

6,250 subscribers www.TML1.org Volume 67, Number 6 April 11, 2016



June 11-14 in Gatlinburg

Public safety, crisis training focus of conference sessions

Almost every Tennessee city has a railroad within their city limits or nearby with hazardous chemicals rolling through their community all the time. Are you ready to respond quickly and effectively if there is a train derailment in your city? Come learn how Maryville responded effectively to a critical incident last fall during a workshop session planned for the TML Annual Conference in Gatlinburg.

Presented by the Tennessee City Management Association (TCMA), Greg McClain, Maryville city manager, and Jane Covington, regional vice president of public affairs for CSX Transportation, will discuss how they responded to the disaster, the lessons learned, and the role of the railroad in the response.

The Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police (TACP) will also present a workshop session covering a wide variety of public safety issues cities are currently facing. Knoxville Police Chief David Rauch will provide information on the use of body-worn cameras by police officers, guns on campus legislation, and combatting the opioid and her-See CONFERENCE on Page 6

Schedule At-A-Glance

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

8 am - 12 pm MTAS EOA
2- 3 pm Pre-Conference
Workshops
8 - 10 pm Welcome Reception
Park Vista Hotel

Sunday, June 12

11 am - 5 pm Registration
11 am - 5 pm Exhibit Hall Opens
11:30 - 1:30 pm Lunch
1:15 - 2:15 pm CMFO Workshop
1:30 - 2:15 pm District Meetings
2:30 - 3:45 pm Opening Session
4 - 5 pm Exhibit Hall
Extravaganza

6 - 8:30 pm Host City Reception

MONDAY, JUNE 13

Monday, June 13

8 - 8:30 AM Breakfast
8:45 -9:45 am General S

8:45 -9:45 am General Session
10 - 11 am Workshops
11:15 - 12 pm Business Meeting
12:15 - 1:30 pm Lunch
2:15 - 3:15 pm Workshops

3:30 - 4:30 pm Workshops 6 - 11pm Pool Party

<u>Tuesday, June 14</u> 8 – 10 am

Awards Breakfast



Steps for issuing certificates and background checks for selling wine in grocery stores

BY MELISSA ASHBURN

MTAS Legal Consultant

Cities in which voters approved the sale of wine in grocery stores are required to issue certificates before grocery stores may be licensed to sell wine by the Alcoholic Beverage Commission.

The language in the law concerning these certificates is in Tennessee Code Annotated § 57-3-806, and states:

(a) As a condition precedent to the issuance of a license under §57-3-803, every applicant for a license under that section shall submit with the application to the commission a certificate signed by the county executive

(b) The certificate must state:
(1) That the applicant or applicants who are to be in actual charge of the business have not been convicted of a felony within a ten-year period immediately preceding the date of application and, if a corporation, that the executive officers

or those in control have not been

convicted of a felony within a tenyear period immediately preceding the date of the application; and

(2) That the applicant or applicants have secured a location for the business which complies with all zoning laws adopted by the local jurisdiction, as to the location of the business.

No direction is provided by the law concerning the type of background check to be conducted or fees that may be charged by the city. No one type of background check is required to satisfy the law, so the city has discretion in determining what type of check to perform. Some grocery stores are submitting background checks they have conducted on their officers or those in charge of the premises.

If the police chief confirms that such submitted background checks are legitimate, the city should accept those background checks. If the city conducts the background check, MTAS recommends the city use the See WINE on Page 6



New federal transportation funding through the FAST Act federal legislation includes a roughly two percent increase for the upcoming fiscal year. However, despite the increase in revenue for FY 2017, the Tennessee Department of Transportation still has a multi-billion dollar backlog of unfunded highway and bridge projects that have been approved by the General Assembly, but lack available funding to move forward.

Increased funds allocated to highway budget

Cities left out of proposal

Last week, Gov. Bill Haslam and TDOT Commissioner John Schroer released the Tennessee Department of Transportation's annual three-year transportation program. The \$2 billion plan features infrastructure investments for 79 individual project phases in 42 counties, as well as 15 statewide programs.

Accompanying this announcement was also information about the Governor's budget amendment that adds \$12 million to the \$130 million originally presented in his proposed FY 16-17 budget to repay the state's Highway Fund. Amidst tight budget years during the Sundquist and Bredesen Administrations, more than \$260 million in highway funds were transferred to the state general fund. Haslam's proposal transfers money

back to TDOT as a partial payment.

Of the total \$142 million, \$100 million will be available to TDOT, and \$42 million will be distributed to the State Aid Roads Program, which is a county only funding program. The governor's proposal does not allocate any additional revenues to cities.

The highway fund represents the largest component of state-shared taxes in Tennessee and is generated through the gas tax. Motorists pay 21.4 cents per gallon tax for gas and 18.4 cents per gallon for diesel. The State Highway Aid Program distributes the funds back to both city and county governments according to current allocation formulas; whereas, the State Aid Roads Program is administered by TDOT but only flows back to counties.

"This is very disappointing. Surely, the majority of the gas tax dollars that were transferred from the highway fund to the general fund in years past were generated in cities," said Margaret Mahery, TML executive director. "So why should the plan to make repayment of these gas tax dollars to the highway fund not include cities?"

In addition, city governments and the Tennessee Municipal League have been active participants in the Transportation Coalition of Tennessee, and have supported the governor in his endeavor to find a solution for transportation funding.

"We ask that they look at that again," said Mahery. "Cities just want and deserve a fair share."

For more information, about **TDOT's 3-Year Plan** see Page 4.

TDOT to use returned earmarked funds for road maintenance, bridge repairs

Plans to chip away at \$6 billion of backlogged projects

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialist

Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) officials remain cautious about how much funds the state will actually receive after the U.S. Department of Highways announced millions in orphaned earmarks will be made available for transportation projects.

A law passed by Congress last year has allowed money from decades-old congressional earmarks to return to the states to be redirected to new projects. However, the use of these funds come with some caveats. The state will receive \$64 million for projects more than a decade old that are less than 10 percent complete, which can be redirected to new projects as long as the project is within 50 miles of where the funds were originally allocated.

An additional \$86.3 million could also be available for projects that are more than 10 percent complete— as long as transportation officials can adequately document those projects are closed out and new projects take place within 50 miles of the original location where the funds were allocated.

While it may seem like a lot of money, TDOT Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer Paul Degges said much of the money is already spoken for.

"These are not new dollars; they are very old dollars," Degges said. "This isn't quite as easy as 'here is a bunch of free money.' The process is more complicated than it might seem. For projects that people are already working on and they have a contract with us, these funds probably won't have any real impact on those projects. We are not going to be writing everyone a check."

Because of the age of the ear-



TDOT officials are hoping money from recently released orphaned earmarks will help fund maintenance for state roads and bridges. Road maintenance costs TDOT an average of \$300 million annually.

marks, Degges said some have lost their buying power.

"Every single one of these earmarks is over 10 years old, so over the last 10 years these monies have been sitting there doing nothing," Degges said. "If you have 2 percent inflation each year, they have lost their buying power. We believe that when Congress or the state general assembly passes funds down to the states for transportation projects, those funds need to be spent as quickly as they can on good projects to prevent inflation from robbing that purchasing power."

Some of the projects these earmarks were attached to are still ongoing, he said.

"There are a handful of projects out there where the environmental work is underway or something is happening, but it will take a while for that project to be ready," he said. "A big complicated project with federal funds often requires an environmental process. For instance, in

downtown Memphis there are several projects involving environmental issues, historic sites and economically disadvantaged communities that have taken some time."

In other cases, the project was completed but not all of the federal funds were used.

"The funny thing about earmarks is that when a project has been finished, you would think that any unused money can be returned and reused. But under the law, that's not how it works," Degges said. "So that money has been sitting out there as a result. Arguably, those dollars should have been returned to the highway program years ago."

Degges said there are other reasons why a project was not completed or why funds were not used.

"A lot of these funds are old, and priorities have changed in communities," Degges said. "Sometimes, they don't have the matching money. Getting \$1 million is a nice gift, but See ROADS on Page 5



Tennessee Town & City photo

Cherry blossoms in bloom at the Legislative Plaza are a welcome sign that spring is finally here.

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



CHATTANOOGA

FedEx Ground is constructing a \$30 million distribution center off Interstate 75 in Chattanooga. The new center will be built near the existing Volkswagen plant and Amazon distribution center and is expected to open by August 2017. While construction is underway, FedEx Ground has entered into a lease agreement for the 235,000-squarefoot center at Exit 9 at I-75 and Apison Pike. While staffing needs at the new FedEx facility have not been officially determined, company officials said there will be a mix of full-time and part-time employees. The \$30 million being spent on the site by the company includes about \$2.5 million in public utility and road improvements, according to developers. Of the 80 acre site, about 20 acres will remain for development at the front when the distribution center is completed. FedEx Ground is the small package delivery unit of Memphis-based shipping firm FedEx.

CLEVELAND

A new home for veterans on Westland Drive in Cleveland is one step closer to reality after property donated for the site was officially handed over to the state. Tennessee Department of Veterans Services Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder, Tennessee Department of General Services Deputy Commissioner John Hull and Tennessee State Veterans Home Executive Director Ed Harries joined Cleveland Mayor Tom Rowland and other local officials at the ceremony, which was also attended by members of many local veterans' organizations. Efforts to raise the matching funds needed locally included an anonymous \$3 million commitment and funds totally more than \$2 million from the city of Cleveland and Bradley County. The site was donated by Cleveland businessmen Robert Wright, and Steve and Thomas Williams. American Legion Post 81 held the property for several years until the transfer to the state could be made. Southeast Tennessee veterans and officials are now waiting on federal funding to complete the steps leading to a groundbreaking. According to the Southeast Tennessee Veterans Home Council, there are more than 48,000 veterans in the six county region the home will serve.

DICKSON

A new 10,700-square-foot retail center with plans to house at least five tenants is coming to Dickson. The shopping center - currently named Corner Market Place - has an anchor space of 3,800 square feet and will be located along Highway 46 between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Highway 47 on a parcel of land where Volunteer Pools and Mid-Tenn Transmission are currently located. The land for the development was originally zoned for residential usage but has since been rezoned for commercial use. Developers are now working with Nashville-based Market Retail Partners to find national retail and restaurant tenants for the property.

GALLATIN The city of Gallatin has added more than 700 new homes and 1,700 new jobs in the past two years, according to the Gallatin Economic Development Agency's recently released 2015 Growth Report. The report details job growth, estimated capital investments and new building and business developments in the city over the past two years, including a total of 1,761 new jobs announced by nine companies. New and existing companies have also put in an

TENNESSEE TOWN & CITY

Tennessee Town & City (ISSN 00403415, USPS 539420) is published semi-monthly except in the months of June and December 19 times per year by Tennessee Municipal League, 226 Capitol Blvd, Suite 710, Nashville TN 37219-1894. Subscription rates: \$6 per year to members, \$15 to nonmembers, \$1 a copy. Periodicals Postage Paid at Nashville TN. POSTMASTER:Send address changes to Tennessee Town & City. 226 Capitol Blvd, Suite 710, Nashville TN

Official publication of the Tennessee Municipal League. Publisher: Margaret Mahery (mmahery@ TML1.org); Editor: 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 Carole Graves at 615-255-4752, or e-mail cgraves@TML1. org. Fax advertising copy to *TT&C*: Attention Debbie Kluth at 615-255-4752, or e-mail to dkluth@ TML1.org. Opinions expressed by non League officials or staff do not necessarily reflect policies of TML.

estimated \$185.7 million in capital investments in Gallatin with 275 new business licenses issued by the city last year for ventures including boutique clothing shops, restaurants, children's shops, health care and support services. Gallatin also added six new industrial buildings, 108 new commercial buildings, and 778 single family homes built in 2014-15.

