

Gov. Lee's amended budget provides \$100M in local funds

On April 13, Gov. Bill Lee unveiled his budget amendment and as he promised in his State of the State address his administration is proposing \$100 million in one-time funds to Tennessee's cities.

The specific details will not be certain until the legislature adopts the final FY21-22 budget. However, when presenting the budget amendment to the Senate Finance Ways and Means Committee, Finance Commissioner Butch Eley stated, "The Governor feels strongly that the local government investments should be maintained."

In March, the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was signed into law and includes a potential allocation of up to \$513 million for Tennessee's towns and cities.

However, the ARP limits use of federal funding to local government to four allowable uses and guidance governing the use of ARP funds will not be published

until mid-May.

In light of this, Lee's administration is proposing a wait-and-see approach that would allocate state grants in January 2022 after the impact of the American Rescue Plan Act funds are fully realized.

While the amount of federal ARP dollars flowing to cities is significant, it is not certain how many cities will be able to utilize these federal funds given the limitations on their permitted uses.

Conversely, it is certain that every city will be able to fully utilize its' share of the proposed local government grants. Authorized uses include: public safety, street projects, capital maintenance, utility system upgrades, IT hardware upgrades, and new school construction and existing school renovations.

The cities and towns across Tennessee appreciate Gov. Lee's commitment of funds for improving our infrastructure and meeting public safety needs as a result of *See FUNDS on Page 5*

Tim Kelly elected Chattanooga mayor; four municipalities hold local elections

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

April elections were held in four municipalities across the state of Tennessee.

As a result, all four municipalities that held elections will have new mayors while several will see new faces on city councils and boards of mayor and aldermen.

CHATTANOOGA

The city of Chattanooga held a run-off election on April 13 that decided the city's new mayor as well as several unfinished city council races from the previous March 2 municipal election.

Tim Kelly defeated fellow challenger Kim White to replace outgoing Chattanooga Mayor Andy Berke. Kelly earned 15,966 votes to White's 10,661. A local businessman and philanthropist, Kelly was sworn in on April 19, alongside other new members of the Chattanooga City Council.

"Under my leadership, Chattanooga will get back to basics," Kelly said during the inauguration ceremony. "City services will be more responsive, and we will clearly communicate how and when things are going to get fixed. To put it simply, we are going to fill a lot of potholes and pave a lot of roads, striving to make it a more enjoyable city for all of its residents."

In the District 2 run-off race, Hamilton County Board of Education Member Jenny Hill defeated fellow challenger Thomas Lee with Hill garnering 1,284 votes to Lee's 850.

Hill will take over the District 2 seat from retiring Councilman Jerry Mitchell. She will retain her school board seat as well.

Isaiah Hester defeated fellow newcomer Dennis Clark for the District 5 seat with Hester earning 1,598 votes to Clark's 1,332.

The District 5 seat was previously held by Russell Gilbert, who chose to run an unsuccessful mayoral campaign rather than for re-election to the District 5 seat.

DAYTON

More than a month after Councilman Caleb Yawn won a special called election to fill the term of the late Councilman Jim Lewis, Dayton voters returned



Tim Kelly was sworn in as mayor of Chattanooga on April 19 after defeating fellow challenger Kim White in a run-off election for the seat. New City Councilors Jenny Hill and Isaiah Hester were also elected in the same run-off election where Kelly was chosen as the city's new mayor.



New Spring Hill Mayor Jim Hagaman is sworn in by outgoing Mayor Rick Graham on April 20. An Air Force veteran and retired facilities manager, Hagaman will be joined by three new faces on the Spring Hill Board of Mayor and Aldermen - Jason Cox, William Pomeroy, and Trent Linville - as well as incumbent Kevin Gavigan.

to the polls on April 21 to elect officials to the city's mayoral seat and two council seats.

Challenger Hurley Marsh defeated incumbent Gary Louallen for the Dayton mayoral seat. Marsh garnered 557 votes to Louallen's 382.

A retired Norfolk & Southern Railroad employee, Marsh served 10 years on the Rhea County School Board, including as its chairman and vice chairman. He also served on the Rhea County Election Commission.

Incumbent city councilmen Bill Graham and Steve Randolph kept their seats, defeating challengers including Bo Kaylor, Paul Soyster, and Angie Pierce



Stumbo.

Randolph led the vote tally with 455 followed by Graham with 395. Stumbo followed with 325 followed by Kaylor, who earned 273 votes, and Soyster who garnered 269.

JACKSBORO

Voters went to the polls on April 3 in Jacksboro to pick a new mayor as well as a new alderman.

Sitting alderman Shayne Green defeated present Vice Mayor J.C. Miller 180 to 55 votes to obtain the mayoral seat.

Outgoing Jacksboro Mayor June Forstner announced she would not seek re-election after serving 12 years as vice mayor and mayor of the town.

Newcomers Brian K. Osborn and Jimmy Snodgrass took the two open aldermen seats, defeating fellow challengers Jennifer Banks and Roy Lynn Green.

Osborn led the total with 102 votes, Snodgrass with 1010, Green with 99, and Banks with 44. Osborn and Snodgrass will take the seats vacated by Green and Miller when they ran for the mayoral seat.

SPRING HILL

Spring Hill has a new mayor and several new faces on its Board of Aldermen following the city's April 8 municipal election.

Air Force veteran and retired facilities manager Jim Hagaman defeated Ward 4 Alderman Vincent Fuqua for the Spring Hill mayoral seat 1,796 votes to 1,219 votes. Hagaman ran in 2015 unsuccessfully for the mayoral seat.

Incumbent Mayor Rick Graham announced he would not seek re-election to the post after 14 years on the board of mayor and aldermen and eight as the *See ELECTION on Page 4*

Two new members appointed to stimulus accountability group

Gov Bill Lee announced the addition of Sen. Ferrell Haile and Rep. Patsy Hazlewood to the Financial Stimulus Accountability Group (FSAG).

