BY CAROLE GRAVES

After a two-year climb to heights unseen in nearly three decades, the nation's jobless rate dropped two-tenths of a percent to 10 percent in November, according to figures released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on Dec. 4.

In Tennessee, however, the unemployment rate for October was unchanged from the September rate of 10.5 percent.

But still, state officials charged with keeping a careful eye on the Unemployment Trust Fund welcomed the news with some optimism that unemployment has neared its peak and that the economy is gaining momentum.

"I see some light at the end of the tunnel," said James Neeley, Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development. "If we can get through the end of February, I'm optimistic we can get through the end of the year."

Neeley, along with Bill Fox, executive director of the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research, updated the Legislative Joint Select Committee on Business Taxes on the state's Unemployment Trust Fund and whether it can meet the unprecedented demands placed on the system.

"Tennessee will experience some periods that the fund will turn negative," said Fox, "but premium

revenues come in the second quarter and will bring the fund back in balance. At the end of FY 2011, the trust fund balance may be in trouble again if the economy does not improve and benefits don't start slowing down."

As of Dec. 10, 2009, the state's UI fund balance was \$197.7 million.

Gov. Phil Bredesen said after a Labor and Workforce Development budget hearing last month that another increase employers are taxed appeared unavoidable.

Several states, including Tennessee, are facing UI Trust Fund solvency challenges. During the 2009 legislative session, the Tennessee General Assembly voted to increase the amount employers are

See **UNEMPLOYMENT** on Page 5

U.S. DOT secretary announces \$280 M in available grant money

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced the availability of \$280 million for urban circulator projects such as streetcars, buses, and bus facilities to support communities, expand business opportunities and improve people's quality of life while also creating jobs.

The money represents the first batch of funding by the Obama Administration for its Livability Initiative, a joint venture of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"This represents a significant effort to promote livable communities, improve the quality of life for more Americans and create more transportation choices that serve the needs of individual communities," DOT Secretary Ray LaHood said. "Fostering the concept of livability in transportation projects will stimulate America's neighborhoods to become safer, healthier and more vibrant."

"Not only will these urban circulator and bus projects provide Americans with new neighborhood-friendly transit systems, they will give us a cleaner environment and create much-needed jobs," Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff said.

A maximum amount of \$25 million per project will be made available from approximately \$130 million in unallocated discretionary

New Starts/Small Starts Program funds. Eligible projects include streetcars and other urban circulator systems. Priority will be given to projects that connect destinations and foster the redevelopment of communities into walkable, mixed use, high-density environments.

A second pot of money totaling \$150 million in unallocated discretionary Bus and Bus Facility funds will be available for projects that will foster the preservation and enhancement of urban and rural communities by providing new mobility options which provide access to jobs, healthcare, and education, and/or contribute to the redevelopment of neighborhoods into pedestrian-friendly environments.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) plans to announce grants early in 2010. Key lawmakers on Capitol Hill greeted the news with enthusiasm. "I applaud this important step in recognizing the environmental and economic development benefits of streetcars and other sustainable transit projects," House Transportation Chairman Jim Oberstar said. "I have always embraced the vision to improve the sustainability of our communities through new transit and livability initiatives, and I look forward to working with the Administration to accomplish our shared goals."

This announcement is available on the FTA website at: <http://www.fta.dot.gov>. FTA will announce **GRANTS** on Page 4



Photo by Victoria South

The young and young at heart are thrilled to meet Comet, just one of Santa's reindeer on display at the annual lighting of the State Capitol Christmas tree celebration. Comet is joined by Santa's helper Jill Swenson from Strickland Place.



TML District Meetings continue in January

When the final session of the 106th TN General Assembly convenes in January, state government leaders will address numerous issues of interest and concern to Tennessee's towns and cities.

To educate our membership on the potential impact these issues might have on municipalities before lawmakers begin their deliberations, TML held five district meetings in December with the remaining three district meetings scheduled for January.

TML staff will be on hand to present updates on the latest events

and news affecting municipalities at the state and national levels, as well as present the League's legislative agenda for the upcoming session.

It is vital that municipal officials

take this opportunity to attend these meetings to prepare for the upcoming session. The following district meetings have been scheduled for January.

District 4	Jan. 8, 2010	Livingston City Hall	11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
District 5	Jan. 11, 2010	Hendersonville Public Library	10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
District 6	Jan. 15, 2010	Brentwood Public Library	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



BY TML STAFF REPORTS

BRENTWOOD

The City Commission authorized \$35,000 to develop and maintain a Web site to promote businesses, especially hotels, to tourists and residents. The Web site, Explore Brentwood, would include businesses with physical addresses inside the city limits only and at no cost to the companies. The city is mailing letters to all Brentwood-based businesses and requesting information to be included on the site.

BRISTOL

Touchstone Wireless will hire 200 to 300 full-time contractors at its West State Street facility during the next three months. Touchstone's vice president for human resources said the wireless company has already added 80 contractors and will bring in 120 to 220 more within 90 days. The workers will earn \$9 an hour as technicians, repairing and servicing cell phones throughout Bristol and East Tennessee.

CHATTANOOGA

Chemco, a technology development consultant firm from Chattanooga, is helping an Arizona-based company, Nth Degree, to market its new paper light bulbs. NASA is partnering with the company and plans on using the bulbs on one of its space crafts. The company may be looking at the Tennessee Valley Corridor to open a new manufacturing plant. "Our best estimate is that we could bring about 20,000 jobs to the corridor," said Chemco owner Lloyd Starks. The corridor stretches from Oak Ridge to Huntsville, Ala. and is currently made up of five states.

CLARKSVILLE

BusinessWeek Magazine named Clarksville the best city in Tennessee to raise your kids. *BusinessWeek's* fourth annual sur-

vey calculated information from several categories. Affordability, safety and school test scores were given the greatest weight. Other criteria included number of schools, household expenditures, air quality, job growth, family income, museums, parks, theaters, other amenities, and diversity. Clarksville was also named by CNN as the fourth best city in the country to start a business.

COVINGTON

The maker of Slim-Fast is recalling all its products in cans because the drinks may contain a micro-organism that could make you sick. All of the recalled Slim-Fast products are from the company's plant in Covington. Unilever United States, Inc. said the canned shakes could be contaminated with *Bacillus cereus*, a micro-organism that may cause diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting. The recall includes all Slim-Fast ready-to-drink products in cans, regardless of flavor, Best-By date, lot code, or UPC number. The company sold the drinks in individual 11 ounce cans and in paper cartons that contained four, six, or 12 cans.

FRANKLIN

The city's first law focused on clearing the city of graffiti would make parents pay when their kids deface others' property. According to a proposed ordinance, parents and legal guardians would be held "jointly and severally liable" for children who get caught vandalizing private and public property. Parents could be forced to pay to remove the graffiti, in addition to paying a fine or serving community service as well. Although the problem of graffiti in Franklin has been mild to date, city officials fear it might spread without swift intervention. Last year, police reported 150 graffiti incidents, and the city parks and street departments together spent \$2,200 in materials and labor to remove graffiti from public spaces.

FRANKLIN

The city Parks Department has created a new shady spot for citizens to enjoy at 429 Cool Springs Blvd. The area is the entry way to the walking trail at Aspen Grove Park. The standing structure with gliders and picnic tables is a great resting place for visitors to take a break from walking or waiting to be seated at their favorite restaurant. The department used in-house staff to design and build this addition to the Aspen Grove Park east entry. The project took approximately two years to design and obtain the materials.

GATLINBURG

Gatlinburg has converted its entire *Winter Magic* winter lights program to quarter-watt LED bulbs, replacing the 5-watt incandescent bulbs and saving the city some 95 percent in energy cost. The change allows the city to light the entire 120 days of the program for what it once cost for three days of electricity.

KINGSPORT

Kingsport's Fiscal Year 2009 City Budget has been acknowledged for clarity and precision in budgeting by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). The 2009 Budget Award marks the 10th consecutive year Kingsport has received the honor. The GFOA is the only national program that evaluates governmental units based on the quality of budgeting. In general, the GFOA examines budget presentations looking for documents that clearly lay out a policy, financial plan and operations guide to aid departments in meeting the budget for the coming fiscal year, as well as employing appropriate communication channels to ensure the public has ready access to the budget document. To view the city of Kingsport budget, visit www.kingsporttn.gov, hover the cursor over City Hall and click "budget."

KNOXVILLE

The University of Tennessee is launching a new statewide initiative to increase math and science teaching statewide, with the help of a \$1.8 million grant. The grant from the



Courtesy of Market Center Management Co.