KNOXVILLE

The city of Knoxville's Fleet Services as added nine propane-powered mowers to the horticulture division of the city's Public Service Department as part of efforts to reduce the city's carbon footprint. The mowers will be used on the 400 acres of parks and an average of 1,947 overgrown lots the city mows annually. The city sought advice from the East Tennessee Clean Fuels Coalition (ETCleanFuels) before purchasing the equipment. The city chose propane mowers because they offer a reduced carbon footprint through decreased carbon dioxide emissions and a closed-loop fuel system, which prevents gas leaks that are often common in the mowing industry. In case studies of other cities using propane mowers throughout the country, fuel costs have frequently been improved between 20 and 50 percent. After testing three propane mowers in 2015, the city purchased the nine Kubota ZP330P-60 mowers for \$8,800 each, totaling approximately \$79,000, to replace nine gasoline-powered mowers.

LENOIR CITY

Lenoir City has been selected by the University of Tennessee-Knoxville as its 2016-17 Smart Communities Initiative (SCI) Program partner. SCI pairs faculty and students with Tennessee cities, counties, special districts, and other governmental organizations to engage in real-world problem solving aimed at improving the region's economy, environment, and social fabric. During the 2016-17 academic year, SCI will work on five to 10 projects for Lenoir City aimed at enhancing the downtown central business district. Cleveland was the inaugural partner for the program in 2014-15.

MEMPHIS

The city of Memphis has merged two departments to help streamline the fight against urban blight. The Commercial Anti-Neglect Division of the Memphis Fire Department (MFD) is merging with the Code Enforcement Division of Public Works. The MFD currently addresses blighted commercial property while public works oversees citations for residential blight. Both departments have the ability to issue citations on commercial properties, and city officials have noticed a duplication of resources as a result. The transition has already been approved by the Memphis City Council and employees are being moved effective July 1. The MFD Anti-Neglect Division will join Code Enforcement at the city-owned facility at 4225 Riverdale Road in Hickory Hill. The hope is the merged departments will manage the city's blight and code issues on a larger scale with additional resources and services. Ordinances are also in the works to help make the newly created division revenue neutral through new fees for rental and multi-family property owners.

NOLENSVILLE

Plans are underway for a \$57 million mixed-use development project on Nolensville Pike, which is bringing developers from Brentwood, Nashville and Atlanta together. Known as the Shoppes at Burkett Place, the parcel of land at 7022 Nolensville Pike will be developed into some 200 residential units – including town homes and condos – as well as 36,000 square feet of retail space. The residential portion of the development is expected to cost \$48 million while the retail section has been priced at \$9 million to construct. Brentwood-based PGM Properties LLC is overseeing the retail portion, and teamed up with Atlanta-based Coro Realty Advisors and Nashville's Regent Homes to construction the residential part of the project. Smith Gee Studio is designing the project, and Civil Site Design Group is handling the engineering. Developers sited the 25 percent growth of population in Nolensville since 2010 as one of the main reasons they decided to construct the development in the area.

SAVANNNAH

The city of Savannah has added its name to the list of municipalities across the state going digital. Savannah is the most recent addition to Shop Main Streets, a website that helps promote downtown businesses by taking 360-degree visuals of each store and putting them online for potential visitors to tour. So far, 15 stores in downtown Savannah have signed up to be part of the project. Savannah is also now part of Shop Main Streets' Tennessee Main Street Trail, which includes the municipalities of Bristol, Cleveland, Collierville, Columbia, Cookeville, Fayetteville, Franklin, Greeneville, Jonesborough, Lawrenceburg, Lebanon, Paris, Pulaski, Rogersville, Sweetwater, and Winchester. For more information visit www.shopmainstreets.com.

SMYRNA

Steel Technologies LLC officials will build a new, 83,000-square-foot facility in Smyrna and invest \$18 million in the local area, creating 50 new jobs. The new greenfield operation expands the company's exposed and unexposed automotive slitting and blanking capabilities and will handle both steel and aluminum. Construction will begin mid-summer and is expected to be complete by the end of the first quarter of next year. To accommodate its current customers and attract future clients, Steel Technologies will install a slitting line and a 1,000 ton blanking press to expand its platform in Tennessee. The company also has an existing location in Murfreesboro which employs 87 people. Steel Technologies is one of the leading steel processors in North America and makes products for the automotive, appliance, lawn and garden, agriculture, construction, office furniture, hardware and consumer goods industries. Operating 24 facilities in the United States, Canada and Mexico, Steel Technologies employs more than 1,800 people and produces over \$2 billion in annual sales.

SPRINGFIELD

Stony Creek Colors, Inc., will locate a new facility in Springfield, investing \$7.2 million and creating 50 jobs during the next five years. The indigo plant processing and distribution company will be used to produce bio-based dyes to be sold to major denim and clothing manufacturers. Company officials said the new location will allow them to be closer to local farmers who will grow the indigo plants used in its dyes. The company, with the help of Robertson County Economic Development Board, will renovate an old tobacco processing plant for the new facility. The renovations include repairing loading docks, floors and stairwells and making sure the building is up to code. The new facility will be ready for operations in June 2016. Stony Creek Colors is an emerging U.S. manufacturer of bio-based dyes for the textile industry and is expanding production of their flagship product, natural indigo for denim and other clothing items. The company contracts with local farmers for its indigo supply in order to sustainably produce its natural indigo dye with full transparency and authenticity. The company will be expanding to more Robertson County farms in 2017 and is encouraging local farmers to learn more about working with the company.

TAZEWELL

DTR Tennessee, Inc., will be investing \$9 million to expand its Tazewell manufacturing facilities and create between 60 and 80 new jobs. The expansion will be DTR's fourth expansion since initial construction on the facility was completed in 2002 and total employment is anticipated to be around 800 by the end of 2017. DTR Tennessee will also increase the Tazewell facility by 66,300 square feet due to increased business of anti-vibration and sound insulation polyurethane products for the automotive industry in North America. The expansion is expected to be complete by November 2016. DTR Tennessee is a subsidiary of Sumitomo Riko Rubber Industries, which is a leading supplier of anti-vibration, polyurethane and hose productions for the automotive industry. Operating globally in 23 countries, DTR also supplies products for the IT, electronics, industrial and construction industries.

Franklin finance department earns **GFOA** award for financial reporting



The city of Franklin's finance department has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

Garden at Goodlettsville park wins **National Wildlife Federation award**



Goodlettsville's Moss-Wright Park has been recognized as a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife Program. Goodlettsville Parks and Recreation staff along with local master gardeners created a garden space at the park to improve the habitat of birds, butterflies, frogs and other wildlife by providing essential elements needed by all wildlife – natural food sources, clean water, cover and places to raise their young. NWF is America's largest wildlife conservation and education organization and encourages responsible gardening that helps pollinators and other wildlife thrive.

Nashville, surrounding areas see highest population growth in state

Metro-Nashville and its surrounding communities lead the state in population growth, according to data recently released by the Tennessee State Data Center.

The Nashville-Murfreesboro-Franklin region had a population of about 1.8 million people in 2015, approximately 28 percent of the state's total 6.6 million population. Out of 412 metropolitan statistical areas nationwide, Nashville ranked 36th in one-year growth from 2014 to 2015 and all of the top 10 fastest-growing counties in the state either include Nashville or border it. Nashville's population grew 2 percent over last year.

Memphis remains the second-most populous area of the state with 1.3 million people followed by Knoxville with 861,424 residents, Chattanooga with 547,776 residents, the Kingsport-Bristol region with

307.120 residents.

Clarksville had the second highest percent of population growth of any Tennessee city between 2014 and 2015 at 1.1 percent. Clarksville has a total population of 281,021 residents. Cleveland had the third highest percentage of population growth at 0.9 percent followed by Morristown at 0.8 percent, and Chattanooga at 0.7 percent population growth. The average population growth for cities in Tennessee between 2014 and 2015 was 0.8 percent.

The Tennessee State Data Center is a partner to the U.S. Census Bureau and is housed at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Center for Business and Economic Research.

Full results of the 2015 County and Metro Area Population Estimates and Growth Rates can be found online at tndata.utk.edu/sdcpopulationestimates.htm.

PBS selects Memphis' Overton Park for show on "Parks That Changed America"

Memphis' Overton Park will be featured in a PBS program about parks that were influential in shaping

The park will be part of an April 12 episode of "10 That Changed America," a program about influential places in America. The park was selected for the episode because of its role in the U.S. Supreme Court case Citizens to Preserve Overton Park v. Volpe.

The case ruled that federal funds could not be used to construct highways through parks after a group of citizens rallied to prevent 26 acres of the park from being taken to use for construction of Interstate 40.

PBS said the Overton Park is important because it is a story of "a grassroots campaign [that] saved not only Overton Park, but cherished green spaces around the country."

The park, designed by George Kessler, was one of the first major public parks in the city. Construction began in 1902 and was completed in 1906.

Famous faces have also stopped by the park on occasion. It was here, in 1927, that Charles Lindbergh addressed a crowd of Memphians about the future of aviation. The Levitt Shell – also known as the Shell Theatre – was the location of Elvis Presley's first paid concert in 1954.

Today, the 342-acre park is home to the Memphis Zoo, the Overton Golf Course, the Brooks Museum of Art, and the Old Forest Arboretum and Tennessee State Natural Area.

Overton Park is also popular for its many playgrounds, picnic areas, and its dog park, Veterans Plaza, and Rainbow Lake. The Overton Park Conservancy manages the park on behalf of the city of Memphis.

Rural Town Recovery Initiative helps cities reinvest in neighborhoods

By KATE COIL

TML Communications Specialists

Three Tennessee cities have been selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to participate in a new initiative designed to guide rural communities through the process of removing blight and restoring neighborhoods.

Tennessee USDA Rural Development selected Bolivar, Paris and Springfield to participate in the Rural Town Recovery initiative and has already begun working with them to restore neighborhoods.

Lisa Hewitt-Cruz is the Single Family Housing Team Leader for Tennessee USDA Rural Development, and said the program is still in its infancy, but each community is making strides.

Each city has to identify a certain neighborhood to work with based on certain parameters. At least half of the residents have to be below median-income and many of the areas have a higher rate of rentals than homeowners.

Springfield plans to focus on eight blocks surrounding the Bransford Community Center on J.L. Patterson Street, while Paris has selected eight to 10 blocks of properties near the Lee Academy for the Arts, a former school converted into an art center. Bolivar is still in the process of narrowing down its site, Hewitt-Cruz said.