The bipartisan group will continue its work to support Tennessee's economy and ensure proper fiscal management of federal relief funds, meeting publicly and reporting regularly to bring transparency to the process.

"As Tennessee's strong economic recovery continues, we must ensure federal dollars coming to our state are used wisely and effectively," said Gov. Bill Lee. "I thank Sen. Haile, Rep. Hazlewood and all members of this group for their valuable input as we steward these resources and serve Tennesseans."

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve on this panel which is charged with ensuring this money is used properly to best benefit our citizens," said Senate Speaker Pro Tempore Ferrell Haile. "We have a huge responsibility to see that these funds are managed in the most effective manner and Gov. Lee is taking every step possible to ensure the most efficient use. I *See FSAG on Page 5*



Sen. Ferrell Haile
Speaker Pro Tempore



Rep. Patsy Hazlewood
House Finance Chair

Historic Depot Street makeover first phase of Greeneville downtown revitalization plan

By KATE COIL

Construction work will soon begin on the first phase of a project aimed at revitalizing downtown Greeneville.

The first phase of the project will include 18-months of construction along Depot Street, bringing a new streetscape, underground utilities, and a designated area for street festivals and fairs to one of the most historic streets in the town.

Greeneville Mayor W.T. Daniels said Depot Street was chosen for the first phase of the project because the street has potential to be a major economic engine for downtown.

"The intersection of Depot and Main streets are the nucleus of our downtown," Daniels said. "There are a lot of available buildings there and a lot of opportunity for growth. We are working on several infrastructure projects, including a parking plan for the area. We have had a lot of plans for downtown Greeneville, but this is the first time the city council has really put our money where our mouth is."

Town Administrator Todd Smith said Depot Street is one of the most historic streets in Greeneville with the President Andrew Johnson Historic site on the eastern end, the General Morgan Inn and Convention Center in the center, and the U.S. District Courthouse anchoring the western end.



Depot Street is the focus of the first phase of a downtown revitalization plan for the town of Greeneville. The street is home to the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, General Morgan Inn and Conference Center, and numerous other historical buildings that make the area unique.

"Depot Street, interestingly enough, has most of the old historic buildings that are still here," Smith said. "There is a lot of opportunity there because many of these historic buildings are vacant. We feel it gives us the greatest opportunity to do something productive and that looks good in the public sphere and

also brings in investment from the private sphere."

Smith said the revitalization project has been several years in the making.

"The project was born out of the 2012 strategic plan for the town of Greeneville," Smith said. "One of our initiatives was downtown

redevelopment, and we did a master plan for the downtown in 2017. From that conceptual design, we built out downtown redevelopment in three phases. We started honing in on phase one, which is what Depot Street reflects. We hired Vaughn and Melton who are finishing the design, which will we then bid it out."

However, the pandemic has created some delays in the project's progress.

"We thought we were going to be ready to go this same time last year, but when the pandemic hit in March, we decided, like many other communities, to put capital projects on hold," he said. "We then went back in November and modified our budget to put capital projects back in the plan. It was January before we could restart it."

In addition to new sidewalks, landscaping, and lighting, the project will see a makeover for how utilities operate in the area.

"We are redoing all of the utilities on Depot Street so all the water, sewer, power, and natural gas will be new infrastructure underground," Smith said. "This project has been pretty timely because our water lines are more than 100 years old, so it just made sense while we had the streets dug up to replace all of that infrastructure. We are also going to have WiFi downtown."

A part of Depot Street will also *See GREENEVILLE on Page 3*

NEWS
ACROSS
TENNESSEE



ARLINGTON

The town of Arlington has opened the Crossing at Depot Square, a new market and outdoor event space located in the heart of downtown. The opening included a market featuring local artisan and craft vendors and farm vendors along with food trucks. The venue will be the home of the Market at the Crossing, the town’s new farmers’ and craft market.

CLARKSVILLE

LG Electronics USA announced the world-leading home appliance manufacturer will expand its Clarksville operations to meet unprecedented U.S. demand for its top-rate washing machine. LG is increasing production by investing an additional \$20.5 million to add another shift for manufacturing. Higher production is creating 334 new jobs, bringing total LG Clarksville employment to about 1,000 this year. LG first announced in 2017 that Clarksville would be home to its first washing machine manufacturing facility in the U.S. Completed in 2018, the 1-million-square-foot facility is believed to be the world’s most advanced integrated washing machine plant. LG Electronics USA is the North American subsidiary of LG Electronics, Inc., a \$56 billion global innovator in technology and manufacturing headquartered in South Korea.

CLARKSVILLE

The Clarksville City Council is considering a purchase agreement with solar energy provider Silicon Ranch to purchase 140.2 acres of property from the city for \$3.36 million to develop the land as a solar farm. The city purchased the entire 347.5-acre site for more than \$4 million in 2018, and would sell the parcel for development as a solar farm that would sell electricity to CDE Lightband, equivalent to 56% of the electricity needed for city departments or service for 1,863 Clarksville households. The rate would be half of what the city is currently paying to TVA for traditional power supply. The company would enter into a 30-year agreement with the city to sell power at a fixed-rate. The solar farm would also be part of the Exit 8 Athletic Complex using similar access roads to be built by the city.

ELIZABETHTON

The Elizabethton City Council has accepted the donation of a train display from the Elizabethton/Carter County Chamber of Commerce. The display has long been located on property owned by the city of Elizabethton on U.S. Highway 19E next to a building that houses the chamber offices. However, with the chamber moving its offices to downtown, officials decided to turn maintenance of the display over to the city to ensure proper maintenance going forward. The city intends to maintain the display as a tourist attraction, especially for train enthusiasts who come to the city to learn more about local railroad history and heritage.