A rendering depicts the exterior of the proposed Nashville Medical Trade Center, \$250 million facility to be created by a Dallas-based company at the current Nashville Convention Center.

state will allow the university to establish VolsTeach, a program that will retool the way the university trains math and science teachers. The program will allow math and science teachers to graduate in four years, instead of the current five. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the Tennessee State Department of Education provided the initial grant, which the university plans to match with \$2 million of its own money over the next five years. The program will begin for new students in fall 2010, with the goal of enrolling 200 students in four years.

LA VERGNE

The city's "Drug Take Back" program was a major success as citizens dropped off multiple bottles of expired and unused medicines. Sponsored by the Community Anti Drug Coalition of Rutherford County (CADCOR) expired and unused prescriptions—pills, syringes, liquid medicines and other drugs—were received, counted and destroyed. CADCOR's mission statement is "to bring people and organizations together to create a healthy environment and improve the quality of life for citizens by reducing substance abuse, crime and violence."

MURFREESBORO

Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association named Murfreesboro's Gateway among six "Deal-Ready" industrial sites in the region. A certified site is guaranteed to meet or exceed the criteria required by industries seeking a site

for immediate development. The Gateway is along Medical Center Parkway. It includes an interchange with Interstate 24, the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center, The Avenue Murfreesboro center and the future home of a new Middle Tennessee Medical Center.

NASHVILLE

Senior executives of Market Center Management Company (MCMC) of Dallas have announced plans to locate the world's first medical trade center on the site of the current Nashville Convention Center at 601 Commerce Street. The project will be titled the Nashville Medical Trade Center and is slated to be developed on the site of the existing Nashville Convention Center. Development is contingent on MCMC pre-leasing a significant amount of exhibit space and securing financing, as well as the approval of a new \$585 million convention center by the Nashville Metropolitan Council Jan. 19. With plans to build a 12-story structure on top of the largely underground facility, developers estimate the cost of the project to be in the neighborhood of \$250 million and estimate it will create approximately 2,700 new jobs.

VONORE

MasterCraft Boat Co. is recalling laid off workers and ramping up production. The company said it will recall 73 laid off employees. Forty workers returned to work Nov. 23 and another 33 will be back on the job this month, giving the plant a work force of about 325.



PEOPLE



BY TML STAFF REPORTS

Victor Ashe, former Knoxville mayor and ambassador to Poland, has been nominated by President Obama to the nine member Broadcasting Board of Governors. The board is an independent agency responsible for all non-military U.S. government broadcasting organizations, including Voice of America and Radio Free Europe.



Ashe

Lana Seivers, Clinton native, former Oak Ridge educator and Tennessee Education Commissioner will take the helm as dean of Middle Tennessee State University's College of Education in February. Seivers most recently served as executive director and founder of the Mississippi Center for Education Innovation, after stepping down as Gov. Phil Bredesen's education commissioner in 2008.



Seivers

Newly appointed National League of Cities (NLC) president **Mayor Ronald O. Loveridge** pledged to make the voice of cities heard in his Nov. 14 acceptance speech at the

Congress of Cities and Exposition in San Antonio. Loveridge urged city officials to connect with outside opportunities and resources. A professor of political science at UC Riverside since 1965, he was elected to the Riverside, CA city council 28 years ago before being elected mayor in 1994.



Loveridge

George Little, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Correction, announced he will leave his Cabinet position effective Dec. 31. Appointed in 2005, Little is leaving to take a job in Memphis as the city's chief administrative officer under new Mayor A.C. Wharton. Little said that he hopes to help the city do a better job of educating children and improving the city's economy.



Little

Gayle Ray has been appointed by Gov. Bredesen to be the next Commissioner of the Department of Correction. She will assume her new role on Jan. 1, 2010. Ray currently serves as deputy commissioner in the Department of Correction. Ray served as sheriff of Davidson County from 1994 to 2002.

Brigadier General **Terry M. "Max" Haston** has been appointed as Tennessee's 75th Adjutant General. Haston will replace Major General Gus L. Hargrett, Jr., who announced his retirement. Haston is currently the Assistant Adjutant General, Army, Tennessee National Guard. He is a native of McMinnville and currently resides in Knoxville.



Haston

Angie Carrier, White House city manager, has been selected to sit on the 2010-2011 International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Nominating Committee. The committee will meet at the ICMA Annual Conference in San Jose, CA, to conduct interviews with vice presidential candidates.

Nellie B. Patton has joined the city of Murfreesboro as Assistant Transportation Director. She served 33-years with the Tennessee Department of Transportation in various technical and management roles.

Murfreesboro Personnel Department Director and City Treasurer **Sue Mahon** has announced she will retire in April after a 20-year run. Mahon said she is looking forward to spending time with her family.

Kingsport celebrates opening of new state-of-the-art RCAM



Commissioner Matt Kisber joined Kingsport Mayor Dennis Phillips and representatives from Eastman Chemical Company, Domtar Paper Company, the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce and Northeast State Community College for a ribbon cutting and tour of the new Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing (RCAM) Nov. 19.

Commissioner Matt Kisber joined Kingsport Mayor Dennis Phillips and representatives from Eastman Chemical Company, Domtar Paper Company, the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce and Northeast State Community College for a ribbon cutting and tour of the new Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing (RCAM) in November. This state-of-the-art, 27,000 square-foot facility houses eight welding,

process, electrical and instrumentation training labs, in addition to traditional training and lecture rooms and a testing center and computer lab. RCAM was funded through an ECD grant as part of Eastman Chemical's Project Reinvest Initiative. RCAM's program offers three apprenticeship curriculums, two general technology programs and schooling for electromechanical degrees and chemical process operator certificates.

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What will your town send in 2010?

BY VICTORIA SOUTH
TML Communications Coordinator

News tips become BIG TT&C features

What does a cemetery monument have in common with alternative energy or a man-made lake with an award winning education initiative? All are the subjects of feature articles appearing in *Tennessee Town & City* after a news tip was provided by the community.

Contributing news items and information about your town or city or even tidbits about the area can ultimately make a big impact on municipalities across the state. It's an opportunity for TML to spotlight your city and share your ideas and good practices with neighboring communities. After all, we're all in this together!

A monument in Paris

The city had no idea that a tip about a monument forwarded to *Tennessee Town & City* would become a full page feature. But to TML, the event reflects much more than artwork, but the elements of humanity, teamwork and good will as demonstrated by the citizens of Paris.



Paris' monument commemorates a number of African American citizens buried at the city cemetery in unmarked graves.

In 1823, the same year Paris was declared a municipality, a city cemetery was established to bury the dead. Yet, as common for the time period, bodies lay segregated at opposite ends of the lot. Biographical plaques and expensive tombstones recognize white dignitaries buried on the hill, yet little if any history

the State Energy Program and the State Energy Block Grant Program to fund the project and plan to conserve and generate enough green power to offset the costs of Camp Jordan's operation by retrofitting current municipal buildings and park facilities with AES as well.

With multiple partners, includ-



Citizens along with state and local dignitaries came out to help Portland celebrate their Sesquicentennial and Days Gone by Festival in October.

exists about an unknown number of black citizens, most former slaves, in unmarked graves at the far north end. Just two small illegible sandstone markers remain to bear witness that anyone is buried along the grassy slope.

Hoping to rectify the situation, Paris citizen Georg Todd, who is black and Carl Holder, who is white, rallied an entire community into action. One year later, both black and white citizens held a commemorative service to christen a large decorative obelisk at the north end of the cemetery honoring these long forgotten souls. The inscription reads:

Nearby are the unmarked graves of an undetermined number of slaves and others of African-American descent who though lacking personal freedom or equality of standing as citizens contributed to the building of our community through their physical toil, perseverance and unfettered spirituality. Though they are unknown, we commemorate their lives and pledge to seek the fulfillment of their hopes and dreams in their descendants. For these purposes we dedicate this monument - Citizens of Paris, 2006.

East Ridge: The Green Zone

Thank you so much for the outstanding spread on the Green Zone—East Ridge City Manager William Whitson.

The city of East Ridge demonstrates what imagination in local government can achieve. The possibility of a green glow along I-75 captured the attention of Gov. Phil Bredesen as well, who met with East Ridge officials about their plans for a Green Zone initiative in Camp Jordan Park, an existing 257-acre recreational park located along I-75.

"The Zone" would blanket 10 to 15 acres of parkland where research, classes, interactive models, displays and green job training would be provided at a new 6,000 square foot state-of-the-art Leed Platinum certified educational facility.

The building would support field demonstration, and applied research-oriented activities for middle school, high school, college and graduate students as well as businesses.

The city requested funds from

state agencies, Carroll County Lake is under construction at Reedy Creek, near the Leach community off U.S.70 on the west and 22 on the east side.

The lake will hold around 17,000 acre-feet of water and feature 22.5 miles of new shoreline dedicated to incoming residential and business development. Surrounding the lake, 300 acres of farmland will be transformed into a wetland habitat created by the West Tennessee River Basin Authority and the largest wetlands mitigation project in the Southeast. Carroll County Lake is projected to be open to the public in 2012.