Each community has also named their project to help brand it and give each individual initiative its own identity. Springfield officials dubbed their project "Envision Springfield." The city of Paris is calling their program "Preserve Paris" while Bolivar officials christened their program "Believe in Bolivar."

Springfield Planning Director Grant Green is overseeing his city's project. The initiative is one of Green's first major projects for the city since he was hired in January, and like many city officials and residents, he said he is excited about the project's potential.

"We are working on a community clean-up day, which is set up so we can clean up some of the properties and excess trash in the neighborhood that they need help with," Green said. "We are focusing particularly on bigger items. In the later stages – which we are evolving right now – we will be working more in depth with the properties. Some of the properties have been turned over to us because of tax delinquencies. We working with USDA to try to get new homes built on those properties."

Don Harris, the housing program director for Tennessee USDA Rural Development, said restoring a single neighborhood can boost the vitality of a municipality as a whole.

While many think of blight as an urban issue, Harris said older neighborhoods in smaller communities can be just as affected by blight. Whether in a rural or urban setting, Harris said blight can create other issues for a city ranging from crime to falling property values to a loss of community investment.

Green said the majority of the homes Springfield has selected for its project were built between 1900 and 1950 with the majority built in 1920 or earlier. Many of the structures are smaller – between 1,000 to 1,200 square foot homes– and the neighborhood a mix of elderly residents



The homes in the neighborhood near Springfield's Bransford Community Center were built between 1900 and 1950, and many of them are 1,200-square-feet or less. Aging homes and aging residents can sometimes be a factor in a neighborhood's deterioration.

and younger families. Many of the properties are also rentals and not all landlords have maintained their properties.

Most of the neighborhoods selected for the initiative were built in the 1960s or earlier. Often times, residents are elderly and don't have the financial resources of physical ability to upkeep their house. In other cases, Harris said the homes are owned by absent landlords who either do not check on their properties or aren't even aware they own the property.

"Everything we do in these neighborhoods not only affects the neighborhood but also affects the larger city," Harris said. "The more we make people aware of what is available to them, the more people who will access those services. A lot of people think blight is an urban issue, but that's just not true. We had a couple of smaller cities approach us about cleaning up blight, and we decided to bring in other agencies like HUD to see what we could do there."

Before work can be done to bring vitality back into these neighborhoods, Hewitt-Cruz said the cities must first identify the stakeholders involved and the needs of the local community.

Rural development officials have been working with each city to conduct door-to-door surveys, community forums, establish focus groups and clean up neighborhoods. While restoring a neighborhood takes time, Harris said small successes can help keep the momentum going.

"Anytime you do something like this you have to have some early success, otherwise people have heard you talk and don't expect anything else to be done," Harris said. "We get the city leaders and planners involved and do a clean-up first. We ask for volunteers and have a city forum to get input. It takes years for these neighborhoods to get this far in this situation, so it's going to take time to show some improvement. It allows people to see something and think 'Wow, it's coming back.""

Sometimes, homes cannot be saved and Hewitt-Cruz said it can be difficult for smaller and rural cities to find the funds needed to demolish homes that have become health and safety hazards. Part of the initiative is to help cities find ways to take down



Paris residents and city officials participate in a meeting with the Tennessee USDA Rural Development about the Rural Town Recovery Initiative. Paris has dubbed their neighborhood redevelopment project "Preserve Paris" and will be focusing their efforts on the neighborhood around the Lee Academy for the Arts, formerly the Robert E. Lee School.



A former elementary school, the Bransford Community Center is serving as the anchor for Springfield's Rural Town Recovery Initiative, which city officials have dubbed Envision Springfield. The redevelopment project will focus on homes in the neighborhood south of the school. Most of the homes in this area were built prior to the 1950s.

While many think of blight as an urban issue, older neighborhoods in smaller communities can be just as affected by blight. Whether in a rural or urban setting, blight can create other issues for a city ranging from crime to falling property values to a loss of community investment.

- Don Harris, Tennessee USDA Rural Development

these dilapidated structures so new development can emerge.

"Being able to demolish a house that is a hazard to the neighborhood can be hard if you don't have deep pockets," she said. "Especially in older homes, you have to account for taking out asbestos and other things that can be hazardous."

In the past, Springfield has done some demolitions but Green said they can be expensive. Some of the issues the neighborhood faces include decaying roofs and sidings that residents cannot afford to or are not physically able to repair.

"Our city has been very proactive in working to condemn and demolish some of our really uninhabitable structures," Green said. "We have demolished several projects over the past five to six years. Cities put a lot of money into trying to redevelop these properties and take down the blight."

Hewitt-Cruz said the agency and cities then begin working with local developers to construct new homes on vacant lots that are affordable for

first-time homebuyers. The USDA is also bringing awareness about loan and grant programs that help firsttime homebuyers purchase homes or for current residents to repair and bring their homes up to code.

"These cities have neighborhoods with vacant and abandoned houses, houses that are in significant disrepair and also decaying infrastructure, such as broken sidewalks, city parks that are distressed and streetlight or signage problems," Hewitt-Cruz said. "Through the partnership with these cities, USDA will work together to find resources to help meet the needs of homeowners, neighborhoods and community."

While the USDA is helping "coach" the cities in these efforts, Harris said the goal is for the cities to do the work themselves. Each city has to help promote its initiative, help identify resources, and bring citizens together.

Green said many local residents are interested in redeveloping the neighborhood.

"This is something that people

get excited about, and they get more excited the more opportunities that are available for them to help their neighborhood," Green said. "People want to help and make it a better place to live. As of right now, we've mainly heard back from the people who live in that area but since this is a two-year effort, I think as we go on we will see more people from outside the neighborhood and businesses willing to help renovate some of the homes."

Other projects the city is working on around the neighborhood include the extension of a local greenway from downtown into the area and demolishing the former Bransford gymnasium, Green said.

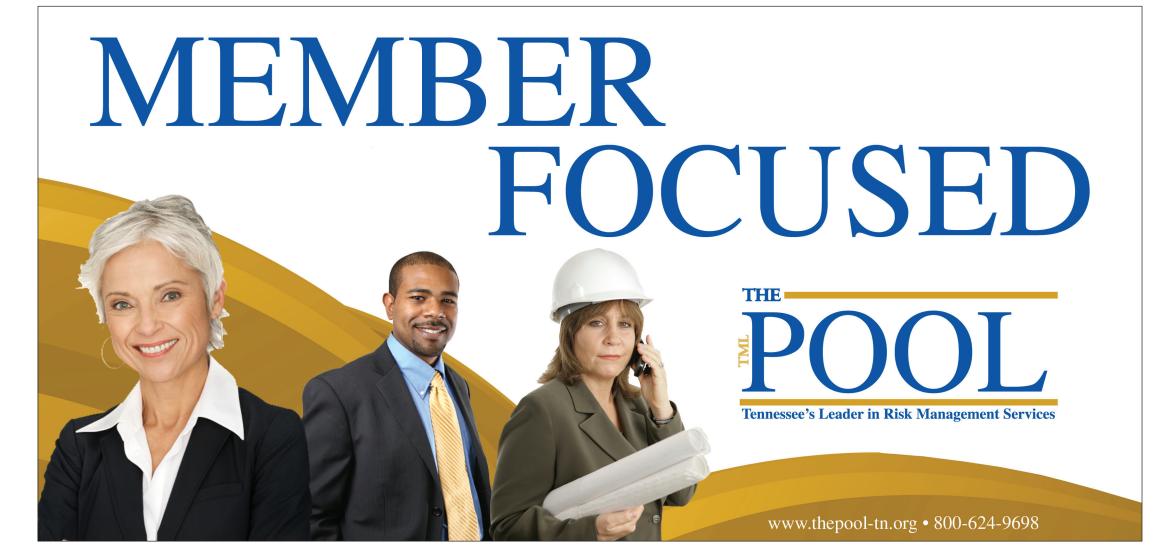
In the future, the cities will be meeting with other state agencies to learn what other redevelopment programs they qualifies for.

The agency's hope is that suc-

cess in these three communities can then be translated to other rural cities and towns across the state.

"It is quite a large undertaking, and we aren't sure which direction each city is going to go," Hewitt-Cruz said. "Once this is done, we are going to create a step-by-step guide that can be used by other rural communities in Tennessee or even throughout the nation who are struggling with these issues. We want to improve upon this process so we can replicate it."

For more information about Tennessee USDA Rural Development, grant and loans visit www.rd.usda.gov/tn.





PEOPLE

Carolyn Christoffersen has been unanimously appointed as the new city judge for Mt. Juliet. Christoffersen will replace outgoing judge Andy Wright



Carolyn Christoffersen

and will mainly rule on traffic court cases for the city twice a month. Christoffersen currently works as a transactional attorney in her own practice and is part owner of Legends Title. She has also previously filled in as Mt. Juliet's city judge and was sworn in on April 11. Christoffersen has a masters and bachelor's degree in accounting at the University of Mississippi and also earned her J.D. from the university. She is also a member of the Mt. Juliet/West Wilson County Chamber of Commerce.

Ward Crutchfield, former Tennessee Senate Majority Leader, died on April 3 at the age of 87. A native Chattanoogan, Crutchfield attended the Uni-



Ward Crutchfield

versity of Chattanooga - now the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga – and received a juris doctorate from the University of Tennessee College of Law in 1941. He also served in the U.S. Army and worked as an attorney before being elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives where he served from 1957 until 1959 and then again from 1961 until 1963. He was elected to the Tennessee Senate's 10th District in 1963 until 1966 and again from 1985 until 2007. He served as Senate Majority Leader from 1999 until 2004. He also served as Democratic Caucus chairman.

Darin Gordon, the longest serving director of TennCare, has announced he will step down from the position on June 30. Gordon is not only the longest



Darin Gordon

serving Medicaid director in Tennessee but the longest in the country, starting his tenure as director Tenn-Care and director and deputy commissioner of Health Care Finance and Administration in 2006. Gordon said he intends to enter the private sector after stepping down. Gordon has more than 18 years experience in public health care finance and management and has served under three governors. Prior 2006, he served as Director of managed care programs and chief financial officer for the state. Gordon graduated from MTSU in 1995.

Colin Ickes has been selected as the director of the Knoxville-Knox County Emergency Management Agency (KEMA). Ickes has served as an operations officer at KEMA for 11 years and will succeed Alan Lawson, who retired on March 31. KEMA is a joint City-County agency that serves as the central point of contact for local government for all major emergencies and disasters. KEMA works in partnership with local, state and federal agencies as well as industry and volunteer organizations. Ickes has two bachelor's degrees from the University of Tennessee and a master's in fire and emergency management from Oklahoma State University.

State Rep. Jon L u n d b e r g, R-Bristol, a captain in the Navy Reserves, has been called to active duty for two months as a public affairs officer for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Lundberg



State Rep. Jon Lundberg

has been excused for the remainder of the 2016 legislative session by House Speaker Beth Harwell so he may return to active duty. The stint in Washington will delay his campaign for state senator, but he said he is still running for election. Lundberg was initially elected to represent the 1st House District in 2009 and currently serves as chairman of the civil justice committee.