FRANKLIN

Advanced Correctional Healthcare, Inc. (ACH), will relocate its headquarters from Peoria, Ill., to Franklin, creating 58 new jobs and investing \$2.5 million. ACH will locate its new headquarters at 720 Cool Springs Boulevard. ACH is the largest county jail health care provider in the U.S., and operates health care teams and customized programs in a variety of correctional settings, including

county jails, juvenile detention centers, mental health units, work release centers, and drug rehabilitation centers. In 2019, ACH was honored with the Better Business Bureau’s Torch Award for Ethics, which is given to companies that demonstrate best practices, leadership, social responsibility and high standards of ethics that benefit their clients, employees and communities. ACH has also been certified by its employees as a Great Place to Work through Fortune magazine for six consecutive years. Further, ACH is currently listed as No. 6 in Fortune’s Best Workplaces in Healthcare and Biopharma.

HOHENWALD

BRS Offroad North America will establish new operations in Hohenwald, creating 115 new jobs and investing \$1.7 million. The off-road and luxury camper manufacturer recently purchased a building, located at 320 Summertown Highway, where the company will build its Sherpa, Pursuit, and Pullman models. BRS Offroad is partnering with TCAT Hohenwald to develop training opportunities and invest in the local community. The Australian company is based in Redhead, New South Wales, with its North American division headquartered in Aberdeen, Miss.

NASHVILLE

Software giant Oracle has unveiled plans for the creation of a new office hub at the River North Campus in Nashville, investing \$1.2 billion and bringing an estimated 8,500 jobs to the area. The proposal includes \$175 from the tech firm for public infrastructure needed to support the 60-acre campus, a pedestrian bridge connecting it to the Germantown neighborhood, and a riverfront park and greenway. The deal is the largest economic development project and planned jobs infusion in Tennessee history, transforming the East Bank of the Cumberland River. The average salary for Oracle employees will be \$110,000 a year with about 2,500 jobs by the end of 2027 and the full 8,500 by 2031. Additionally, nearly 11,500 ancillary jobs and 10,000 temporary construction project jobs are expected as a result of the project.

NEW HOPE

Colonial Chemical officials announced the surfactant product manufacturing company will expand its operations in New Hope, investing \$13.8 million and creating 44 jobs in the next five years. Located at 225 Colonial Dr., Colonial Chemical’s expansion will include renovations of its existing 25,000-square-foot warehouse and the addition of a stand-alone employee facility. Colonial Chemical will also construct a new research and development laboratory and tank farm, all of which is expected to be complete by 2025. Founded in 1988, Colonial Chemical is a specialty chemical manufacturing company and global supplier of surfactants used in personal care products, household cleaners, and various industrial applications.

Company Distilling announces investments in Alcoa, Townsend

Company Distilling officials have announced the company will create 60 jobs and invest \$20.2 million to create two multi-use facilities in Alcoa and Townsend.

The facilities will be used for bourbon-whiskey manufacturing as well as feature tasting rooms and outdoor activities.

The Townsend location is set to open this year and will include a 4,000-square-foot tasting room and outdoor space for activities with access to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The second location is set to open in 2022 in Springbrook Farm, a master planned “city center” in Alcoa. It will serve as the primary distillery and location for the spirit’s main manufacturing.

The 20,000-square-foot refurbished building will include a tasting room and retail store along with family-friendly outdoor activities and entertainment on the property’s

ORLINDA

Puritan Medical Products, North America’s largest manufacturer of COVID-19 testing swabs, will establish new manufacturing and distribution operations in Orlinda, investing \$220 million and creating 625 jobs in the next five years. The Orlinda operations are designed to produce up to 200 million swabs per month. Headquartered in Maine, Puritan Medical Products is a family-owned business that has been operating for more than 100 years. Puritan is one of two companies in the world that manufactures the specialized swabs used in COVID-19 tests. Because of the contributions the company has made to the fight against COVID-19, Puritan was named “Company of the Year” by *Inc.* on the magazine’s Best in Business 2020 list. Prior to the pandemic, Puritan produced roughly 15 to 20 million swabs per month. With funding awarded through the Department of Defense and the CARES Act, Puritan has since increased its swab production to 70 to 90 million swabs per month at its two facilities in Maine.

SOMERVILLE

Memphis Contract Packing officials announced the beauty product contract manufacturer will build a new facility to expand its Fayetteville operations, investing \$48 million to add new product lines and creating 261 new jobs. Located at 95 Ball Park Street in Somerville, Memphis Contract Packaging will expand its operations by constructing a new space and adding new equipment. The new distribution and warehouse facility will support contract manufacturing for consumer products customers from leading global brands. Memphis Contract Packaging is a contract manufacturer of liquid beauty products such as shampoo, lotions, and hand soaps. As a result of increased demand for sanitizing products due to the COVID-19 pandemic, foaming hand soap, and hand sanitizer will also be produced at the Somerville facility.

SPRING HILL

Ultium Cells LLC, a joint venture of LG Energy Solutions and General Motors, will invest more than \$2.3 billion to build its second battery cell manufacturing plant in the U.S. in Spring Hill, creating 1,300 new manufacturing jobs. Ultium Cells LLC will build the new 2.8-million-square-foot, state-of-the-art plant on land leased from General Motors. Construction will begin immediately, and the plant is scheduled to be open in late 2023. Once operational, the Ultium Cells plant will supply battery cells to GM’s Spring Hill assembly plant. GM’s proprietary Ultium battery technology is at the heart of the company’s strategy to compete for nearly every EV customer in the marketplace, whether they are looking for affordable transportation, luxury vehicles, work trucks, commercial trucks or high-performance machines. Through Ultium Cells, LG Energy Solution and GM will merge their advanced technologies and capabilities to help accelerate automotive electrification.

31 acres.