Kingsport Education Initiative

The city was excited about being a finalist when it notified TT&C that its education initiative, "Educate and Grow," was in line for the coveted 2009 Innovations in American Government Award presented by The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Since the story broke in TT&C, Kingsport's status has changed to "winner" and one of six government initiatives honored at an awards reception in Washington, D.C.

Hard times were the catalyst that brought education into play when community leaders found themselves dealing with a major decline in the area's manufacturing base. The city was lacking in a diversified economic base as well as a skilled workforce.

In 2001, Kingsport officials collaborated with the Sullivan County school board to develop and finance a host of new programs to enhance academic outcomes of Kingsport students and build a more qualified workforce.

Among these initiatives, the city's K-14 program, a first in the nation, extends public high school by an optional two years to provide students with additional training and technical skills. Designed to capitalize on Kingsport's 53 percent daily commuter population increase, the city also underwent a series of infrastructure enhancements, building an "academic village" in close proximity to the city's business center.

Among the offerings is the new Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing (RCAM) opened in November. This state-of-the-art, 27,000 square-foot facility houses eight welding, process, electrical and instrumentation training labs, in addition to traditional training and lecture rooms and a testing center and computer lab. RCAM was funded through an ECD grant as part of Eastman Chemical's Project Reinvest Initiative.

As part of their winning designation, Kingsport received a grant toward sharing its innovation with other jurisdictions around the country.

Brentwood, Franklin awarded for Automatic Fire Aid Agreement

"It just makes sense," said the chiefs of the Brentwood and Franklin Fire Departments concerning the automatic aid agreement both departments have entered into. Apparently The Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) thinks it makes sense as well. The GNRC presented both departments with an Excellence in Public Safety award for their success with the automatic aid agreement and TT&C was happy to tell the story.

"Franklin firefighters have to drive past a Brentwood Fire Station to get to The Landings Apartments," said Franklin Fire Chief Rocky Garzarek. "Now, dispatchers will notify that Brentwood station automatically and they could potentially arrive on the scene first when there is a fire."

Previously the fire departments had provided mutual aid to one another acting solely upon request, where under the new agreement, residents of both communities have the added security of having Brentwood and Franklin fire departments on the scene each and every time at no cost to the taxpayers.

The two communities are part of only a handful of fire departments participating in Tennessee. However, the effort was not without challenges. The departments' radio systems had to unite as well. They operated on different frequencies,



Kingsport Center for Higher Education rendering

Brentwood's on UHF and Franklin on an 800 megahertz system.

According to Bill Jorgensen, director of Williamson County Emergency Communications, the county provided \$15,000 from the general fund for the necessary conversion equipment to create a Franklin Fire Department UHF gateway where the two fire departments can communicate freely and effectively.

"In a fire, every second counts," notes Brentwood Fire Chief Kenny

The scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War in 1864, the property had been fashioned into a stately golf course and clubhouse since the 60s until the city recently acquired the property and began restoration efforts. During the restoration process, the city, working with the group Franklin's Charge surveyed the former golf course sand traps prior to their removal. The findings were significant: a six pound iron solid cannon ball,



The Brentwood and Franklin fire departments have been awarded by the GNRC for their performance in an automatic fire aid agreement.

Lane. "Any way that we can reduce response times will provide additional protection for our citizens and firefighters."

Portland's Sesquicentennial

Anytime's something gets to be 150 years old, it's worth celebrating.—State Rep. Mike McDonald.

When Portland sent us the news of its upcoming Sesquicentennial celebration, they were simply eyeing a spot in the newspaper's "Festival" section, but TT&C attended along with citizens and state and local officials to celebrate the big day.

Oct. 31, 1859, is the day the first

Hotchkiss artillery shells, pottery or dish shards, a spoon, two ax heads, several bricks, a ceramic wheel and various pieces of iron.

Earlier, the bones of a civil war soldier were discovered by construction crews on the site of the Battle of Franklin. The soldier was laid to rest with full military honors in historic Rest Haven Cemetery.

"Most of these artifacts date back to the Civil War, but some may indicate earlier wars," said City Administrator Eric Stuckey. "If possible, we may do more surveys as we restore the battlefield to its original state. Obviously, there is a story here."



During the restoration of Franklin's battlefield, the city discovered some Civil War artifacts including a six pound iron solid cannon ball.

Louisville and Nashville train thundered toward the Richland Station Depot at the east end of Main Street. (Portland was originally called Richland.) From that day forward, the depot became the social and economic hub for Portland, the little city that grew up to become the strawberry capitol of the world.

Portland is still growing strong. With its annual strawberry festival, 50 manufacturers and imminent growth along a widened highway 109, the community looks forward to celebrating major milestones in the next 150 years.

Franklin Battlefield Artifacts

Communications Manager Milissa Reiersen, shared the scoop with TT&C in her article about Franklin's fascinating archeological discoveries along the Eastern Flank Battlefield. The Eastern Flank Battlefield is located southeast of downtown Franklin, about one mile from the town square.

Contact Us:

Please consider submitting news about events, developments, awards, municipal plans, updates about local landmarks, community programs, citizen's awards or other interesting happenings in your town or city to *Tennessee Town & City*, read by legislators and city officials from all across the state.

Send news tips to: Victoria South, Communications Coordinator, *Tennessee Town & City*, e-mail vsouth@tml.org or Carole Graves, editor, *Tennessee Town & City* e-mail cgraves@tml.org or call us at 615-255-6416.

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BY TML STAFF REPORTS

The Lumina Foundation for Education will spend up to \$1.2 million in Tennessee on a multi-year initiative to implement model programs for re-enrolling and graduating adult students who have left college and revising the state's higher education funding formula and Performance Funding program. The grant, which comes amid budget shortfalls and rising college enrollments, is one of seven awarded nationally as part of the foundation's effort to increase productivity by promoting significant changes in how states fund and deliver higher education.

The Department of Economic and Community Development has launched a program, Tennessee Downtowns, to help Tennessee cities and counties revitalize their downtowns through technical assistance, training and grants. Up to six innovation project grants will be awarded. Successful applicants will also receive an 18-month program of technical assistance which includes training on downtown revitalization and historic preservation, an introductory site visit, attendance at a two-day downtown revitalization workshop and a grant of up to \$15,000. For more information about the Tennessee Downtowns initiative, visit www.tennesseemainstreet.org.

The Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation is offering a green stretch of real estate about 120 miles northeast of Nashville near Pickett State Park. The previous owners placed a conservation easement on the land to keep development limited to only three houses. The couple donated the land to sell, so more land can be conserved. To contact the foundation, call 615-386-3171.

Like Cash For Clunkers, the government is now offering cash for consumers who upgrade their appliances. Tennesseans will be eligible for up to \$250 in rebates on air source heat pumps and air conditioners next year, as part of the federal stimulus package, according to the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. The rebates will be available starting April 22, 2010. Consumers can receive a rebate of \$250 for air source heat pumps and central air conditioners with an Energy Star designation. Room air conditioners will be eligible for a \$40 rebate. The program's administrative and rebates will total \$5.9 million. The state estimates the rebates will save almost \$1.4 million in and reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air by 32 million pounds annually.

Thanks to a new state law, rules, regulations and licenses soon will be required for all Tennessee court reporters. The Tennessee Court Reporting Board is tasked with serving as the board of professional responsibility for Tennessee court reporters. The seven-member body – whose members were first nominated and then appointed by Gov. Phil Bredesen – met in Nov. to elect its officers and lay out its agenda.

Experts predict that up to 30 percent of the \$1.2 trillion in economic stimulus money Federal, state and local officials are currently spending could be lost to fraud, at the expense to taxpayers. With the American Relief and Recovery Act, Tennessee is slated to get a total of \$4.5 billion. The Knoxville FBI is investigating about a dozen cases possibly linked to stimulus money involving fraud between the contractors and many of the sub-contractors that would be hired to complete the projects. The Knoxville FBI team is working overdrive trying to track the large amount of stimulus money that could already be in the wrong hands.

The national unemployment rate dropped two-tenths of a percent from October. The Labor Department said employers shed 11,000 jobs, the fewest since the recession began in December 2007. Upward revisions showed the nation lost 159,000 fewer jobs in September and October than previously thought. Though Americans are still losing jobs, the pullback in layoffs was enough to cut the jobless rate from 10.2 percent in October, when it crossed into double-digit territory for the first time since 1983.

A new Facebook page is designed to help the state's arts industry share their creative ideas. The page, Arts Agency Idea Exchange, has more than 100 members and continues to grow. There has been some interest outside the state, with individuals from the West Coast and Arizona joining. The page was spurred by a recent Tennessee Arts Commission conference.