State Rep. Steve McDaniel, R-Parkers Crossroads, has been named as the 2015 recipient of the Rural Health Association of Tennessee's

(RHAT) Leg-



State Rep. Steve McDaniel

islator of the Year award. He was recently presented this award by RHAT officials at the state capitol and was nominated for the award based on his continuing advocacy on healthcare for rural Tennesseans. A rural Tennessee resident, Mc-Daniel introduced the Prevention of Youth Access to Tobacco and Vapor Products Act, and was successful in addressing as many concerns as possible in one single piece of legislation by working with a variety of interested organizations including The American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the Rural Health Association of Tennessee, Children's Hospital Alliance of Tennessee, the tobacco industry, and many other organizations. The act was the culmination of his efforts to establish the legal framework to protect Tennessee's youth and the general public and expanded the definition of "vapor products," imposing restrictions to access to vapor products in the retail markets across Tennessee. McDaniel has represented the 72nd House District in West Tennessee, which includes Chester, Henderson, Decatur and Perry counties, since 1989.

Michael Skipper has been named the new executive director of the Greater Nashville Regional Council effective June 8. Skipper is



Michael Skipper

currently the executive director of the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and has more than 15 years of experience in public policy, community and regional planning, and research consulting. He has also served as an adviser to the Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus. Skipper has a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and earned a master's in community and regional planning from the University of Texas at Austin.

Jai Templeton has been appointed as Tennessee's new commissioner of the DepartmentofAgriculture, beginning May 1. Gov. Bill Haslam



Jai Templeton

appointed Templeton to replace Julius Johnson, who announced his retirement in March. Templeton currently serves as the department's deputy commissioner, leading the day-to-day operations and directing programs and services that range from food safety to animal and plant health to agricultural development. Templeton served as the mayor of McNairy County before joining the department of agriculture. He also served as a field representative for U.S. Rep. Ed Bryant from 1995 to 2003, as a McNairy County commissioner and former president of the McNairy County Chamber of Commerce. A sixth generation farmer, Templeton's family have farmed in McNairy and Hardin counties for decades, producing grain, cotton, hay, timber, and cattle. Templeton has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Union University in Jackson and is a graduate of the University of Tennessee Certified Public Administrator program.

Ginna Winfree has been selected as acting executive director of the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission following the resignation of executive director Keith Bell on March 24. Winfree has been serving as assistant executive director and announced she would be leaving the ABC at the end of April to join the Gullett Sanford law firm and agreed to serve as interim director of the ABC until then.

TDOT announces three-year funding plan

Gov. Bill Haslam and TDOT Commissioner John Schroer released Tennessee Department of Transportation's annual three-year transportation program, featuring approximately \$2 billion in infrastructure investments for 79 individual project phases in 42 counties, as well as 15 statewide programs.

The three-year program continues the state's focus on providing a high-quality state transportation network that is safe and reliable and supports Tennessee's economic development efforts. New federal transportation funding through the FAST Act federal legislation includes a roughly two percent increase for FY 2017 over FY 2016's funding. The FAST Act also provides some one-time flexibility that allows TDOT to tap into an additional \$147 million in federal money.

These increases combined with the \$100 million repayment to the highway fund in the Haslam administration's proposed FY 16-17 budget will give the department a somewhat larger building program in the upcoming fiscal year - an estimated \$965 million in FY 2017, compared to \$660 million in FY 2016.

Despite the increase in revenue

for FY 2017, the department still has a multi-billion dollar backlog of unfunded highway and bridge projects that have been approved by the General Assembly, but lack available funding to move forward.

"This program reflects our commitment to increasing safety and economic development opportunities, while also remaining debt free on our roads, and these one-time funding increases will allow TDOT to move forward with nearly a billion dollars in much needed road projects in communities across the state," Haslam said.

The following projects would be funded with the \$100 million transfer from the state's general fund, and would all be under contract before the end of 2016 if approved by the Tennessee General Assembly:

• Fayette County, I-40 – Interchange modification at SR 196 (Hickory Withe Road) Haywood County, SR 19 – Construction of the Brownsville Bypass from west of Windrow Road to SR 76 south of Brownsville

• Knox County, SR 62 (Western Avenue) – Widening from Texas Avenue to Major Avenue Marshall County, SR 50 – Widening from US 431 (SR 106/Franklin Pike) to US 31A (SR 11/Verona Avenue)

• Montgomery County, US 79/ SR 13 – Widening from Cracker Barrel Drive to International Boulevard, serving Hankook Tire Sullivan County, I-81 – Construction of truck climbing lane at mile marker 60

• Washington County, I-26 – Interchange modification at US 321 (SR 67), including the addition of an auxiliary lane and widening of I-26 East

In addition to the 2017 budgeted program, partial plans for 2018 and 2019 are included, along with funding for 15 transportation programs including Rockfall Mitigation, Spot Safety Improvement, and the statewide HELP Program.

The program also provides funding for transit agencies in all 95 counties, as well as Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations. To view a complete list of projects and programs funded through the 2017-2019 three-year multimodal program, visit http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/tdot/attachments/FY_17-19_3_year_program_%283-29-2016%29.pdf.

For more information about transportation funding, please visit https://www.tdot.tn.gov/Project

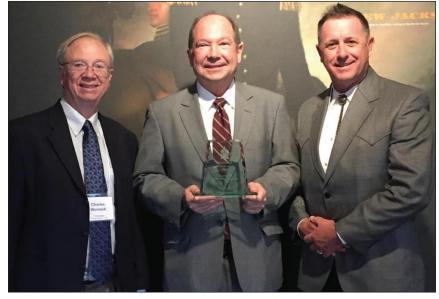
TN state parks honored with preservation award

Tennessee State Parks Deputy Commissioner Brock Hill and other Parks staff were honored with the 2016 Excellence In Preservation Leadership Award during an annual historical preservation conference on March 16.

The award was presented by the Tennessee Preservation Trust (TPT), the only statewide nonprofit organization promoting the preservation of Tennessee's historic resources, at a joint conference in partnership with the Tennessee Association of Museums and the Society of Tennessee Archivists.

The award recognizes Tennessee State Parks' protection and renovation of the following historic Civilian Conservation Corps structures: the bathhouse at Cumberland Mountain State Park; cabins and the Tea Room at Norris Dam State Park; upcoming renovation of cabins at Chickasaw and Pickett State Parks; and the preservation and reuse of the historic cotton mill at Rock Island State Park.

"This award is greatly appreciated and represents the collaborative efforts of many bright and creative persons within Tennessee State Parks who express their passion for preservation and restoration of



Dr. Charles Womack, TPT board chair; Deputy Commissioner Brock Hill; Jeff Wells, TPT Treasurer

our state's cultural assets on a daily basis," said Commissioner Hill.

Tennessee State Park Manager Eric Hughey also took home an award for his work at Fort Loudoun State Historic Park's museum, and Old Stone Fort State Park Ranger Josh Waggener was honored with the Young Professional Award.

Along with protecting natural resources within parks, Tennessee State Parks, a division of the De-

partment of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), is committed to conserving and protecting cultural and historic resources. From archaeologically significant locations to historic structures and places, TDEC protects and interprets a rich tapestry of authentic Tennessee stories and sites.

For more information on Tennessee State Parks, visit <u>www.tn-stateparks.com</u>.



STATE BRIEFS

The Tennessee Legislature passed a bill allowing wholesalers to deliver wine to grocery stores prior to July 1, when under a 2014 statute the stores may begin selling wine. The agreed-upon provision was viewed as logistically necessary for wine sales actually to begin July 1.

The Tennessee General Assembly approved new legislation to boost pre-K results. As part of the application process, it mandates that all districts ensure coordination between pre-K and elementary grades, create a plan to engage parents and families around pre-K, and create a plan for building strong pre-K teachers through professional development. The legislation, received bipartisan support among lawmakers.

The 2016 Forbes ranking of states by state and local tax burden, based on single taxpayers earning \$50,000, shows Tennessee as the **fourth lowest** with an effective rate of 7.3 percent, above South Dakota and Wyoming, 7.1 percent, and Alaska, 6.5 percent. New York has the highest, 12.7 percent.

Thirty-eight cities and counties from across the state are participating in the Healthier Tennessee Communities initiative. The initiative began last spring with nine pilot sites and takes a local approach to improving Tennesseans' health by engaging citizens and local leaders. Participating communities have up to a year to initiate sustainable community-wide events and activities that support physical activity, healthy eating and tobacco abstinence, and then track and measure outputs and accomplishments of the program. For a list of participating communities and more information about the Healthier Tennessee Communities program, visit www. healthierTN.com/communities.

Arts Build Communities Grant now accepting applications for FY 2017

Nonprofit and government organizations can now submit applications for projects that stimulate economic activity and connect neighbors through arts and culture to receive the Arts Build Communities (ABC) Grant for FY 2017 from the Tennessee Arts Commission.

ABC Grants provide support for arts and cultural projects that positively impact communities across Tennessee. Funding can be used for arts and cultural projects that: introduce communities to unfamiliar art forms or programs; address social issues; strengthen community engagement; target youth for after-school initiatives; enhance a community's identity or brand; add value to tourism efforts; and encourage further economic development.

This past year, 13 arts councils and development districts worked as designated agencies with the Tennessee Arts Commission to award 159 ABC Grants in 53 counties. The awarded grants totaled approximately \$245,000 and resulted in addition-

al investment of \$1.4 million. The vast majority of those dollars were leveraged by private contributions and earned income.

"Across the state, 678,000 people benefited from ABC activities, including 80,000 youth," said Shannon Ford, Tennessee Arts Commission director of Community Development. "The projects also resulted in donations of goods and services valued at \$1.1 million, including 5,061 volunteers working 125,233 hours. These numbers show how relevant these investments in Tennessee communities are."

ABC Grants opened April 1, 2016. Program guidelines are online. The application deadline for projects occurring between August 16, 2016, and June 15, 2017, is July 1, 2016. Grant awards range from \$500 to \$2,500.

For more information about applying for a grant, contact the appropriate designated agency or Shannon Ford, (615) 532-9796, at the Tennessee Arts Commission.

Returned earmarks to fund maintenance, bridge repairs

ROADS from Page 1

if you don't have \$200,000 to match, it's not such a nice thing."

TDOT is estimating that only around \$10 million of the \$86.3 million from projects at 10 percent or more completion will qualify for use in new projects.

"Our books aren't going to show we have \$86.3 million in new money. Some of these projects are already underway, and that money is being spent right now," Degges said. "We think there may be \$10 million for new projects."

TDOT announced in November 2015 they were delaying 181 backlogged projects until 2034 and at least \$400 million in road projects would have to be delayed another fiscal year because of uncertainty over federal funding. A 2015 report from the Tennessee Comptroller's office found revenues are not sufficient to maintain current infrastructure in the state due to rising costs of construction and labor, the lack of a long-term federal transportation bill, and the fact that vehicles are now getting more miles to the gallon.