Company Distilling is a new distilling company built from the collaborative efforts of multiple people with a history of building distilleries, crafting spirits and bringing people together, according to Company Distilling President Kris Tatum.

“It’s this collaboration between friends seeking to produce a spirit worth gathering over that sparked the Company Distilling name,” Tatum said. “Not only will the whiskey be best when enjoyed among good company, but the distillery’s property provides ample opportunities for gathering and outdoor fun.”

The partners include former Jack Daniel’s Master Distiller Jeff Arnett, former Tennessee Distillers Guild President Kris Tatum, H. Clark Distillery Founder Heath Clark, Clayton Homes CEO Kevin Clayton, and Corey Clayton, project manager for Vee Hollow Bike Trails.

Decherd officials dedicate refurbished historic arch



The city of Decherd has christened the refurbished historic, 114-year-old arch at the Mt. Garner Cemetery. From left, Franklin County Chamber Executive Director Kayla Doney, former Decherd Alderman Roy Partin, Decherd resident Diane Hensley, Decherd first lady Janel Gillespie, Mayor Michael Gillespie, Cemetery Committee Member Mary Nell Hess, and Decherd residents Jim Hensley, Skip Hatmaker and Aaron Krouse.

Hendersonville dedicates Little Free Library at park



Officials with the city of Hendersonville Parks Department and the General Jethro Sumner Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) dedicated a new Little Free Library at the Mary’s Magical Place inclusive playground at Hendersonville’s Veterans Park. The Little Free Library is dedicated in the memory of Mary Elizabeth McAuley, who is also the namesake of the playground.

Friendsville opens new inclusive city playground



Friendsville citizens got a chance to explore the city’s New Generation Playground, the first all-inclusive play area in the city. Located near Friendsville City Hall at the corner of North Farmum Street and West College Avenue, the playground has wheelchair access with room for expansion. Future plans include a walking trail connecting the playground to Friendsville Elementary School.

Tullahoma cuts ribbon for new police headquarters



Law enforcement officers, city officials, contractors, and citizens gathered on April 16 to cut the ribbon on the new police headquarters for the Tullahoma Police Department. The new station is located behind the current municipal building. Designed by Crossville-based Upland Design Group and constructed by Brentwood-based American Constructors, Inc., the 10,000-square-foot building doubles the size available to the police department, meeting both current and future technology needs, opening space for on-site training, and more. The department will officially move into the building on May 1.

TENNESSEE TOWN & CITY
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Safe Bar program trains hospitality workers to prevent sexual assault

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

A new program is hoping to recruit those in the hospitality industry to help protect both tourists and locals from sexual assault.

Sharon Travis, outreach and advocacy specialist for the Sexual Assault Center (SAC) in Nashville, said the Safe Bar program for Nashville began with a phone call from a concerned man from out-of-town. He reported that his fiancée had come to Nashville as a bridesmaid on a bachelorette trip. Sometime during the previous night, she had been separated from her party. She woke the next morning in a strange place with a stranger and needed help reporting the sexual assault.

When accompanying the young woman to the hospital for a rape kit and after care treatment, officials with the SAC were told by a hospital nurse that stories like the victim’s were all too common. Travis said staff at SAC knew they needed to do something to help.

“We started to see an uptick in drug and alcohol-facilitated sexual assaults,” Travis said. “I don’t know how much of it was that this was increasing or that it was becoming more in our face. As a prevention person and from a public health perspective, we need to make sure we are providing the right support and safety.”

Modeled on a similar program launched in Washington, D.C., the Safe Bar program trains staff of bars, restaurants, and other hospitality industry workers to recognize the signs that a patron may be unsafe and to intervene. The Sexual Assault Center is working with the Tennessee Commission to End Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Tennessee Department of Health to expand the program not only in Nashville bars but throughout the state of Tennessee.

At the start of April, 15 bars in Nashville had been trained through the program with a goal of 100 by the end of April, which is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Programs have also been started in Memphis, Johnson City, and are beginning in Knoxville. Online, on-demand trainings are offered through SAC’s website.

“We focus on bystander intervention through the lens of how predators operate. We know alcohol is not the problem; the problem is someone weaponizing alcohol to gain an advantage on another person. There are things that can be done before there is an actual rape. What we are hoping to do is to empower people to use their voice and to use what authority they have in those spaces



A bar in downtown Nashville with the Safe Bar logo on its windows lets patrons know that its staff have been through training with the Sexual Assault Center of Nashville to learn the signs and how to better protect patrons from sexual assault. Officials with the program hope it will not only decrease sexual assault but also help both tourists and locals feel safer when patronizing local restaurants, bars, and other hospitality-focused businesses.



The Angel Shot Program is another program the Sexual Assault Center is working with bars to promote. Patrons who are feeling unsafe can ask waiters or bartenders for an angel shot to know they need help discretely. This coaster also allows drinks to be tested for GHB.

es to prevent these things from happening. Bar staff are there all night and see everything that is going on. A lot of these places have bouncers and security staff who can intervene.”

Travis said often times the signs that someone is about to be victimized are there, but it can take a certain awareness to recognize those signs and act.

“Sexual assault is about domination, control, power and manipulation; it’s not about sex,”

she said. “Everyone thinks they do a good job of keeping patrons safe, but they need to look at that from a different vantage point. Preventing sexual assault is about paying attention to nuances that you might not ordinarily pick up on. We want to give the right tools to the people who can be the helpers and a voice to the people who are impacted.”

Another program the Sexual Assault Center trains hospitality workers on is the “angel shot”

program. Used internationally, a patron who is feeling unsafe can ask a waiter or bartender for an “angel shot,” thereby letting them know they need help without alerting a person wishing to do them harm.

The overall goal of both programs is to stop sexual assault before another victim is hurt.