Eligibility for AccessTN, a state-administered high-risk health insurance plan, now includes children. The program typically covers adults who have been denied insurance coverage due to a pre-existing condition. Enrollment in Cover-Kids, a state-administered insurance program for children that had covered children in that category, has been suspended due to budget limits. Premiums for children will range from \$284 to \$410 per month. Premium assistance, which can cover up to 60 percent of monthly premiums and is subject to available funding, is possible for families earning less than \$75,000 a year. To qualify for the program, an applicant must be a Tennessee resident, U.S. citizen or qualified legal alien and be considered uninsurable because of a pre-existing health condition.

Tennessee traffic deaths are down significantly this year. According to the Tennessee Highway Patrol, 829 people have died in state wrecks, down 99 from this time in 2008. For 2008, there were 1,043 traffic fatalities in the state, down 14 percent from 1,211 in 2007. Troopers said the best way to save lives on the highway is using seat belts.

Tennessee lawmakers want more information on a state program that allows low-level radioactive waste into regular landfills around the state. State officials say Tennessee's program was developed because of its proximity to so

many nuclear facilities and doesn't handle cases individually. Instead, it has a licensing process that makes disposal more economical and quicker. State rules allow landfills to use less than five percent of their space for very low-level wastes. The wastes in the landfills can expose no one to more than 1 millirem of radioactivity a year. That compares with the average 360 millirems a person can expect generally in a year.

Tennessee could be at risk of losing millions of dollars in federal grants for not complying with the National Sex Offender Registry. More than three years after Congress ordered stepped-up monitoring of sex offenders, only one state has adopted the government's strict new requirements. Tennessee must decide to either adopt the new requirements or ignore the law and pay a penalty. If the state does not comply, millions of dollars in federal grants could be lost. State leaders do not know how much it would cost to adopt the new requirements. Congress has extended the initial compliance deadline to July 2010.

Two years after the General Assembly passed a bill to ban smoking from most workplaces, including restaurants, supporters say the law should be extended to include places that are now exempt. The advocacy group Campaign for a Healthy and Responsible Tennessee, or CHART, wants to eliminate exemptions in the law that include allowing smoking at places like 21-and-up establishments, hotel and motel rooms, workplaces with "garage-door" access, and sites with three or fewer workers.

Tennessee is finally inching its way out of the bottom on the list of healthy states. A recent survey shows Tennessee has moved from 48th to 44th. The United Health Foundation uses obesity, tobacco use, and violent crimes to come up with its rankings.

Small business lending in Tennessee has jumped significantly in recent months due to federal stimulus efforts, according to the Small Business Administration. Total small business loans in the state under the SBA's most popular 7(a) program hovered around \$35 million in the third quarter of 2008. As Wall Street stumbled and credit began to freeze, SBA lending in Tennessee declined to about \$23 million in the fourth quarter of 2008. It then dropped to roughly \$15 million by the first quarter of 2009.

Effective in 2010, the state is taking the collection of business taxes and the renewal of business licenses away from the local city and county governments, which had been performing that function. Entrepreneurs will still go to the appropriate city or county office to obtain a new business license, but from that point forward the state will handle license renewals and collection of the business tax. Businesses which file their sales tax reports electronically will now be required to file their business tax returns electronically as well. The state claims that the changes will make tax collections more efficient and that, by cross-referencing business tax records with sales tax records, they will be able to ensure that businesses pay their fair share.

All local governments in compliance with GASB

Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury Justin Wilson recently announced that Tennessee is now one of the very few states where there is 100 percent compliance by local governments with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 34.

He attributed the hard work and dedication of the General Assembly and local government officials for reaching this goal.

"All local governments in Tennessee are now in compliance with this standard," said Wilson. "This is a milestone achievement and should be a source of pride for all Tennesseans."

The purpose of GASB Statement No. 34, *Basic Financial Statements and Management's Discussion and Analysis for State and Local Governments*, was to make government financial statements more user-friendly for people who access government financial information, to help states and local governments make better operating decisions and to make it easier to compare financial information from different state and local governments.

The Government Accounting Standards Board is responsible for establishing accounting standards for state and local governments in the United States. GASB Statement No. 34 was issued in June 1999 and is considered one of the most far-reaching – if not *the* most far-reaching – accounting standard ever is-

sued by GASB. This standard is extremely detailed and difficult to implement.

The state of Tennessee implemented Statement No.34 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2002, as required by the standard. However, due to the complexity of the standard, many local governments in Tennessee had difficulty complying and weren't able to present financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

In 2003, former Comptroller John Morgan suggested a process for helping local governments achieve compliance with GASB Statement No. 34 and in May 2004 the General Assembly established a special joint committee that focused on financial accounting and reporting standards. The committee recommended legislation, later approved by the General Assembly, known as the Local Government Modernization Act of 2005. The purpose of the legislation was and is to ensure that local governments in Tennessee maintain adequate accounting records and comply with GAAP. Compliance with GAAP would help ensure local governments maintain their bond ratings.

"As of June 30, 2009, every county and city in Tennessee has implemented this standard, a remarkable accomplishment for which each and every Tennessean can be proud," said Wilson.

State retirement officials working to set 2010 rates

The Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) board of trustees adopted the 2009 actuarial valuation for the pension plan on Nov. 20, 2009. The actuarial valuation includes new employer contribution rates for the state and K-12 teachers, Retirement Director Jill Bachus said. Bachus noted that the actuary is still working on new contribution rates for local governments that participate in TCRS. Those rates will be available in January 2010.

The actuarial report is available on the TCRS web page at www.treasury.tn.gov/tcrs/ActuarialInfo.html. TCRS will be holding a series of employer meetings across the state in which local government fiscal staff will have opportunities to discuss administrative aspects of TCRS and get copies of the actuarial employer balance sheet with the new rate. More information about the meetings can be found at www.treasury.tn.gov/tcrs. The balance sheets will also be mailed. Beginning in January, employers can call (615) 741-1971 to

find out if rate information is available.

Just as they did for the state and K-12 teachers, employer contribution rates for local governments are expected to increase, Director Bachus said. Key factors contributing to the increase include the difficult investment markets and the fact that many retirees are living longer. The TCRS board of trustees has taken some actions to mitigate the rate increases - including a change in the cost-of-living projection - to better reflect actual experience. The board also decided to spread out the funding of liabilities over longer periods of time.

Bachus pointed out that the TCRS investment staff beat 80 percent of the country's public pension plans in investment performance during the economic downturn. She believes full recovery from the market downturn will be difficult, but the pension plan should return to a much better funded status in time.

"Keep in mind TCRS is designed to be a long-term plan," said Bachus.

U.S. DOT secretary announces \$280 M in available grant money

GRANTS from Page 1
announce final selections on the website and in the Federal Register.

Proposals for the Urban Circulator program may be submitted to FTA electronically at UrbanCirculator@dot.gov or through the GRANTS.GOV APPLY function.

Proposals for the Livability Bus program may be submitted to FTA electronically at buslivability@dot.gov or through the GRANTS.GOV APPLY function.

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City officials updated on legislative issues at TML District Meetings



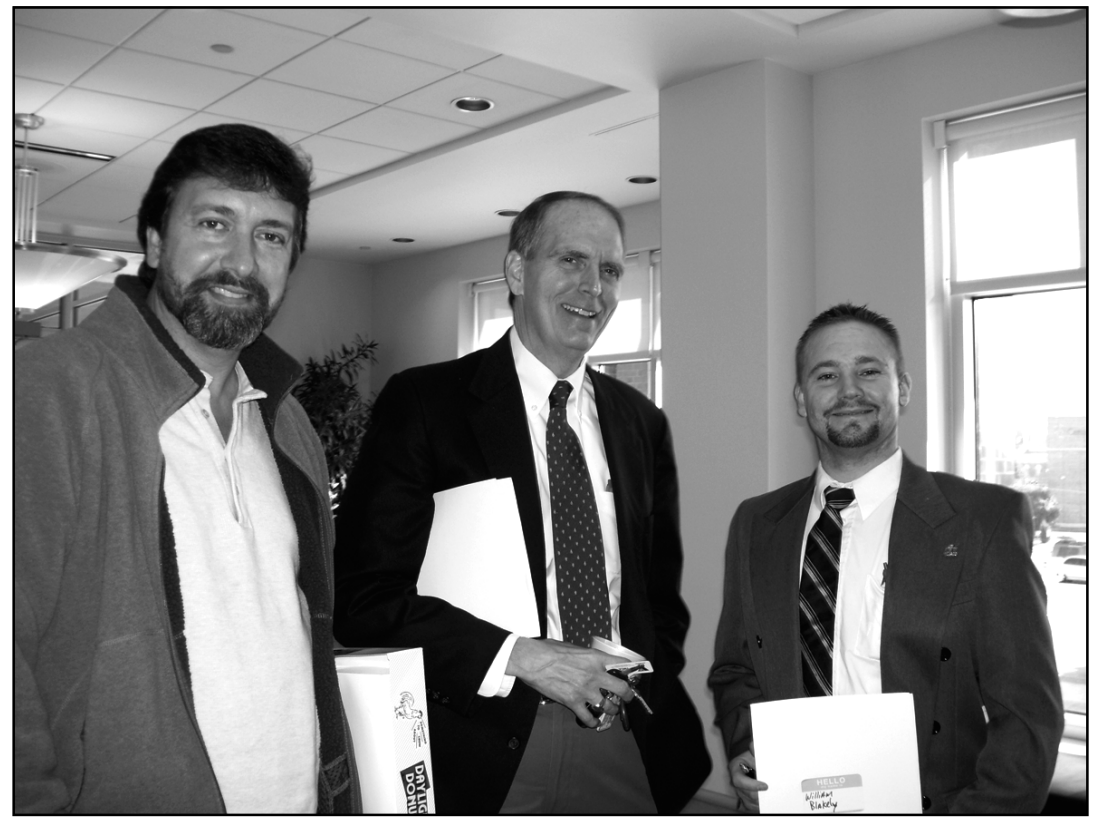
Jane Myron, Johnson City mayor, and Janet Jennings, Johnson City finance director
Photos by Denise Paige