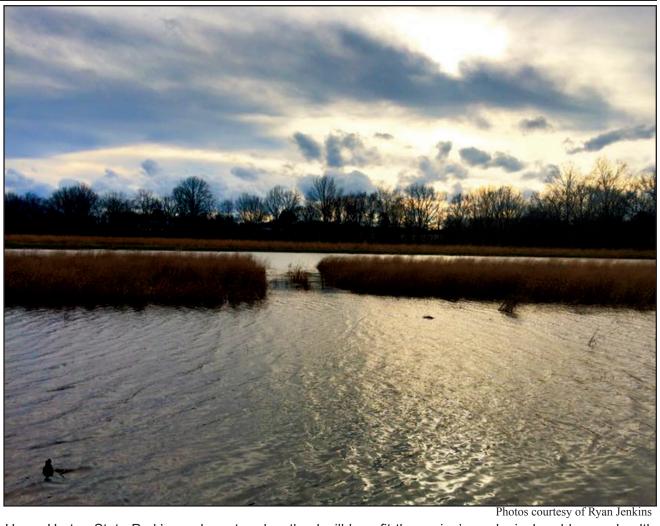
Degges said TDOT plans to focus what funds it does receive from orphaned earmarks on road maintenance and finishing what backlogged projects it can.

"These funds should go to address safety, resurfacing, and bridge

projects. We also want to try and attack the backlog of projects we already have commitments on," he said. "What we are not going to do with this is create a program to give out money. What we have been hearing from Tennesseans for the last several years is that we need to take care of what we owe and then finish the commitments we have made to projects. Arguably, we could do a bunch of new projects with this money. I'm sure every city in the state has a new project they'd like to spend money on, but we don't believe it's appropriate to go after new stuff before we take care of what we have and honor commitments we have already made."

While Degges said he is grateful the earmark money has been made available, he cautions officials against assuming the funds will fix all of the state's transportation funding issues. He said the state currently has about \$6 billion backlog of projects and spends about \$300 million each year just to maintain existing roads.

"It is a good amount of money, but in the scheme of our backlog and what we are responsible for in the way of bridges and resurfacing projects, it doesn't seem as much," he said. "If we get \$60 million out of this, it's not a huge impact over time, but it's a pretty good lick in one year."



Henry Horton State Park's newly restored wetland will benefit the region's ecological and human health, providing both safe drinking water and improved flood management.

Wetland area at Henry Horton produces ecological, economic benefits to local community at Chapel Hill

BY PATRICK LINDSEYOffice of Sustainable Practices

In the rolling hills of Middle Tennessee a 65-acre agricultural field has been restored to its original wetland state, producing ecological, human, and economic benefits for the local community.

The restoration project was completed in 2015 at Henry Horton State Park in Chapel Hill through a partnership between the staff of Henry Horton State Park, the town of Chapel Hill, the Tennessee Environmental Council, Friends of Henry Horton State Park, volunteers of all ages, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. This project has successfully reintroduced one of the most diverse ecosystem types back into the region, while improving local water quality.

The now converted field was drained more than 100 years ago for use as farm land. The land lies in a natural floodplain along the 269-mile-long Duck River, making it a fertile site for farming, but an even more appropriate site for an ecosystem restoration project. The wetland will provide crucial habitat for native flora and fauna, while also serving as a model and teaching tool for future restorations across the state and country.

Re-flooding and re-planting the land was a team effort. The field had been raised for agricultural use and before it could be flooded the field had to be lowered to its original level and drainage points controlled to prevent water from entering the area too soon. Additionally, berms had to be rebuilt.

Once the berm system was nearly complete, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation coordinated a crew of workers to plant a mix of wetland seeds prior to flooding the area. Two weeks after the water returned to the wetland, a chorus of frogs was heard and ducks were sighted in the newly constructed habitat.

The newly restored wetland will benefit the region's ecological and human health, providing both safe drinking water and improved flood management. Ronnie Bowers, a special projects coordinator with the state of Tennessee, emphasizes the importance of this project.

"The Duck River provides over 250,000 Tennesseans with their drinking water and wetlands are na-



Once the berm system was nearly complete, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation coordinated a crew of workers to plant a mix of wetland seeds prior to flooding the area. These berms may eventually be used as walking paths to observe wildlife.

ture's best filter to restore cleanliness back into the state's rivers," Bowers said. "Wetlands are nature's sponge soaking up water and releasing it slowly into our state's rivers, waterways, and groundwater aquifers. Wetlands cleanse and filter sediment runoff from stormwater and reduce chemical content. This process provides Tennesseans with clean drinking water as well as healthy habitat for aquatic species and wildlife."

Stormwater filtration is an important function of the wetland, particularly due to the fact that the wetland flows into the Duck River which contains more biodiversity than any other river in the world.

It has more than 151 species of fish, 60 freshwater mussel species, and 22 species of aquatic snails. This diversity is due to numerous conservation efforts that help keep the river clean and healthy. Conservation efforts range from educating farmers about responsible land management to assisting city and county stormwater directors with their programs in urban areas near the Duck River. The Duck River is so clean that scientists are relocating an endangered mussel species from the Clinch River to the Duck to help preserve the species.

Danny Bingham, mayor of Chapel Hill, appreciates the clean water and also looks forward to the economic benefits that the restored wetland will bring to the area.

"This restored wetland will add to the draw of the town of Chapel Hill," Bingham said. "The wetland will also entice visitors from around the state to come and witness the beauty of this unique ecosystem in our own backyard."

CEO of the Tennessee Environmental Council Dr. John McFadden, an expert in waterway restoration, added: "Natural resources, including this wetland, are the backbone of our economy, our community, and our quality of life."

The wetland area will also provide opportunities for environmental education to visitors. Stacey Cothran, President of the Henry Horton Friends Group, has already started coordinating environmental education events at the wetlands.

On March 5, 2016, Stacey worked with volunteers to plant trees in the wetland as part of the statewide 50K Tree Day event sponsored by the Tennessee Environmental Council.

"We are planning several more tree planting events with 5th graders from the Delk-Henson Intermediate School and Cascade Elementary School," Stacey said. "We plan to educate them about the importance of Tennessee's wetlands and inform them of the plants and animals that the area supports."

Additionally, there are plans to add observation decks into the wetland area, and the berms may eventually serve as walking paths from which wildlife can be observed.

The Henry Horton wetlands serve as a great model of a successful ecosystem restoration project that will help to conserve and protect Tennessee's waterways and drinking water while providing a real-life teaching tool. The newly-created wetlands are the physical embodiment of Henry Horton State Park's motto: "We care about our nature, our history, and about you."

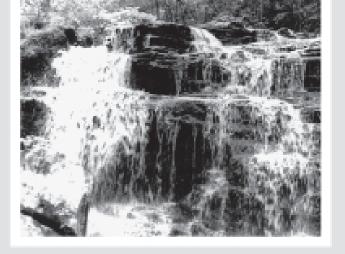
J.R. Wauford & Company

Consulting Engineers, Inc.

Water and Wastewater Systems

www.jrwauford.com

Home Office: 2835 Lebanon Road P.O. Box 140350 Nashville, TN 37214 (615) 883-3243 Branch Offices: Maryville, TN 37801 (865) 984-9638 Jackson, TN 38305 (731) 668-1953





CLASSIFIED ADS

Advertising: \$9.25 per column inch. No charge to TML members. Send advertising to: TT&C Classified Ads, Carole Graves, 226 Capitol Blvd. Suite 710, Nashville TN 37219; e-mail: cgraves@TML1.org; or fax: 615-255 4752.

BUILDING, MECHANICAL & PLUMBING INSPECTOR

MT. JULIET. The city of Mt. Juliet is seeking candidates for a state certified building, mechanical & plumbing inspector. Electrical certification is a plus. Detailed job descriptions and requirements are available on the city's website. Applications must be filed electronically and are available online at, www.cityofmtjuliet.org. The city will accept electronic applications until such time when a qualified candidate is chosen. The city of Mt. Juliet reserves the right to stop accepting applications at any time. For questions, please call (615) 754-2552. The city of Mt. Juliet does not discriminate based on race, color or national origin in federal or state sponsored programs, pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d). EOE/ Drug-free Workplace

CITY MANAGER

CLEVELAND. The city of Cleveland is currently accepting applications for city manager. This is a great opportunity for a management professional to be an integral part of a business-oriented community that is highly progressive and interested in being at the forefront of the state of Tennessee and in the region. Brochure at www. mercergroupinc.com. The successful candidate for the position of city manager of the city of Cleveland should meet the following criteria: Possess a bachelor's degree in public/business administration, political science, or a related field from an accredited college or university. A master's degree in a related field is preferred: Display evidence of continued professional development such as designation as an ICMA Credentialed Manager: Have proven and demonstrated executive-level management experience with a minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible experience as a city manager or assistant city manager in a municipality of similar size and complexity: Or any equivalent combination of education and experience that qualifies for the above: Have experience in budgeting, finance, and economic development. Residency in Cleveland within 90 days following

The starting annual salary range is from \$100,000 to \$161,000 DOQ/E. In addition, an excellent fringe benefit package is available. Reasonable relocation expenses will be provided. Position open until filled. First review of candidates on April 21, 2016. Under the Tennessee Open Records law candidate resumes and all application materials are subject to public disclosure. Resumes by 5 PM EDT on April 20, 2016, to James Mercer, The Mercer Group, Inc., 5579B Chamblee Dunwoody Road, #511, Atlanta, GA 30338. VOICE: 770-551-0403; FAX: 770-399-9749. E-Mail: jmercer@ mercergroupinc.com; Website: www. mercergroupinc.com. EOE.

PLANNER

MARYVILLE. The city of Maryville is seeking an experienced professional to fill the position of Senior Planner. Responsible for managing the planning

program of the city; this position will assist with the effort to update the city's land use plan and zoning ordinance. Reports to Director of Development Services. Master's degree in planning, public administration or a related field or equivalent; AICP certification and supervisory experience required. Hiring range: \$61,376 - \$80,527 DOE plus an excellent benefits package. Deadline to apply: Friday, April 15. Applications are available at the City of Maryville Municipal Center, Human Resources, 400 W. Broadway or on our website www.maryvillegov.com). Nepotism policy prohibits hiring relatives of City employees. EOE. Maryville is a progressive city of approximately 30,000 residents, and is located 15 miles south of Knoxville. Maryville has received widespread recognition for its local school system, its parks and recreational facilities, and its overall quality of life. The city has a diverse economic base, including manufacturing, healthcare, retail and office, and education and government. It is also the home of Maryville College. Maryville is the county seat of Blount County, and approximately one-fourth of the land area in the county lies within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

POLICE CHIEFGREENFIELD

The city of Greenfield is accepting resumes for the position of Police Chief. A job description and benefits package are available upon request. Compensation DOQ, the city of Greenfield participates in the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System. Resumes may be submitted to: Dana Deem, MTAS Management Consultant, 605 Airways Blvd, Suite 109, Jackson, TN. 38301, Dana.deem@tennessee.edu Deadline for submission is May 13, 2016.