“We don’t want to react to things that have already happened,” Travis said. “Prevention is about stopping it before it starts. If it looks like we don’t have a problem, but we aren’t doing anything to address the problem, it means that people don’t know how to report it or don’t feel safe enough to come forward. It doesn’t necessarily mean you’re doing a good job. The average sexual offenders strike 398 times before they are caught the first time. The average victim only discloses they have been a victim once. They can commit an offense that many times because we don’t pay attention, and we aren’t holding them accountable.”

Travis said part of the issue is addressing misconceptions that sexual assault only happens to certain types of people.

“I think the biggest misconception is that people think that victims are only from a certain socioeconomic background or only go to certain areas,” she said. “They also often blame the victim and say ‘well, they shouldn’t have been drinking.’ If you go to a place that serves libations, you should be able to enjoy yourself without being raped at the end of it. We

need to make sure we aren’t blaming victims or buying into the ‘it couldn’t happen to me’ mentality. There is no discrimination when it comes to who can be a victim of sexual assault.”

Another misconception is that only “dive bars” or places that cater to a specific type of clientele are locations where sexual assaults can take place.

“I’ve heard people say that they aren’t a dive bar or that they’re an upscale restaurant, so this won’t happen here as if someone won’t go on a blind date to an upscale restaurant,” Travis said. “There are a lot more dating sites like Tinder, and we are seeing an uptick in sexual assaults reported from those types of dates, which can take place anywhere. There is no place that is immune from a predator looking for a victim. It can happen in your space, and when you have the mindset that it can’t happen in your space, you might be missing some important red flags and cues.”

Programs like Safe Bar can also be a boost for the image of businesses who participate.

“People like to go to places where they know they’ll be safe,” Travis said. “If they know that your business has been proactive and cares enough about their patrons to put these things in place, it could increase your business because you can show what you do to make the safety of patrons a priority.”

For more information on the Safe Bar program, visit <https://www.sacenter.org/>

Depot Street makeover first phase of Greeneville downtown revitalization plan

GREENEVILLE *from Page 1*
be set aside for events like the local farmer’s market, street fairs, and other events.

“The block of Depot Street from Main Street to Irish Street has been honed in on as our special events block,” Smith said. “It will have a decorative stone look and feel on the street top and have decorative street paving. In the middle of that there will be a pretty large table-top concept in the middle of the street. Our hope is for special events, farmers’ markets, and concert events, we can block that whole area off and make it a pedestrian area for special events. At the end of the day, our goal is to have visitors look at that section of Depot Street and be talking about it.”

Smith said the overall goal is to encourage others to invest in downtown Greeneville.

“We took the approach of why should we expect the private sector to invest in our downtown if the public sector isn’t willing to invest in it,” he said. “So we are making the initial investment with our public dollars downtown in the hopes that the private sector sees that investment and feels this is a worthy investment for their dollars. We are hoping particularly to see some investment from the commercial and retail sector. We have a lot of activity with the federal courthouse and the historic sites that we have downtown, but we don’t have a lot of restaurants, pubs, and retail stores.”

Public input has been a major part of the project, especially from business and property owners on Depot Street.

“The feedback has been very

positive,” Smith said. “We have gotten farther than we’ve ever been with a redevelopment project, and people have realized that. Next month we are going to see dirt turning, which is really exciting. Our businessowners downtown – in spite of the fact they know there is going to be road closures, construction, and detours downtown – they are excited and ready to be involved with it.”

Daniels himself has renovated half a dozen historic structures in downtown Greeneville, including the 1820 house on Main Street – the second oldest in Greeneville – where he and his wife live.

“We are doing our best to bring downtown back to life,” Daniels said. “I think this will bring revitalization to our downtown and hopefully, it will encourage people to make personal financial commitments to downtown. We want to provide the infrastructure for growth and development, and let the private sector bring projects and businesses. We have already seen that happen with the renovation of the General Morgan Inn. There is a lot of excitement about this project.”

Smith said Depot Street’s makeover is only the first step in a ten-year plan to reinvigorate downtown Greeneville.

The town is already considering plans for a permanent farmer’s market facility, more pedestrian areas, and opening up the area around Richland Creek to make a pedestrian promenade with outdoor dining.

“This is an exciting first phase, but there is still a lot of work to do,” Smith said.



The vision for Depot Street was created by design firm Vaughn and Melton. Town officials said the goal for the project is to make the street more walkable, provide new landscaping, and accommodate outdoor activities ranging from outdoor seating for restaurants to local street fairs and the Depot Street Farmers’ Market. Design plans also call for the area between Irish and Main streets will also be specially paved to make room for special events.



The General Morgan Inn and Convention Center is located at the intersection of Depot Street and Main Street in Greeneville. Town officials say that this intersection is the heartbeat of the community, serving as a central location for downtown.



PEOPLE



Amy Brooks has been appointed as the new executive director of Knoxville-Knox County Planning in a joint appointment by Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon and Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs. Brooks has been with the department for more than 14 years and has been serving as its interim executive director since July 2020. Brooks is a member of the American Institute for Certified Planners, a nationally Certified Public Manager, and is currently serving as treasurer for the Tennessee chapter of the American Planning Association. She earned a master's in urban and regional planning from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and political science from Maryville College.



Amy Brooks

of Gallatin by the Gallatin City Council. DePriest has served as the assistant director of public works for the city since 2019 and prior to that spent four years as a project manager at the Portland-based Hodges Group. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration from Middle Tennessee State University and also worked as a border patrol agent in Texas from 2007 until 2013.



Richard DePriest

vice to the city, including 19 as director. Under Gamble's supervision, the Manchester Recreation Department has seen the addition of an all-inclusive playground, the building of the Duck River greenway, the addition of ball fields, the establishment of the community garden and greenhouse, and the building of a municipal recreation complex.