Shari Brown, Bristol community development director, and Bob Wilson, Johnson City assistant city manager



Margaret Mahery, TML executive director, and Joy Baker, Johnson City risk manager



Keith Paxton, Greeneville alderman; Jim Warner, Greeneville city recorder; and William Blakely, Mt. Carmel alderman

State faces \$1 billion budget shortfall

ECONOMY from Page 1

Fox said that for total revenues, Tennessee would need to have a 14 percent growth rate from now to the end of the fiscal year in order to just collect as much as last year.

"To put this in perspective, my 2010 forecast is about \$1 billion lower than 2008 revenues, and 2011 is \$600 million less than 2007," said Fox. "So we are still dramatically lower than our peak years of 2007 and 2008. The base is still very low," said Fox.

November Revenues

Commissioner Goetz reported that November tax collections is the fourth consecutive month this fiscal year and the 18th consecutive month beginning November 2007 that sales tax collections have come in under the budgeted estimates.

Sales tax collections were \$21.2 million less than the estimate for November with a growth rate of negative 4.45 percent.

"If there's a bright spot, it's worth noting that the growth rate for sales tax collections in November, while still negative, fared slightly better than the month before, when it was negative 7.8 percent," Goetz said. "It's important to remember we won't see how after-Thanksgiving retail sales performed until this time next month, when we've collected revenues for November spending."

Year-to-date collections for four months were \$114.8 million less than the budgeted

estimate with a year-to-date growth rate of negative 7.52 percent.

Estimates of the total revenue shortfall this year could range from \$700 million to more than \$1 billion. After cutting \$750 million in the 2009-10 state budget, Gov. Phil Bredesen has asked all departments to prepare 2010-11 budget proposals with 6 to 9 percent cuts.

National Outlook

Tennessee is not alone in its current financial situation. Thirty-six states face budget shortfalls totaling \$28 billion in the fiscal year that began just five months ago, according to a new 50-state report. The assessment predicts another \$56 billion in shortfalls across 35 states next fiscal year and \$69 billion in shortfalls across 23 states the year after that.

The analysis by the National Conference of State Legislatures is the latest to point to a long period of money problems ahead for state governments, which historically have faced budget crises even after national recessions are declared over. Many economists, the report notes, believe the current recession ended sometime in the third quarter of this year.

According to NCSL, Oklahoma and Arizona must deal with the nation's largest budget gaps this fiscal year — at 18.5 percent and 18 percent of their general fund budgets, respectively. They are followed by Illinois (16.5 percent), Hawaii (13 percent) and New Mexico (11.8 percent).

Unemployment trust fund still not stable

UNEMPLOYMENT from Page 1

taxed from \$7,000 to \$9,000 and raised the tax rate by point-six percent.

The new tax rate brings Tennessee inline with the Southeast average of \$9,000 but still ranks below the nation average of \$11,570.

The measure also included a retroactive provision that made implementation of the new rate effective January 2009.

"Had we not had retroactivity in the bill, we would have had to borrow money from the Feds," said Neeley. "And it would be tough paying back any borrowed money while trying to build the fund."

Neeley reported that in 2009, 30 states have increased their UI taxes; 21 states have increased their taxable wage base; 15 states have increased their contribution rates; seven states have increased both their contribution rates and their taxable wage bases; and 24 states are currently borrowing money from the federal government.

One option Tennessee officials are considering is for the state to borrow short-term from the federal government, which it can do provided it pays the money back by June 30, the end of the fiscal year.

Extended Benefits

On Nov. 6, President Obama signed HR 3548, the "Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009." Among

other things, the law allows for a 14-week extension of unemployment benefits for claimants in all states and an additional six weeks of benefits for claimants in states with high unemployment, which is defined as a three-month average total unemployment rate of 8.5 percent or higher.

The national unemployment rate was 4.9 percent when the recession began in December 2007. According to Fox, by the time this recession is over, job losses will reach 8 million nationwide. "That is as many as four recessions combined," he said.

Currently, 27 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico qualify for the additional six weeks.

Tennesseans who exhaust their State Extended Benefits (EB09) after Dec. 17, will automatically transition into the new program without having to reapply.

"During this slow economic period, we have seen an unprecedented number of Tennesseans staying on unemployment until they exhaust their benefits," said Neeley. "This will give those who are still looking for work more time to cover their expenses through the holidays and into 2010."

This federally funded extension is the fourth announcement of benefits beyond the initial 26 weeks of unemployment compensation provided by the state.

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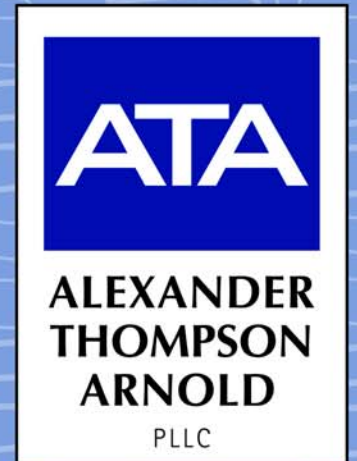
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Farewells precede political changes

FAREWELLS from Page 1

"Betty Ann and I have been honored and humbled by the support granted us through the years. The many kindnesses and friendships extended to us are something we cherish and for which we will be forever grateful," he said.

The news falls on the heels of the loss of longtime state Rep. Larry Turner, 70, a well-respected 24-year veteran of the Tennessee General Assembly who passed away recently after an extended illness. Representing the south Memphis District 85 since his election in 1984, Turner's most notable legislative victories dealt with education, predatory lending and helping restore rights to felons. He was secretary of the House Democratic Caucus and a member of several committees, including the House Education and Commerce committees.

Always involved in community activities including civil rights, Rep. Turner was widely known for voting according to his conscience and convictions, even if his was the lone vote. Late in his first session of 1985-87, he cast the only nay vote during a special session called to oust Judge Ira Murphy.

"Sometimes it may be politically expedient to vote a certain way, but I don't do the politically expedient thing if I don't think it adequately represents people's sense of their real needs," Turner said in a

2008 TT&C interview.

Because Turner's death vacated the seat less than a year before the 2010 general election, it will be filled by an interim appointment by the Shelby County Commission. According to the Secretary of State's office, Article II Sect. 15 states that a special election to fill a state legislative seat will be held only if a vacancy is created "12 months or more" before the next general election.

According to Richard Holden, administrator of Elections with the Memphis/Shelby County Commission, the commission will likely appoint an interim lawmaker before the next session of the legislature.

In a landslide victory, Republican Brian Kelsey secured former state Sen. Paul Stanley's District 31 seat against Democrat Adrienne Pakis-Gillon. A special election was held following Stanley's resignation in light of a recent scandal involving a legislative intern. Kelsey, 31, an attorney and state representative since 2004, won the seat easily with 7,120 votes to Pakis-Gillon's 2,394 votes. The district covers most of Germantown and sections of Bartlett, Cordova, East Memphis and Hickory Hill.

"I'm truly humbled by the opportunity to serve the people in the state Senate," Kelsey said.

The next legislative session reconvenes Jan. 12, 2010.



Pictured at NLC's annual business meeting are: Davis Mosby, Oak Ridge councilmember; Myron Lowery, Memphis councilmember; Bo Perkins, Athens vice mayor; Tommy Green, Alamo mayor; Bob Kirk, Dyersburg alderman; Dot LaMarche, Farragut vice mayor; Keith McDonald, Bartlett mayor; Margaret Mahery, TML executive director; Charles "Bones" Seivers, president and CEO Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund; and Bobby Simmons, Bartlett alderman.