POLICE OFFICER

LEWISBURG. The city of Lewisburg is accepting applications for police officers through April 15, 2016. Certified applicants preferred. Applications may be obtained at Lewisburg City Hall, 131 East Church Street, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For a copy of job description or application questions please contact Pam Davis, city recorder at 931-359-1544 or pam. davis@lewisburgtn.gov. The city of Lewisburg is a EOE and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST OAK RIDGE. The city of Oak Ridge

is currently seeking applicants for a public affairs specialist. Primary responsibilities include: Coordinates media requests, press releases, website content, social media and assists city departments with communications requests. Assists with development and implementation of communications and social media policies. Attends some scheduled city meetings; provides information regarding city activities; gathers information and assists when City action is needed or desired. Researches policy issues and prepares newsletters and reports. Provides administrative support to Information Services staff, including preparation of payroll. Participates in special committees as directed. Participates in emergency response training exercises and related activities. On occasion, must be able to work after normal business hours and on weekends. Performs other related duties

as assigned. Bachelor's degree in Communications, Journalism, Public Relations, or related field; two years administrative, communication and/ or public affairs experience; or any equivalent combination of education and experience. Knowledge of journalistic principles and practices as they relate to writing and editing public information materials and professional correspondence. Strong written and oral communication skills, as well as a solid knowledge of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Ability to manage multiple projects at the same time and meet deadlines. Proficiency in standard office and graphic design software. Knowledge of city policies and procedures. Skill in evaluating problems and proposing solutions. Skill in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with associate personnel, other City employees and the general public. Must possess Tennessee Driver's license. Must pass background/security check. Individuals interested in this position must have a completed application form on file in the Personnel Department by 12 noon on Friday, April 29, 2016. Salary range (\$40,830 - \$51,033 per year. The city of Oak Ridge is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

SOMERVILLE. The town of Somerville is now accepting applications and resumes for a public works director. The public works director is responsible for managing and directing the GIS, Gas, Water, Wastewater, Lagoon, Solid Waste and Streets Departments as well as the Cemetery and Utility Billing. Duties include establishing gas rates, managing current projects, designing new projects by working with engineers and architects, designing and creating specifications for smaller projects, budgeting, administering and managing utility projects, purchasing, employee scheduling and relations, coordinating all departments and presenting ideas and projects to the board for approval. Familiarity with GIS, AMI Meter Reading, and Microsoft Office is a must. Applicants must have at least five years public utility management experience. A bachelor's degree in a related field is preferred. Salary is commensurate with experience. Interested applicants may send a resume to rturner@somervilletn. gov or mail it to Town of Somerville, 13085 N. Main St., Somerville, TN 38068. A more detailed job description is available on our website at www. somervilletn.org. We will be accepting applications and/or resumes for this position through April 29, 2016.

PUBLIC WORKS STREET SUPERINTENDENT

SUPERINTENDENT ATHENS. This position supervises, directs, and schedules work of subordinates in multi-division department; conducts regular inspections of streets, rights of way, sidewalks, drainage, and structures for deficiencies and future maintenance; completes a variety of administrative duties such as, evaluating and counseling subordinates, purchasing, budgeting, training, and reviewing plans. Must have knowledge and understanding of regulations and standards for street construction, maintenance, cleaning, and traffic control. Must have good communication skills, both written and oral. A High School education or equivalent plus related work experience is required;

a college degree is preferred. Must possess and maintain a valid Tennessee commercial driver's license (CDL) and certifications and licenses identified for the position. Minimum salary \$23.34/hr. References are required and background checks will be conducted. Applications are available at the Human Resource Department, 815 N. Jackson Street, M-F, or email: rbrown@cityofathenstn.com EOE.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT OPERATOR, SENIOR

COLLIERVILLE. The town of Collierville has an immediate opening for senior wastewater treatment plant operator. This position requires performance of highly responsible, skilled trades work in the operation and maintenance of the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant. Requires an Associate Degree with major course concentration in Wastewater Treatment, Biological Science, Chemistry, Engineering, or a related field; 4 years' exp. in operation/ maintenance of wastewater treatment equip. or equiv. Must possess/maintain a Class IV Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator's License from the State of TN Department of Environment and Conservation within 12 months of hire. Valid driver's license regd. Salary is \$37,043 - \$46,042/annual (DOQ). Applications are available at the Human Resources office, 500 Poplar View Parkway, Collierville, Tennessee, 38017, M-F. The official application of the Town of Collierville must be completed and may be accompanied by a resume. Pursuant to Tennessee Open Records Law, applications and resumes are subject to disclosure. Open until filled. EOE



April 20-22 Tennessee Association of Municipal Clerks and Recorders Spring Conference

Embassy Suites Conference Center in Murfreesboro. Preventing fraud, cybersecurity, budgeting, changes in FLSA, and a legislative update are among the topics to be discussed. There will be a four-hour Internal Controls class on April 19 as a pre-conference even, taught by MTAS finance consultants and will count for CMFO financial continuing education credit. For a complete agenda or to register go to: https://tamcar.wildapricot.org/ event-1948552. For more information, contact Dana Deem, MTAS Municipal Management Consultant at 731-423-3710 or dana.deem@ tennessee.edu.

May 18 - 21 2016 Women In Municipal Government Summer Conference Knoxville Convention Center

The meeting will include sessions that offer creative solutions for local leaders about women in business, handling the political media, coping with gridlock in Washington, DC, women's health issues, corporate giving, and the future of metropolitan planning organizations and grassroots influences. All NLC members and colleagues with an interest in women and family issues in their communities are all welcome to attend. For more information or to register, go to www.NLC.org

Issuing certificates and background checks for wine in grocery stores

From WINE, Page 1

same method relied upon for background checks conducted for beer permit applicants. Corporations may request a background check on either their executive officers or the persons who will be in charge at that location. The Alcoholic Beverage Commission will conduct background checks on all managers at the location as part of their licensing requirements.

Cities may legally pass along the costs of conducting these background checks, but may not assess a fee which will generate revenue. No resolution or ordinance is required, and the governing body does not have to vote on the question of whether or not to issue the certificate. In fact, if a governing body declines to issue a certificate, and the background check relied upon shows no felony conviction in the past 10 years, the city will be open to a lawsuit if the certificate is not issued within 60 days of the store's request. If the city takes no action on a request for a certificate, it is deemed to be issued after 60 days have elapsed.

The applicable language in Tennessee Code Annotated § 57-3-806 reads:

(g) An applicant may seek review of the denial of a certificate by instituting an action in the chancery

court having jurisdiction over the municipality or county within sixty (60) days of the denial.

(h) A failure on the part of the

issuing authority to grant or deny the certificate within sixty

(60) days of the written application for such shall be deemed a granting of the certificate.(i) The requirement imposed by this

section to submit a certificate shall not be applicable to any applicant if:
(1) The authority of the county or municipality charged with the responsibility to issue the certificate required herein shall have failed to grant or deny the certificate within sixty (60) days after written application for such certificate is filed; or
(2) The applicant submits a final order of a court holding that the denial of the required certificate was unreasonable, as established by subsection (g).

No form is required for either the request by the grocery store or the certificate issued by the city. A letter signed by the mayor or city manager is sufficient under the law. These certificates do not expire, so a grocery store is not required to renew the certificate or have any further contact withthe city concerning this process once the certificate is issued.

Public safety, crisis training focus of conference sessions

From CONFERENCE, Page 1 oin abuse crisis, among others.

Other conference highlights include historian, economist, and demographer, Neil Howe, who will examine how the different generations impact workforce issues; dynamic workshop sessions encompassing a wide range of city-related topics; credited educational workshops

as part of the Certified Municipal Finance Officers training program, numerous networking opportunities to interact with your peers from across the state, and an annual award ceremony to recognize the extraordinary work taking place in our cities throughout Tennessee.

For more information and to register, go to www.TML1.org.



... providing high quality training to economic and community development practitioners and community leaders in Tennessee.

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE

CENTER for INDUSTRIAL SERVICES

For more information, visit http://cis.tennessee.edu/TCED or call 1-888-763-7439

Tennessee Drug Card saves citizens \$30M

With allergy season upon us, TML would like to remind you about one of the League's endorsed programs, the Tennessee Drug Card, that offers a free statewide prescription assistance program for your patients.

To date this program has saved Tennessee residents more than \$30,000,000 on prescription costs.

This program can be used for savings of up to 75 percent on prescription drugs at more than 56,000 regional and national pharmacies.

Here's how you can participate:

- Display cards at your office location for employees and residents to take. Contact Natalie Meyer, program director, at Natalie@TennesseeDrugCard. com or 1-888-987-0688 and a supply will be mailed to your office at NO COST.
- Encourage members of your community to print a FREE Tennessee Drug Card at Tennesseedrugcard.com.
- Inform members of your community that they can ask for the Tennessee Drug Card discount at any CVS pharmacy in the state even if they don't have



a card in hand.

:Through the Tennessee Drug Card program, you can help uninsured and underinsured Tennessee residents access much-needed prescription medications at a discounted rate.

The program is used by people who have health insurance coverage with no prescription benefits, which is common in many health savings accounts (HSA) and high deductible health plans. Additionally, people with prescription coverage can use

the program to get a discount on prescriptiondrugsthatarenotcovered by insurance. The program has no membership restrictions, no income requirements, no age limitations, and no applications to complete.

TML hopes you take advantage of this easy and innovative way to help members of your community get the prescription drugs they need.

For more information about the Tennessee Drug Card, visit TML's website at www.TML1.org

Tennessee Municipal League 2015-2016 Officers and Directors

PRESIDENT
Curtis Hayes
Mayor, Livingston
VICE PRESIDENTS
John Holden
Mayor, Dyersburg
Ann Davis
Mayor, Athens
Wallace Cartwright
Mayor, Shelbyville
DIRECTORS

Wallace Cartwright
Mayor, Shelbyville
DIRECTORS
Jimmy Alexander
Mayor, Nolensville
Megan Barry
Mayor, Metro Nashville
Andy Berke

Andy Berke Mayor, Chattanooga Randy Brundige Mayor, Martin Roger Campbell

Asst. City Manager, Maryville (District 2)

Vance Coleman Mayor, Medina Betsy Crossley

Commissioner, Brentwood **Richard Driver** Mayor, Lafayette (District 5)

Bill GrahamCouncilman, Dayton (District 3)

John HickmanCity Manager, Waynesboro (District 6) **Hoyt Jones**

Alderman, Sparta (District 4) Christa Martin Vice Mayor, Columbia

Pete Peterson
City Manager, Johnson City (District 1)

Bo Perkinson Vice Mayor, Athens Madeline Rogero Mayor, Knoxville Paula Sedgwick

Alderman, Bartlett (District 8) **Charles "Bones" Seivers**President-CEO, TN Municipal Bond Fund

Jim Strickland
Mayor, Memphis
Mary Ann Tremblay
Vice Mayor, Three Way

Garry Welch City Manager, Savannah (District 7) Mike Werner Mayor, Gatlinburg

PAST PRESIDENTS

Tom Rowland (2015) Mayor, Cleveland Dale Kelley (2014) Mayor, Huntingdon Ken Wilber (2013) Mayor, Portland Kay Senter (2012) Morristown Vice Mayor Sam Tharpe (2011) Commissioner, Paris Tommy Pedigo (2010) Council, Morristown Tommy Green (2007) Mayor, Alamo Bob Kirk (2004) Alderman, Dyersburg