Magen Honeycutt has been appointed to fill the seat on the La Vergne Board of Mayor and Aldermen vacated by former Vice Mayor Melisa Brown, who resigned in March after moving out of the area. Honeycutt will fulfill the remainder of Brown's alderman term, which ends in November 2022. Honeycutt is a route supervisor for FedEx Ground and has lived in La Vergne since 2019. She has also volunteered with the La Vergne Fire Rescue Department and other local charities. Alderman Steve Noe has been named the new vice mayor for La Vergne.



Magen Honeycutt



Roscoe Dixon

Roscoe Dixon, a former state lawmaker and Memphis-based civil rights activist, died April 15, 2021, at the age of 71 after a lengthy illness. Born in Arkansas, Dixon was raised in South Memphis and earned his bachelor's degree in political science from Memphis State University — now the University of Memphis. After college, Dixon worked with several civil rights groups including the Urban League, the NAACP, Operation PUSH, and on the political campaigns of Harold Ford Sr. and President Jimmy Carter. He won election to Tennessee State House District 87 in 1977 and served as a state representative from 1978 until 1994. He was then elected to State Senate District 33 in 1994, serving until 2005 when he resigned to take a job as deputy chief administrative officer of Shelby County. He remained involved in several community organizations until his death.

Bonnie Gamble, director of the Manchester Recreation Department, will retire on June 30, 2021, after 20 years of service.



Bonnie Gamble

Jason Lawson has been appointed the new attorney general for Tennessee's 15th Judicial District by Gov. Bill Lee following the retirement of Tommy Thompson after 44 years of service. As the new attorney general for the 15th District, Lawson will serve Wilson, Smith, Macon, and Trousdale counties until the seat is up for election in August 2022. Lawson has been serving as an assistant district attorney for more than 18 years.



Jason Lawson

Courtney Pogue has been tapped as the new economic and community development director for Nashville. Pogue comes to Nashville from Dallas where he served as the city's director of economic development since 2017. Prior to that, Pogue was employed for two years as the director of economic development for Clayton County, Ga., and as deputy director of economic development for Cook County, Ga., for two years and as a financial analyst for the city of Chicago for 3 years. He also worked in several financial analyst roles in the private sector. Pogue holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Howard University and a master's in business administration from the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business.



Courtney Pogue

Cerelyn "C.J." Davis has been selected as the new director of the Memphis Police Department. Davis will be the first woman to lead the Memphis Police Department, and will be the first hire from outside the department for the position in decades. Davis presently serves as the chief of police for Durham, N.C., since 2016. Davis has 32 years of experience in law enforcement, including 28 years with the Atlanta Police Department where she served as a section commander, assistant commander, legislative liaison for the department, public affairs officer, and personnel and human resources commander. Davis holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Saint Leo University and a master's degree in public administration from Central Michigan University.



C.J. Davis

Richard DePriest has been unanimously appointed as the new superintendent of public works for the city

Four cities hold elections

ELECTIONS from Page 1

city's mayor. Procurement coordinator Jason Cox defeated Lee Elder 1,840 votes to 626 votes in the Ward 1 alderman race. Elder suspended his campaign in February due to a change in his employment situation. Vice Mayor Amy Wurth decided not to run for re-election to the Ward 1 seat.

William Pomeroy, a retired military police officer with the U.S. Army, ran unopposed for the Ward 2 seat. Incumbent Alderman Jeff Graves chose not to

run again for the seat.

Kevin Gavigan was the lone incumbent to retain a seat on the Spring Hill Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Gavigan defeated challengers Brent Murray and Angela Privett by 1,477 votes to Murray's 439 and Privett's 910 votes.

Trent Linville, a lawyer and administrator at the Bridge Church in Spring Hill, ran unopposed and was elected to the Ward 4 seat. Incumbent alderman Vincent Fuqua left the seat when he chose to run for mayor.

Public Entity Partners mourns loss of Jon Calvin

Jon Calvin, vice president of underwriting and internal services for Public Entity Partners (PEP), died April 3, 2021, at the age of 64 of COVID-19.

Calvin had been with PEP since 2010 as director of underwriting and had been promoted to vice president in June 2020.

PEP Executive Director Michael Fann said the loss was a shock to the entire PEP team.

"During this difficult time, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on the enormous impact Jon made over the years — not just on me, but also on our entire team and the local governments we serve," Fann said. "I wish that I could adequately describe the positive influence that Jon had on all those who were fortunate to work with him, and the effect of his expertise and guidance on our organization."

Fann said Calvin has a passion for serving the Tennessee cities and would often greet people at the door at various PEP events.

"As I've walked through our offices this week, remembering Jon and sharing memories with



Jon Calvin

co-workers, one thing is clear — Jon made a difference in the lives of our members and in each of us at Public Entity Partners," Fann said. "While I'll desperately miss my friend, I also know that, for the rest of my life, I'll benefit from having known him. And our organization, along with the cities, towns and local government agencies we serve, will also benefit from Jon's brilliance for decades to come."

Calvin is survived by his wife of 43 years Becky, two daughters, and two grandchildren as well as two brothers and a sister.

Longtime State Senator Thelma Harper dies at 80

Longtime Tennessee State Senator, first female African-American state senator, and the longest-serving female senator for the state Thelma Harper died April 22, 2021, at the age of 80.

The Tennessee Democratic Caucus honored Harper's legacy.

"As the first African-American woman elected to the state Senate and the longest-serving female senator in Tennessee history, Sen. Harper was a trailblazer who accomplished as much in her decades of public service as any Tennessee legend who came before her," the statement said. "But she never let awards and accolades come before the work of the people. Whether she was fighting landfills for her neighbors, serving a community organization or leading a hearing in the legislature, Thelma was a strong voice for her community, for justice and our most vulnerable children."

Lt. Gov. Randy McNally also praised Harper's years of service.

"Today the legendary Thelma Harper traded in her signature hat for a halo," McNally said. "A transformative public figure, she was a fierce advocate for her constituents and the city of Nashville. She was a role model for many and greatly respected by all who served with her. She will be missed."