NLC's 2009 Congress of Cities focuses on helping cities navigate economic recovery

About 50 members of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) joined thousands of municipal leaders from across the country for the 2009 National League of Cities' (NLC) Congress of Cities and Exposition in San Antonio. Attendees participated in numerous sessions discussing ways cities can navigate the economic recovery, while also learning about the latest city innovations in public safety, economic development, public finance, infrastructure and sustainability.

Conference delegates heard from Michael Strautmanis, chief of staff to Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor and assistant to the President for intergovernmental relations and public engagement; William Freund, chief economist emeritus of the New York Stock Exchange; Ed Begley Jr., actor, author and environmental activist; and political author and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. Additionally, Alejandro Mayorkas, director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services, discussed what citizenship means to cities.

Margaret Mahery, TML executive director, said this conference gives local elected officials the opportunity to attend workshops and to

gain ideas from others across the country. The conference also offered attendees the ability to see successful examples of San Antonio city programs. Mobile workshops included San Antonio River Improvements Projects (Museum Reach), Office of Emergency Management, Voelcker Park and Linear Creekway Development Program, Haven for Hope Transformational Campus and Mission Verde.

TML President Tommy Pedigo, mayor of Sparta, said San Antonio is one of the nicest towns in America. "We all need to be working together like officials do here," Pedigo said.

Attendees participated in leadership training seminars, explored the latest products and services from exhibitors and learned about innovative and award-winning programs for cities and towns through the City Showcase.

William "Bo" Perkinson, vice mayor of Athens, made a presentation on the NLC's Prescription Drug Program and told how his citizens have already saved more than \$65,000 in nine months by participating. Across the country citizens have saved almost \$1 million by using this free NLC/ CVS Caremark

Prescription Drug Card. The city of Memphis joined this program about two months ago, and citizens here have already saved more than \$20,000.

In other NLC highlights, Memphis Councilmembers Barbara Swearingen Ware, Janis Fullilove and Myron Lowery will serve as board members of NBC/LEO, the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials. NBC/LEO is the largest group of African American elected officials in the United States and the group is planning to hold its Summer Conference in Memphis in 2010.

Participants also had an opportunity to build a playground at San Antonio's West End Park with the help of KaBOOM!, a national non-profit dedicated to bringing play back into children's lives and Huggies Brand.

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

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BY TML STAFF REPORTS

First-time buyers taking advantage of a special tax credit gave sales of existing homes in October their biggest surge in a decade. There are now bidding wars for houses in some cities, and home sales are nearly 36 percent above their low point in Jan. The National Association of Realtors said resales rose 10.1 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.1 million in Oct., the biggest monthly increase in a decade. The gains mainly reflected the tax credit of up to \$8,000 for new homeowners, which was due to expire before Congress extended it until spring — and expanded it to more buyers.

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Cities' recession deficits: belated blow to United States economy?

BY NEAL PEIRCE

In the 1930s, America underwent its grinding, years-long Great Depression. Now, at a minimum, we have the Great Recession. It's the severest downturn in 70 years. And without a fiscal lifeline to struggling cities, it could conceivably get even worse.

This is the alarming conclusion of last month's joint study and conference of the Brookings Institution and the National League of Cities (NLC), including a panel of mayors from across the nation.

It's true, many economists now say our recessionary downward spiral has stopped. But, warned the NLC's Christopher Hoene, past recessions show that "the low point for cities," in terms of their revenue and expenditure numbers, "typically comes 18 months to 24 months after the low point of the recession"—a particularly disturbing fact because, economists tell us, the current recession's "low point" has just been hit.

The delayed impact occurs because property tax collections, the revenue mainstay for most cities, don't decline until after an entire cycle of reduced assessments to reflect declining house values.

Even before that, cities and towns are finding themselves engulfed in a daunting, widespread fiscal crisis. Deep workforce cuts, sharply reduced services and cancelled infrastructure projects are reported across the country. Each cut, as it occurs, reduces economic activity and intensifies the recession.

Most attention has gone to the fiscal woes of state governments. But the states at least had a chance to trim their deficits with a major infusion of cash through last winter's \$787 billion American Recovery

and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

But the act, written for "shovel ready" speeds, sent the lion's share of its government aid to states, leaving scraps—relatively—for local governments. Cities are benefitting a bit from ARRA's special energy conservation grants and a temporary uptick in Community Development Block Grant funds. And the act has reportedly saved 350,000 jobs in schools. But its funds scarcely helped cities' core budgets.

The result of still-worsening city fiscal fortunes, report Hoene and Mark Muro of the Brookings Institution, could be "a deepening local government fiscal crisis that hobbles the nation's incipient recovery with several years of layoffs, cancelled contracts with vendors, and reduced services."

One factor darkening cities' recovery hopes is the long-term decline of federal assistance. In the 1970s, notes NLC Executive Director Don Borut, federal programs financed about 17 percent of city budgets. Today, the figure's about 5 percent. Borut sees "an unraveling of the intergovernmental system and inattention to and a disregard of the fundamental interdependence of local, state and federal government."

Cities, of course, have their own critics. They're faulted for adding too many workers in good economic times, and—to avoid immediate wage hikes—offering unwise pension concessions to workers. But the cities can hardly be faulted for escalating health care costs that now are gnawing away at their bottom lines. Or state laws that sometimes force them into expensive agreements with police and fire unions.

The fact — as the mayors like to note — is that city and metropolitan economies generate more than 80 percent of the nation's economic ac-

tivity. "If we're going to pump the economy, create jobs" to offset the forces of recession, suggests San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, federal assistance should go to cities and regions. Why? Because, he asserts, that's where economic potential — the country's "greatest, long-term return on our investment" — is concentrated.

Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, who's been forced to go through a series of massive budget cutbacks, believes that "quietly," many federal officials would "admit" they erred by running the bulk of ARRA money through the states. On top of that, Nutter is critical of Washington for giving "a bunch of money to banks who now won't lend it to anyone because they need to hold onto it." And for promoting the idea that some banks and investment firms are "too big to fail."

Too big to fail? How about the nation's cities and their metro regions? Nutter asks: They have "obligations and responsibilities that are far greater, and at least as important, as anything that's going on in terms of business and industry. We provide desperately needed services and drive the economic engines in our cities and metropolitan areas unlike any other industry in the United States."

No question about it, this is unusually bold assertiveness from urban America. And it's likely to become more strident as the cities' finances worsen with the delayed property tax hit.

The Obama Administration is intent on coordinating urban programs in such areas as housing and transportation. But it's lent the cities and metros a deaf ear on fiscal policy. Checking where the votes are — and our economic future lies — may oblige it to change its tune.

**January 28: Cleveland**

Stitches-In-Time Quilt Exhibit
Held at Museum Center at Five Points, 200 Inman Street East. The museum's most popular annual judged exhibit of more than 90 quilts submitted from throughout the southeast. Both antique and contemporary quilts on display. Workshops and lectures will be held throughout the run of the exhibit. For more information, call 423-339-5745 or visit www.museumcenter.org

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Municipal Administration Program January Schedule

Legal Issues (4399)

managers/town administrators, clerks and recorders, HR managers and city attorneys.

Instructors

Melissa Ashburn, Legal Consultant

Time

Public administration courses begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 12:30 p.m.

Dates and locations

Jan. 13 Collegedale

Jan. 14 Franklin

Jan. 19 Jackson

Jan. 20 Lakeland

Jan. 27 Johnson City

Jan. 28 Knoxville

Training Facilities

Collegedale *Collegedale City Hall, 4910 Swinyar Drive*

Franklin *Williamson County Exposition Center, 4215 Long Lane*

Jackson West *Tennessee Center for Agricultural Research, Extension & Public Service, 605 Airways Blvd.*

Lakeland, *International Harvester Club House, 4523 Canada Road*

The MTAS Legal Issues class covers a variety of topics impacting city governments, including employment law and code enforcement issues. The class will review the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008, amendments to the Family and Medical Leave Act and the state and federal requirements for military leave and reemployment of military personnel.

Updates on the Open Records and Open Meetings laws will also be provided. The class also reviews code enforcement actions under the Slum Clearance Act and city authority to clean up overgrown and dirty lots and recoup costs.