AFFILIATE DIRECTORS

Dot LaMarche, Vice Mayor, Farragut (NLC)

Kirk Bednar, Brentwood (TCMA)

TML AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

(Ex-Officio Directors)
Tennessee Assn. of Air Carrier Airports
Tennessee Building Officials Assn.
Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police
TN Assn. Municipal Clerks & Recorders
TN Government Finance Officers Assn.
Tennessee Fire Chiefs Assn.
Tennessee Fire Safety Inspectors
Tennessee Association of Floodplain

Management
Tenn. Assn. Housing & Redevel. Auth.
Tennessee Municipal Attorneys Assn.
Tennessee Municipal Judges Conference
Tenn. Chapter, American Public Works
Tennessee Recreation and Parks Assn.
Tennessee Chapter, American Planning
Tennessee Personnel Management Assn.
Tennessee Assn. of Public Purchasing
TN Section, Institute of Transport
Tennessee Public Transportation Assoc.
Assn. of Independent and Municipal
Schools

Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council Tennessee Urban Forestry Council Tennessee Stormwater Association

TML ASSOCIATE SPONSORS

4 STAR SPONSOR Bank of America 3 STAR SPONSOR

Bank of New York Mellon, Co. First Tennessee Bank
2 STAR SPONSOR

Alliance Water Resources
Ameresco, Inc.
Barge Waggoner Sumner & Cannon, Inc.
Carr, Riggs & Ingram LLC
lbtelematics

Master Meter, Inc. Parsons Brinckerhoff VC3

Voya Financial Advisors
Waste Management Inc. of Tennessee
1 STAR SPONSOR

A2H
Employee Benefit Specialists, Inc.
J.R. Wauford & Co. Consulting Engineers
Local Govt. Corporation
McGill Associates, P.A.
Pavement Restorations, Inc.
Smith Seckman Reid
Tennessee 811
TLM Associates, Inc.
Utility Service Co., Inc.
Vaughn & Melton
Waste Connections of Tennessee Inc.

TML STAFF Margaret Mahery, Executive Director

Waste Industries USA, Inc.

Chad Jenkins, Deputy Director
Mark Barrett, Legislative Research Analyst
Kate Coil, Communications Specialist
Jackie Gupton, Administrative Assistant
Carole Graves, Communications Director
& Editor, Tennessee Town & City
Sylvia Haris, Director of Conference Planning
John Holloway, Government Relations
Debbie Kluth, Director of Marketing /
Member Services
Kevin Krushenski, Legislative Research
Analyst

Denise Paige, Government Relations

NATIONAL BRIEFS

FCC unveils nutrition-like labels for Internet service. Regulators are encouraging companies that sell monthly Internet service to start using nutritional factstyled labels to inform customers about price and performance of service. The Federal Communications Commission designed the "broadband facts" labels so that companies can use them to comply with the transparency portion of the agency's net neutrality rules. The design strongly resembles the Food and Drug Administration's nutritional labels. It is meant to be easy to read to allow customers to comparison shop. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau helped design the labels. While companies will not be forced to use the exact design, those that do will receive assurance that they are complying with the Internet rules passed last year. Featured most prominently on the labels is the price and data allowance of monthly Internet service, and any other fees. Advertised Internet speeds are also displayed. Many Internet providers already provide most the information on their websites.

The Tennessee Valley Authority has approved proposals for new solar power installations by four local power companies in three states. Once completed, the projects will produce 16.7 megawatts of solar energy, enough to power more than 1,300 homes. TVA is awarding the solar capacity to the Chickasaw Electric Cooperative in West Tennessee, the East Missis-

sippi Electric Power Association, the Joe Wheeler Electric Membership Corporation in northern Alabama, and the Johnson City Power Board. TVA and the Tennessee Valley Public Power Association rolled out the new solar program aimed at local power companies in January 2016. TVA currently has more than 400 megawatts of renewable solar power under contract that could supply enough electricity to power more than 216,000 homes.

Wind and solar have grown seemingly unstoppable. While two years of crashing prices for oil, natural gas, and coal triggered dramatic downsizing in those industries, renewables have been thriving. Clean energy investment broke new records in 2015 and is now seeing twice as much global funding as fossil fuels. One reason is that renewable energy is becoming ever cheaper to produce.

U.S. stocks on track to post biggest monthly gain since October. U.S. stocks were clinging to modest gains as a tumultuous quarter comes to a close. Market reaction to a pair of mixed economic reports was muted as investors were cautious on the last day of the quarter as they waited for key labor market data. The main benchmarks were on track to book their first monthly gains since last November and their largest since October while quarterly performance was mixed. "The first half was turbulent, with lots of volume, lots of volatility, while in the second half of this quarter, everything calmed down and stocks have regained a lot

of ground and some," said Ryan Larson, head of equity trading at RBC Global Asset Management.

U.S. states and cities need to adopt a different mosquito-fighting strategy to battle the species carrying the Zika virus as an outbreak that started in Brazil heads north with warmer weather in the coming weeks. The World Health Organization declared a global health emergency in February as the virus spread rapidly in the Americas, citing Zika's link to the birth defect microcephaly and Guillain-Barre syndrome, an autoimmune disorder in adults that can cause paralysis. The mosquito species responsible for spreading the virus by biting people lives in and around homes, making traditional evening insecticide fogging campaigns from sprayers mounted on trucks an ineffective option, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said. Most mosquito abatement efforts in U.S. states target nuisance mosquitoes, those that bite at dusk and ruin picnics and barbecues but pose little public health threat. But Aedes aegypti is a daytime biter that dines exclusively on humans, biting several people in a single blood meal. CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden said health departments need to take a "four corners approach," targeting the Aedes aegypti mosquitoes indoors and outdoors as well as focusing on killing both larvae and adult insects. The Obama administration has asked Congress for about \$1.9 billion in emergency funds to combat Zika but has encountered opposition.



April 23: Milledgeville

Third Annual Milledgeville Heritage Day. Registration and activities begin at 9 a.m. at Milledgeville City Park. Free Admission. Activities, food, screenings, arts/crafts, and more. For more info, call 731-925-1396.

April 30: Gallatin

Gallatin's Annual Squarefest, held the last Saturday in April, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event includes arts and crafts, live entertainment, a kids area and food vendors from throughout mid-south. Held on the historic downtown square, this event has become a signature event in the spring for Gallatin. Crowd size has been estimated at more than 12,000. For additional information call the Greater Gallatin office at 615-452-5692.

April 28 – 30: Greeneville

The 24th Annual Greeneville-Greene County Library Book Sale. Located in historic downtown Greeneville, more than 100,000 books will be for sale. Proceeds from the sale go directly back into library for new books. 406 N. Irish Street, Greeneville, TN 37745. More information can be found on the library's facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/GreenevilleGreene-County-Library-Book-Sale-184344778271585/#greenevillebooksale

May 3: Greeneville

27th annual Taste of Greeneville, beginning at 6 p.m. on the General Morgan Inn Terrace (in the Ballroom if inclement weather) located at 111 North Main Street. All proceeds from the event will benefit the programs of the Greeneville Woman's Club and Main Street Greeneville, co-hosts of the event. Local restaurants will provide attendees with samples of food, drinks or desserts. Some will offer coupons and specials that only those attending will receive. For further information contact the Main Street Greeneville office at 423-639-7102.

May 28-29: Brownsville

6th Annual Exit 56 Blues Fest. Two days of music presented from the porch of the last home of blues legend Sleepy John Estes in Brownsville. For more information about the event, visit www.Exit56Blues.com, call 731-779-9000, or email info@ westtnheritage.com

UT-MTAS APRIL MAP CLASSES

CITY OPERATIONS: HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE WINNING OR LOSING

Have you ever wondered how your city's operations compare with other cities? Have you asked if your city is efficient in the number of code inspections performed? What is the cost per ton of refuse collected per household? Can we reduce the response time on fire calls? How are we doing year-to-year? Is our performance improving? If you have ever asked these questions, then this course is for you. You will learn about types of performance improvement, performance measures and how to apply them to improve operations.

Dates/Locations/Times April 25: Jackson

8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. CDT April 26: Nashville 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. CDT April 29: Knoxville 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT

Target Audience: Elected Officials, Managers and Supervisors

Credits: 4 CPE/CMFO (Other) (PA)

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE LIMITED MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

To register for a course, go to www.mtas.tennessee.edu, or fax to 865-974-0423. Credit card payments must register online with the Solution Point System: http://www.solutionpoint.tennessee.edu/MTAS or by invoice. For registration assistance, call 865-974-0413. Or for more information, contact Kurt Frederick, training consultant, at 615-253-6385.

No loan is too large or too small



The city of Kingston closed a loan through the TMBF loan program in the amount of \$250,000 for a capital outlay note issued for parks and recreational facilities.



See us for your special projects needs. (615) 255-1561



The city of Jackson closed a variable rate loan through the TMBF loan program in the amount of \$17.4 million to finance its three-year capital improvement plan.

Stevens keeps focus on rural economic development

State Senator from 24th District says rural areas must learn to incorporate their roots in new ways to meet future challenges

BY LINDA BRYANT

John Stevens is use to jam-packed work days with plenty of hustle and drive from early morning until late night.

As the state Senator for Tennessee's 24th District, full-time estate planning attorney, and father of two young school-aged daughters, the 42-year-old rarely slows down. At least not during a typical work week.

"During the week, even when we're in session, I have ethical obligations that have to be met, and I have a lot of things to do in a timely manner," Stevens said. "I might go to breakfast at the Capitol at 7 a.m. and go through the whole day until I get dinner at 9 p.m. I'll probably still have law work to get done when I get back to my hotel room, and I'll probably read some bills for the next day, too."

Stevens, who grew up primarily in Gallatin, Tenn., went to college at the University of Tennessee at Martin and earned his law degree from the University of Memphis. When he married his wife Elicia, they settled in Huntingdon because she grew up in the area.

Stevens has emerged as a leader in the Senate. He is a member of two standing committees — the Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee and the Judiciary Committee.

Some of Stevens' key concerns are protecting Second Amendment rights, helping rural counties get more attention, and advancing conservative policies.

"John is known here as a person of great integrity," said Mayor Dale Kelley of Huntingdon. "He's very dedicated and has been supportive of our new 1,000-acre lake, the revitalization of downtown Huntingdon, and the Dixie Carter Performing Arts Center."

"I believe I was the first person who asked John to run for his current seat," Kelley added. "I'm pleased he listened and responded. Rural West Tennessee has ongoing economic problems, and he always shows great interest in serving the needs of our area."

Most recently, Stevens sponsored a high-profile bill [SB2062] to combat asbestos lawsuit fraud and abuse in Tennessee. The bill has provisions that protect honest claimants and also protects Tennessee manufacturing companies from being bankrupted by abusive

"This bill does two things," Stevens said in a video news release from Senate Republicans. "First, it makes sure that people who are actually sick go to the front of the line. Right now, somebody who's not sick takes money away from someone who's actually sick.