Born in Brentwood, Harper earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting from Tennessee State University.

A well-known community advocate, Harper was first elected to political office in 1980 when she was elected as executive committeewoman for Davidson County's 2nd District. In 1983, she was



Thelma Harper

elected to the Metro Nashville City Council, serving eight years on the council.

Harper then began her 30-year state senate career in 1991, making history as the first African-American woman elected to the state Senate. She retired in 2018.

During her tenure, Harper sponsored legislation renaming U.S. Highway 41 in honor of Rosa Parks, the development of Nashville's Music City Center, bringing the Tennessee Titans to Nashville, getting funds for educational programs, increasing legal protections for the elderly, and subsidizing lunches and school supplies for low-income students.

Harper was the first African-American woman to serve as chair of the Senate Government Operations Committee and also served as vice chair of the Senate State and Local Government Committee. She was the first senator to serve as chair of the Tennessee Black Caucus, and served as a Tennessee delegate to the Democratic National Convention nine times, including as a speaker in 2000.

No loan is too large or too small



The city of Trenton recently closed on a \$275,000 note with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund (TMBF) issued for city paving projects. Seated L to R: Leigh Ann Grice, city recorder, and Trenton Mayor Ricky Johnson. Standing is Tommy Green, TMBF marketing representative. The city has used TMBF programs 10 times since 2000.



The city of LaFollette recently closed on a \$1.5 million note with the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund (TMBF) to finance various public works projects for the city. LaFollette has used TMBF programs 16 times since 1993. Seated L to R: Mayor Mike Stanfield, and Stan Foust, city recorder. Standing L to R: Steve Queener, TMBF marketing representative; Terry Sweat, finance director; and Jim Jeffries, city administrator.



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STATE BRIEFS



Tennessee is the fifth best state for working from home, according to a new study conducted by financial planning website Wallet Hub. The state ranked third overall in living environment – which includes factors like internet cost, electricity cost, and square-footage per home – 12 for work environment, which was determined by factors including internet access, cybersecurity, and potential telecommuters. Delaware came in at the top spot on the list followed by North Carolina, Georgia, and New Hampshire. Due to the pandemic, approximately 71% of those with the ability to work from home have done so and more than half say they would like to continue doing so once the pandemic ends.

The March unemployment rate in Tennessee increased despite the highest level of employment reported since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Employers added 15,400 more jobs to the Tennessee economy in March, but the state’s unemployment rate also increased to 5%. The initial claims for jobless benefits also rose to the highest level in seven weeks during the first week of April. Tennessee still reported 84,300 fewer jobs in March than compared to a year earlier, more than half of which were accounted for by the 43,100 fewer jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry.

The Tennessee State Museum has been nominated for the “Best Free Museum” in the 2021 *USA Today* 10Best Readers’ Choice travel awards. The state museum is the only museum in Tennessee nominated in the category. Fans of the museum can vote for the Tennessee State Museum in the contest once per day until polls close on May 10 at noon EST. The winning museums, as determined by votes, will be announced on May 21. To vote, visit <https://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-free-museum/>.

Tennessee had the highest amount of whitewater river paddler deaths in the nation in 2020 and set a record for the number of deaths in a year.

State finance group continues work to preserve TN thriving economy

FSAG from Page 1
look forward to working with him and the other members of the group to make good decisions about how these funds are spent.”
“One of the biggest challenges facing our state currently is using federal stimulus dollars in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure all Tennessean’s benefit,” said Rep. Patsy Hazlewood. “I appreciate Gov. Lee appointing me to Financial Stimulus Accountability Group, and together our work will make sure we can continue to effectively address the immediate and emerging needs of our state.”
Since its founding in April 2020, the FSAG has overseen nearly 90% of all federal dollars distributed to Tennessee through the Coronavirus Relief Fund, authorized in the CARES Act.
In 2020, the group proactively invested these dollars into the state’s unemployment trust fund,

American Whitewater, a river conservation nonprofit that tracks paddler deaths, reported that Tennessee had the highest amount of fatalities with eight. Deaths were reported on Tennessee waterways including Chickamauga Creek, Nolichucky River, Duck River, Richland Creek, Caney Fork River, Elk River, and Spring Creek. Tennessee typically ranks in the top 10 for whitewater deaths, but officials with American Whitewater said 2020 had an unusually high number of deaths. Before 2020, the highest number of whitewater related deaths was four in 1999 and 2011.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation reported a record-number of calls were made to the state’s human trafficking hotline in 2020. TBI said the Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline is a free, anonymous tip line where specially-trained professionals take calls 24/7. Officials with TBI said tips to the hotline have been invaluable in their efforts to end human trafficking, which is the second-fastest growing criminal industry in the state. According to TBI, a child is bought and sold for sex every two minutes in the U.S. The hotline number is 1-855-558-6484. For more information about human trafficking in Tennessee and how to combat it, visit <https://ithastostop.com/>.

Tennessee is one of the worst states for children’s health care, according to a new survey by Wallet Hub. The survey found that Tennessee ranked 48 out of the 51 states and Washington, D.C., when it comes to children’s healthcare. Tennessee ranked dead last in children’s nutrition, activity, and obesity ranks while also ranking 38 out of 51 for children’s access to healthcare and 23 out of 51 in terms of children’s access to dental care. The state ranked 46 out of 51 for its number of children in excellent or very good health, lowest percentage of children with excellent or very good dental condition, and tied with four other states for having the highest number of obese children in the nation.

which successfully protected jobs and prevented tax hikes. The FSAG also supported the allocation of over \$300 million in grants to small businesses across Tennessee.
The FSAG is currently preparing for implementation of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, an additional tranche of relief authorized by Congress in March 2021. Effective April 2021, members of the group include:
• Gov. Bill Lee
• Lt. Gov. Randy McNally
• House Speaker Cameron Sexton
• Sen. Bo Watson
• Sen. Raumesh Akbari
• Sen. Speaker Pro Tempore Ferrell Haile
• Rep. Patsy Hazlewood
• Rep. Pat Marsh
• Rep. Harold Love Jr.
• Jason Mumpower, Comptroller
• Commissioner Butch Eley, Finance & Administration

Tennessee adds 5 locations to National Register

The Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) announced the addition of five properties to the National Register of Historic Places, including a log building, two commercial buildings in Memphis and two churches.