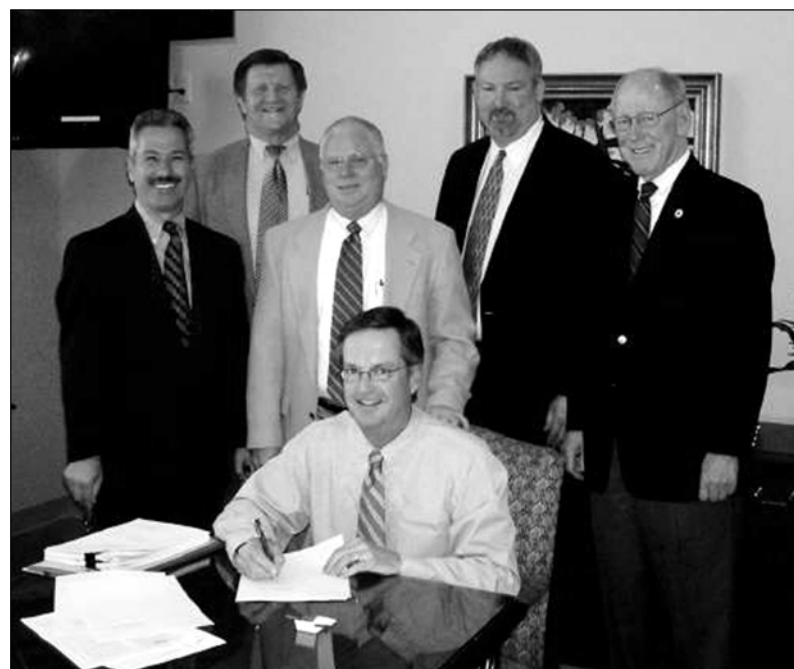
The Tennessee Clean Energy Future Act of 2009 will be explained and information will be provided about the impact of this law on local code enforcement, as well as potential impact on the hiring and certification of codes employees.

Who Should Attend?

This course will be of interest to city



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The city of Murfreesboro closes a \$103 million loan, the largest in TMBF history.



The town of Nolensville closes a \$21,000 loan.

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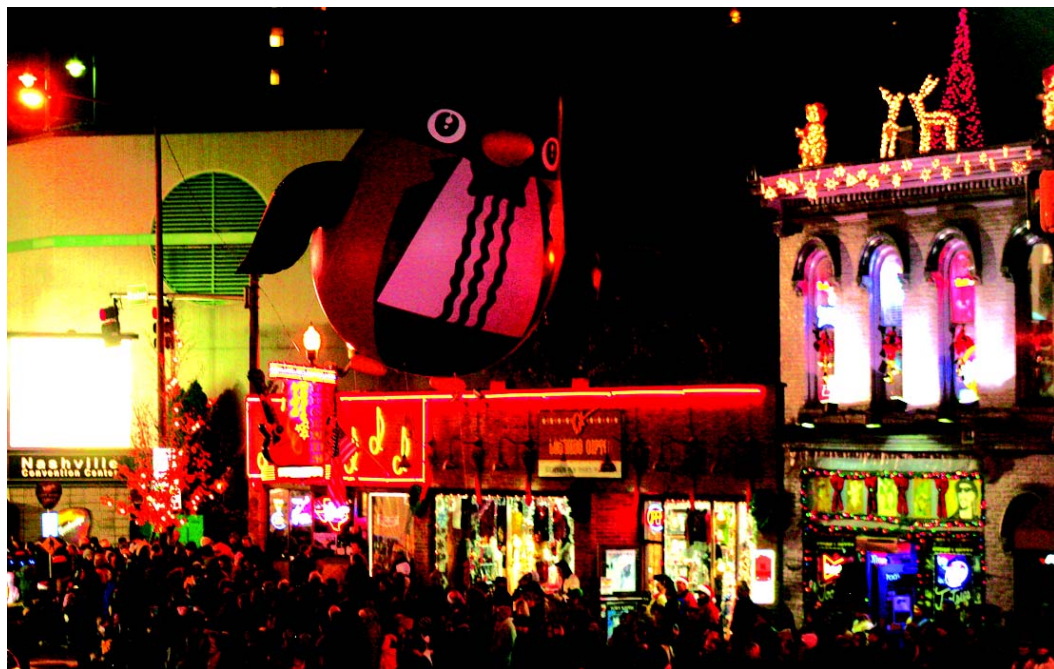
Cities turn out for a tender Tennessee Christmas



Santa's arrival, trees on the square, crafts, stories and concessions are just a sampling of the festive activities for North Pole Family Fun Day, part of "Downtown Unwrapped," a series of special holiday events in Paris.



Santa brightens the day with gifts for underprivileged children living in the Appalachian region as The Santa Train makes its annual run from Kingsport.



This giant penguin balloon is a sign of colder days ahead as it makes its way down Broadway in Nashville's annual Christmas parade.



Tullahoma's Robert E. Lee School Energy Team recycling float won the "Creating Educational Opportunities" award.

Photo By Kelly Hite



Holy cow! Mayfield's giant bovine is on the moove at Athens' annual Christmas parade.



The city of Alcoa decks the halls of their municipal building in style.



Old St. Nick makes a grand appearance at Gatlinburg's annual Christmas parade.



Johnson City's furry friends get in on the fun at the city's annual Christmas parade.



The city of Red Bank launched the holiday season with a parade down Dayton Boulevard.



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Athens Vice Mayor Bo Perkinson – banker and community leader

BY GAEL STAHL

William Bo Perkinson's roots are deep in Athens and McMinn County where he has served on numerous boards and authorities.

The families of his parents, Janet Bohannon Perkinson and William Luther "W. L." Perkinson, have been in the area for generations. Bo Perkinson reflects both families. He says that many people do not know that Bo, from Bohannon, is not a nickname but his given birth name.

The Athens vice-mayor was born in 1952 in Loudon County, but moved to Athens when he was two years old. Growing up in Athens, his home was so close to each of the schools he attended, he walked to school from elementary school through high school. An avid tennis player and member of the varsity tennis team, Bo accepted a tennis scholarship to Tennessee Wesleyan College (TWC) in Athens.

While at TWC, he met his wife, Lynn. Following Bo's graduation with an accounting degree in 1974, he went to work at First National Bank of Athens as an auditor. Lynn graduated two years later with a degree in education. The two were married in June 1976 and have a daughter, Lindsay, born in 1980, and a son, Tyler, born in 1982.

Perkinson, a calm, measured man by temperament, gets rather excited talking about the joys of growing up and raising children in a small town with Athens' excellent schools and being active at church and Boy Scouts. Blessed with the influence and guidance of his family and his mentors in Boy Scouts, he became an Eagle Scout, the highest award scouting offers.

He considers his parents and both of his grandfathers his primary role models. His father, W.L., who unfortunately passed away five years ago, was a life insurance underwriter and World War II U.S. Air Force veteran. His mother, Janet, is a retired school teacher of 39 years who still resides in Athens. Grandfather Perkinson raised tobacco, worked in a hosiery mill, and eventually had his own neighborhood grocery store in north Athens. Grandfather Bohannon was a part-time dairy farmer and a barber.

A special part of Perkinson's growing up was spending a lot of time at his Bohannon grandparents' farm where he learned the expectations, rigors, and benefit of working on a farm. He refers to it as an important component of his upbringing which complemented his active participation in church, Boy Scouts, sports and various boyhood jobs.

Bo and Lynn's son, Tyler, is employed in Athens and their daughter, Lindsay, in Washington, D.C. While going to the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, she worked as an intern for Congressman John J. "Jimmy" Duncan in his district office in Knoxville for a year. Her internship eventually turned into a full-time position in Duncan's Washington office where she worked for more than five years.

Perkinson's former Athens City Council colleague and former Athens mayor, John Proffitt, said that whenever the Athens TML delegation went to the National League of Cities (NLC) annual conference in Washington each spring, they stopped by Congressman Duncan's office where Perkinson was able to see his daughter at work. "Lindsay was a good resource for us, too" said Proffitt.

A banker in Athens since 1974, Perkinson has continued to be active in his community with his involvement in the Optimist Club, church choir and Finance Committee of the Keith United Methodist Church, finance chair of the Unaka District of the Boy Scouts, a member of the Athens Utilities Board and other committees and boards. Perkinson has served on the Athens City Council since his election in 1996. In 2003, the council appointed him mayor of Athens and vice-mayor in 2005.

Perkinson was honored as the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year in 2005. Always an active participant in TML activities, he currently serves on the TML board of directors. Proffitt, and others, describe Perkinson as pragmatic, analytical, a straight shooter, consistent, and never moody. He is further described as a genuine, good man who is always looking at the overall good of the city, always seeking information,



Athens Vce Mayor Bo Perkinson



Perkinson participating in the Soap Box Derby – always a big event in Athens.

always learning.

"If Bo doesn't know you, he knows you before you leave the room," said Proffitt.

During the Southeastern Tennessee Development District's (STDD) search for new members, Proffitt told the search committee, "If you're looking for somebody good, Bo is your man."

Proffitt said that Perkinson, now a member of the STDD on its Finance Committee, has brought more financial acumen to that board and that they are taking a better financial approach to their lending than before Perkinson became a part of it. He added that Perkinson is a longtime supporter of the whole community and of regional cooperation and partnership which help Athens do more with its resources.