'The second part sets up a way for injured claimants to get through their process efficiently, but it makes sure they can't change their story and get paid through the (asbestos) trust fund and then get more money from a Tennessee employer," Stevens added.

The "Asbestos Bankruptcy Trust Claims Transparency Act" passed unanimously on

TT&C: What inspired you to run for political office?

JS: I got the political bug when I was an undergrad at UT Martin in the 1990's. It just stayed with me. I volunteered for a number of political campaigns throughout the 1990's and into the early 2000's. Once we settled in Huntingdon, I got involved in the Carroll County Republican Party and was chairman for a few years. I kept my local Carroll County ties in politics, and I still had my political ties in Nashville and

TT&C: Did you sense that you could win because the political tide was changing in West Tennessee as far as it being traditionally Democrat?

JS: Yes, I had a feeling. It was a Republican year. Barack Obama was not exactly a popular president at that time. I felt like I had a pretty good chance, and that the Republicans would be motivated to go out and vote. I don't know if it was really me or it was just good timing. Roy Herron, the Democrat who'd held the District 24 seat for years, had already run against Stephen Fincher in the 8th Congressional District in 2010 — and he lost. I believe Roy saw a change in voting patterns in the rural parts of West Tennessee. He didn't seek office again. I'm the first Republican to ever hold state office or a state senate seat in Obion and Weakley counties. Henry County, also in my district, had elected Republicans with Carroll County before. A few Republicans were elected over the years in Gibson County.

TT&C: Has it been hard to represent an area with so many Democratic roots?

JS: This rural part of Northwest Tennessee had been Democrat-controlled for many years, but it was always very conservative. Regardless of party affiliation, there's really not a lot of disagreement on policy or issues. Throughout my first campaign, a lot of people told me that I was the first Republican they'd ever voted for. It wasn't so much that they changed; it was that the Democratic Party changed. When working on issues now, the distinction is more between the Republicans because we have a lot of former Democrats who are now Republicans. We have disagreements on how we get to the answer but not so much about where we're going.

TT&C: What would you say your leadership style is?

JS: I've observed public policy being implemented over the years. Because of it I have my own view about how things should be, and I try to state them in a way that people can understand. I want people to know how I approach an issue, and why I'm going to vote a certain way. I'm not constantly trying to figure out what is or is not popular on every bill. That's because I've already told my constituents what I'm going to do. I was elected because more people agreed with me than disagreed with me. I think I was extremely clear with constituents about how I'd approach issues if they elected me.

Of course, there are new issues that come up that I didn't talk about on the campaign trail or that I haven't given any guidance on. I usually talk to groups in my district in the fall and winter before we're in session, and I lay out some of the big issues coming up. I

don't necessarily know how I'm going to vote on some of these issues, and I want to hear from others.

I take a modified William F. Buckley rule on a lot of legislative issues. I'll vote for the most conservative answer to a legislative bill that can pass. I take an incremental approach. Maybe we won't get exactly where we need it to go in any given legislative session, but we can advance toward a more conservative policy.

TT&C: You serve Benton, Carroll, Gibson, Henry, Obion, and Weakley counties. What are some of the most important issues in your part of the state?

JS: There's no question that

No. 1 is jobs, No. 2 is jobs, and No. 3 is jobs. Most of the counties in Northwest Tennessee are still above 8 and 9 percent unemployment. Five of the six counties I represent have some of the highest percentage of residents to receive federal checks — social security, disability, or social security retirement checks. Almost 35 percent of Benton County receives a federal check. If you add on top of that 9 percent unemployment, you've got almost 38 percent of county residents who don't work or who are looking for work. It's a really hard economic climate when there are two generations not working. When you can rely on getting that social security or disability check you get use to getting paid not to work. It's a hard mindset to fight against. I aggressively want to try and stop that. I believe it's human nature to want to work and be productive.

I mentioned to Governor Haslam the other day that the Northwest correctional facility in Lake County is having trouble keeping security guards. One of the difficulties is the pay. You can receive state and federal benefits that are the equivalent of about \$10.30 an hour. Not all jobs pay that much. Some people have the mindset that if you can sit at home and do nothing why wouldn't you instead of going to work and making \$0.20 an hour more?

TT&C: The Department of Economic and **Community Development is really trying to** bring more attention to rural areas. Have you had any 'wins' — things that give you hope?

JS: Yes, we do have our wins. It doesn't feel like it to a lot of people, and I don't discount them because we still have a lot of work to do. Obion and Dyer counties have had really good successes. There have been a few job announcements in Gibson and Carroll counties, but it's not at the level we'd like it to be. We don't get jobs announcements of 1,000 like Nashville. When companies come to Tennessee they see that we have a great business climate and a real opportunity to prosper. Their employees want to come here and work. But when they see the options available, they often choose the bigger cities and surrounding areas over the rural areas. It's a real issue for us.

TT&C: That sounds a little dire. What can we do to make it better?

JS: I have an optimistic, long-term view. My daughters are 11 and 8. The jobs that are available now are different than the jobs that will be available when they are 30. Those jobs don't even exist yet. The changes in technology and the world are not going to leave the rural areas behind. I believe rural areas need to embrace the skills we have, most notably the willingness to work hard and raise a family. If we can keep our rural roots — and incorporate them into trying new things — I think we can eventually grow jobs instead of waiting for somebody to drop them on us.

There's some promising legislation that would offers tax credit to companies that invest in depressed economic areas. This would be a great way to attract investors. We need more of an entrepreneurial spirit in rural areas. We need to strengthen our ability to market and grow businesses and make them sustainable. Frankly, we also need better economic conditions so that our products can sell. We have local customers, but the rest of the world needs



State Sen. John Stevens



State Sen. Stevens and wife Elicia

to be some of our customer base.

We can't continue to think the education of the past is going to meet the needs of our future. The factory work that your father and grandfather had are not going to come back. Your job is not going to be working the line but to maintain the robot that's working the line. I watched a program on education recently where kindergarteners were asked to raise their hand if they were creative. Everyone's hands went up. But when they asked a group of 25-year olds the same question, only a few raised their hands. The highest paid jobs in the world are creative jobs. We need to encourage creativity!

TT&C: Is there anything else you want to say about representing or serving a rural area?

JS: I've seen a finer point of distinction this year between urban and rural needs. It seems like there's been more of a push to improve the urban areas. For example, we recently had a bill that dealt with funding for bicycle routes. I'm all for bicycle routes and greenways, but in the rural areas we want to make sure that our bridges and roads are maintained. The bike paths are great, but to us they seem like luxury items, not necessities. To urban folks they seem more critical because they have so many traffic issues.

TT&C: Do you think that rural areas need to get together to have more of a voice?

JS: Maybe we do. I read "Coup" by Keel Hunt over the summer. One of the things that stood out to me was how Speaker Naifeh and Gov. McWherter got together and had a rural caucus. They met together, voted together and were quite a force. We don't really have that kind of coalescence now. I think we probably vote together on (rural) issues, but it's not intentional.

TT&C: The General Assembly passed a bill last year to set up a legal framework for ride-sharing apps such as Lyft and Uber. This year you're carrying a bill setting up the framework for Airbnb. Why is this im-

JS: On the surface it seems like these are urban issues, but they actually apply to rural areas. My Airbnb bill attempted to set a framework for companies such as Airbnb to act in a responsible way. There are sales taxes owed when you rent through Airbnb and collection is particularly hard. Not many people voluntarily mail in sales tax checks when they rent.

Airbnb is fantastic for tourism. In Huntingdon we only have around 15 rooms in our local hotel. If you want to come to Huntingdon, you can stay in a private home, Airbnb home, or room and have a great place to stay. Some people approach tourism in our area by focusing on attracting hotels. I approach it differently, and say we need to take advantage of the new economy represented by these companies like Airbnb. We need to get on board with it! Another example are companies like Uber. In my district we don't have public transportation to speak of. Having Uber here would be a great way for a college student at Bethel University or UTM Martin to make a little extra money. Five years ago, that job didn't exist, and now it does. That is what I'm talking about in embracing the jobs of the future instead of complaining that the jobs of the past are gone.



Stevens on the Senate floor displaying a Davy Crockett musket.

TT&C: The 1,000-acre recreational lake near Huntingdon, which was unveiled in 2013, is the largest manmade lake in West Tennessee and has more than 22 miles of shoreline. Has the lake brought more attention to the area?

JS: Yes, and it's going to keep making a difference. The lake has been Mayor Dale Kelly's project for the past 30 years. They are continuing to improve the lake. It's going to continue to be a really good thing for Huntingdon as people commute in and out of Madison County and Jackson. That area is an employment hub. Now you have the option of living 30 minutes away on a really pretty lake with great fishing, water sports and recreation. As someone who grew up in Gallatin on Old Hickory Lake, I can tell you it's nice to be able to have a really similar type of environment right outside of town. The folks who sit behind me in church moved here from Cleveland, Ohio, and bought a place on the lake. What we need now is a retirement-type community. It's a great place to downsize, retire and live on a lake. There's a reasonable cost of living and you don't have the income tax like the folks that are in high tax states.

TT&C: Do you have any particular legislation or bills that are important to you either in the past or current that you would like to talk about?

JS: The bill that I worked the hardest on last year was the guns in parks legislation. That was a really high profile piece of legislation, and I put a lot of time and effort into it. [The bill allows permit holders to carry handguns in parks and other public recreation areas owned or operated by local government.]

TT&C: What did you learn from working on it? It sounds like it really meant a lot to you. JS: I did. The Second Amendment has under-

gone a lot of scrutiny and attention in the past few years. I believe the issue will continue to evolve as the American people get their heads around the fact that the Second Amendment is just as important as the First Amendment. For many people that's a big leap.

It's going to take a pragmatic approach to implement some of these constitutional principles. There are a lot of people who are really comfortable with handguns and firearms, and there's another piece of the population that isn't. Frankly, it's just like the First Amendment. There are a lot of people who love people to say whatever they want, and there are others who want to restrict that freedom more and more. Americans have generally agreed that more speech is better. Over time, I think more and more people are going to be comfortable with the fact that somebody next to them in the movies or at a restaurant has a firearm.

TT&C: Do you have any particular mentors or people that have meant a lot to you that you would like to mention?

JS: There a lot of people that have influenced me especially legislatively. I worked with Hardy Mays when he was legal counsel for the Sundquist Administration. Hardy is a federal judge now. I learned a lot from him. I also learned a lot from David Locke, who was the person who hired me in the Sundquist Administration. On the legal side there are several lawyers who have influenced me. Charlie Trotter, is an important influence. He is the other lawyer in my office and represents Farm Bureau Insurance and the town of Trezevant.

TT&C: You're up for reelection this year. Do you have an opponent?

JS: I don't have any declared opponents at this time, but I am preparing for a vigorous campaign. I enjoy campaigning because I like talking to people face to face. I learn a lot by knocking on doors. You get a real sense of what people's mindsets are, and that allows me to serve them to the best of my ability.