Just recently, Perkinson attended a conference for The World of Athens, an international non-governmental organization, in Athens, Greece. He joined mayors and dignitaries from around the nation to celebrate the Athens namesake. Representatives from all 23 cities and towns which share the ancient city's name were invited to attend with all travel expenses for the trip paid for by the city of Athens, Greece. The goal of the organization is to bring these cities closer, to learn their history, to all become ambassadors of the name 'Athens' and everything it symbolizes for the contemporary societies in the international community.

TT&C: What were some of your boyhood jobs and activities?

BP: I started working at a hardware store at age 15 making 80 cents an hour and worked for Proffitt's Department Store, now Belk. I did a lot of other types of jobs such as J. M. Huber Chemical Co. in college. As a youngster I mowed yards, sold vegetables and greeting cards door-to-door. Work was always part of the equation.

I started playing tennis at age 10. I played a lot of tennis in high school and got a scholarship to play tennis in college. I also enjoyed baseball a lot, the major sport along with football when I was growing up in Small Town America.

Boy Scouts were a major part of my growing up. Monday nights for nine months of the year meant going to Boy Scouts meetings at "Prof" Powers' Troop 116. We went to Camp Buck Tom each year to earn merit badges and learn about camping skills, swimming events and other skills. I enjoyed earning merit badges and learned hands on about nature and environment. Athens has always had a great group of volunteers who care about kids in Scouts, sports teams, church life, and many other areas. "Prof" was the Troop 116 Scoutmaster for more than 33 years and was also my grammar school principal and, later, Athens mayor.

In 1969, I attended the National Jamboree at Farragut State Park in Idaho. They beamed the first moon landing to an amphitheater there so more than 20,000 boys could watch it under the stars of Idaho. That was quite an experience. Scouting was significant for me and for many other boys and girls and is a group I hold in high regard.

TT&C: You're considered a big supporter of Tennessee Wesleyan?

BP: Wesleyan is a really good college and has been a large part of my life. I graduated with a degree in accounting because I've always enjoyed the business side of things – with business organization, how businesses build a business model, and how they go about being successful. I didn't want to be a full-time accountant, though, and had an opportunity to enter banking a couple of weeks after I graduated. I got a job at the First National Bank and Trust that was purchased, about nine years ago, by BB&T Bank – now the 8th largest bank in the country. My career included being a teller, a bookkeeper, management trainee, and auditor. I became part of the management team and eventually managed the branch system, bank operations, accounting, and human resources for this bank. BB&T invited me to be part of their commercial lending team. I'm now the area executive. Banking has been good to me for more than 35 years, and I still enjoy each day of my job.

That reminds me of another mentor, L.A. Roseberry, the

president of the bank who initially hired me. He was a mentor for me in many areas including that he was mayor when I was appointed to city council. He had a great influence on my life.

TT&C: What civic, public, and community endeavors led to your running for elective office?

BP: Well, I was involved in different fundraising efforts in the community and have always been involved with organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, United Way, the YMCA, and other non-profits along with being involved in church. I admit I've been busy, but at the same time, it's fun staying busy.

Banking, of course, is my career and keeps me very busy. I am fortunate that the bank has always encouraged me to be active in civic affairs and civic interests. When an unexpired term came open on the Athens City Council, I applied and was selected by council in 1996 and elected in 1997, then reelected in 2002 and 2006 – 13 years in all. I've enjoyed learning a lot.

TT&C: Did you run for council with a specific purpose or to simply serve the community?

BP: Mostly just service at the time. My father always stayed abreast of government so I may have inherited my interest from him. My wife also encouraged me to participate and has always been supportive of my involvements in the community and the city. She is very interested and involved in the Athens community. I could not do it without her being by my side.

Athens has a history of good government leadership. I thought that with my background I could make a contribution to help sustain the good direction we were going. My family has always been involved in education. The city council works with Athens City Board of Education and contributes a good part of the city's sales tax dollars to the school board that runs our city schools. We have municipal pre-K, elementary schools and a junior high. There are two county-operated high schools in McMinn County. We've always had a really good school system here and work to improve it.

TT&C: How badly was Athens hurt by the economic downturn? What are your major industries?

BP: We're quite a bit north of the state's average 10.5 percent state unemployment level. We're in the 13 percent area. Some of our main manufacturing companies are bringing back employees now, but we've got a ways to go. Denso, formerly called Nippon Denso, which has a sister plant in Maryville, is located within our city limits at I-75 Industrial Park. It is the largest employer in the county. We still have some space to grow in a couple of our other industrial parks and we have a few manufacturing buildings that are available. Athens' good situation is helped by our McMinn County Economic Development Authority. It is a coordinated effort of the cities and other entities in McMinn County to keep the county and cities working together to show prospects how good their situation will be if they locate in Athens and McMinn County.

We want to sustain what we have and are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life for all Athenians and the whole region to make it appealing to employers. We think we are in a great part of the country and positioned to attract good jobs as this economy rebounds. Another attraction is our McMinn County Airport that has runways more than a mile long to handle large aircraft that can easily bring just-in-time items to our industries.

TT&C: Do you have any other large industries?

BP: Mayfield's Dairy Farms has influenced the city for years and has meant much to our community. Mayfield's started here and has always been a major philanthropist. The library sits on property they contributed and the portion of the building that looks like a feed silo helps instill the importance that agriculture has had to our community. They've played a role in most anything that has happened here over the last couple of generations.

TT&C: What major accomplishments did Athens achieve during your 13-year tenure?

BP: It all comes down to job creation and good opportunities for your

citizens. That's what we strive for, but you've got to prepare and plan well and lay the ground work for that to happen. We're very pleased about our downtown and are always trying to improve it. We followed a 2003 planned development of downtown study to reach some major milestones in that plan. The McMinn County Courthouse is an imposing and beautiful structure in Downtown Athens. President Ronald Reagan thought highly enough of it in 1985 to launch his tax-reduction plan from the steps of our courthouse.

The Athens park system has become, for a city its size, 14,000, one of the best in the state and maybe in the South. We're looking for funds to finish out a downtown park called Market Park, across from our Veterans Park. It will be home to a farmers market and an outdoor stage. Readers would do well to check our regional park near the interstate the next time they are in Athens. It's very large playground is rented out regularly for parties – a super place for families. We also have a skateboard park that we are proud of.

We're doing a lot with our stormwater and drainage systems, detention ponds, and other innovative approaches to largely eliminate a problem in a few areas that flooded around the city. We continue to add traffic lights in high traffic volume areas to improve the traffic flow for the safety of folks in the city and are probably going to have to build a fire sub-station in the not too distant future. It's hard to overemphasize the importance of planning led by our city manager, Mitch Moore. Our council has an annual planning retreat. It spends considerable time in the area of planning. We have enough capital projects to keep us and our available funds busy for years to come.

TT&C: How does Athens finance so many improvements?

BP: Cost control is necessary during this recession when it's difficult for cities to raise revenue or increase taxes. Athens hasn't increased its property tax rate in 13 years and it has one of the lowest sales-tax rates in the state. The state allows municipalities to have as much as a 2.75 percent municipal sales tax rate. We're at 2.0. We want to maintain that record as long as we can.

Our revenue stream is a combination of sales and property taxes along with pretty good growth over the years. We also do it through efficiencies that give us strong reserves that enable us to match grants. Right now we have something like 20 state and federal agency grants that we're in one phase or another of funding. We apply for grants for all of our various government departments. One of neatest things we're doing right now is putting in about four miles of sidewalks in the city. For our size city, that's a lot of sidewalks. We hope that will improve a healthy citizenry by enabling them to walk to the library or downtown using a network of sidewalks. It's something I have been emphasizing over the years. We kept applying for that substantial grant until we got it.

TT&C: What local boards are you serving on?

BP: I'm on the Athens Parks Foundation, and I'm the council representative on the Athens Utility Board. We provide natural gas, power, wastewater, and distribution of water. Most of Athens' water comes from springs but also we have access to the Hiwassee Utilities Commission with shared ownership between McMinn County and Bradley County. That was the vision of Mayor Bill Brakebill 30 years ago. He played a big role in the founding of the TML Risk Management Pool, too. Among cities in Tennessee, we've been a leader in a lot of different categories.

TT&C: You've been involved in TML and NLC a long time?

BP: I have. In June, I was elected to the TML Board. About five years ago, I was appointed to serve on the NLC Steering Committee on Small Cities. This year, I'm one of the two co-chairs of the NLC Small Cities Council that represents cities less than a population of 50,000 – which is about 75 percent of the membership of the NLC. I've learned what other small cities do across the country and have been able to bring ideas back to our city. As co-chair of that group I'll be looking at policies and initiatives that are especially good for small cities like ours.