The sites recently added are:
Christ Church Episcopal – Chattanooga.
This 1906 brick and stone church was built in the Gothic Revival Style with its interior remodeled in 1929 by nationally-known architect Ralph Adams Cram. A brick addition was added to the rear of the building in 1957.

Laurel Springs Primitive Baptist Church – Cocke County.
The 1914 church is located about three miles south of the community of Cosby in southwestern Cocke County. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is located directly across the road from the church building. The one-story, one-room frame church building is sided with yellow pine.

Lonesome - Burns.
Also known as the William G. and Dicy Austin House, this log cabin was constructed around 1820 in the double-pen style. A frame kitchen was added in 1890 with electricity, plumbing, and a front porch added in the 1960s.



The Lonesome cabin in Burns is one of the oldest structures in Dickson County, dating back to around 1820.

Memphis Overland Company – Memphis.
The Memphis Overland Company building opened in 1917 at the corner of Monroe and Lauderdale on what was then known as Memphis’ Automobile Row. Until 1935, the building was used for automobile sales and servicing for Overland and Cadillac. The two-story brick building, has prominent display windows and classical detailing on the façade.

Missouri Portland Cement Terminal – Memphis.
Standing 131-feet tall, the nine silos of the Missouri Portland Cement Company were built in Memphis in 1947. Top portions of the silos could hold more than 90,000 barrels of Portland Cement. The lower portions of the silos were used for employees’ showers and locker rooms, service department, bagging department and packing department.

State’s March revenues above estimates

Department of Finance and Administration Commissioner Butch Eley today announced that Tennessee tax revenues exceeded budgeted estimates in March.
Overall March revenues totaled \$1.26 billion, which is \$57.1 million or 4.75% more than the state received in March of 2020 and \$112.1 million more than the budgeted estimate for the month.
“Most of the growth in March can be attributed to sales and use taxes, corporate taxes and business taxes, which have been strong contributors to revenue growth for most of the year,” Eley said. “March sales tax revenues, based on February sales tax activity, were positive across all industries except the restaurant and food services industry and apparel and accessories retailers. Additionally, sales tax receipts for the month were supported by approximately \$39.7 million from remote sales and marketplace facilitator laws. To date, online sales tax revenues have accounted for about 65.4% of all sales tax growth to the state.
“We continue to be pleased with the overall growth in total taxes this fiscal year and we are encouraged at the prospect of future growth as Tennesseans become more comfortable resuming some activities. We are optimistic but cautious in anticipation of reve-

nues in the months ahead.”
On an accrual basis, March is the eighth month in FY 2020-2021. General fund revenues were \$115.2 million more than the budgeted estimate while the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$3.1 million less than the estimates.
Sales tax revenues were \$40.4 million more than the estimate for March and were 7.45% more than March 2020. For eight months revenues are \$940.8 million more than estimated. The year-to-date growth rate for eight months was 7.15%.
Franchise and excise tax revenues combined were \$69.1 million more than the budgeted estimate in March and the growth rate was 7.54%. Revenues are \$419.1 million more than the estimate and the year-to-date growth rate is 4.85%.
Gasoline and motor fuel revenues for March decreased by 9.44% compared to March 2020 and were \$6.3 million less than the budgeted estimate of \$87 million. For eight months, fuel tax revenues are below estimate by \$16.4 million.
Motor vehicle registration revenues were \$2.2 million more than the March estimate, and on a year-to-date basis they are \$9 million more than estimates.
Tobacco tax revenues were \$1 million more than the March bud-

geted estimate of \$18.6 million. For eight months, revenues are \$8 million more than the year-to-date budgeted estimate.
Privilege tax revenues were \$2.9 million more than the March estimate. On a year-to-date basis, August through March, revenues are \$58.2 million more than the estimate.
Business tax revenues were \$6.3 million more than the March estimate. For eight months, revenues are \$27.1 million more than the budgeted estimate.
Hall income tax revenues for the month were \$500,000 more than the budgeted estimate. For eight months, revenues closely match the year-to-date budgeted estimate.
Mixed drink, or liquor-by-the-drink, taxes were \$2.4 million less than the March estimate, and on a year-to-date basis, revenues are \$23.5 million less than the budgeted estimate.
All other taxes were less than budgeted estimates by a net of \$1.6 million. Year-to-date revenues, August through March, are \$1.42 billion more than the budgeted estimate. The growth rate for eight months is 4.97 percent. General fund revenues are \$1.35 billion more than the budgeted estimate and the four other funds are \$69.4 million more than estimated.

Lee’s budget amendment allocates \$100M in Local Support Grants for municipalities

FUNDS from Page 1
COVID-19.
This investment will allow our communities the flexibility along with the accountability to fix potholes, invest in critical water, sewer and broadband infrastructure and reduce the fiscal pressures from lost revenues during this fiscal year. As we move toward a more normal way

to operate, these funds permit local governments the flexibility to focus resources on critical needs.
TML and its member cities look forward to working with Gov. Lee, his administration, and the members of the Tennessee General Assembly to ensure passage of this budget amendment.
For an overview and autho-

rized uses, click here. https://www.tml1.org/sites/default/files/tml/pdf/local_government_recovery_and_rebuilding_direct_appropriation_grants_.pdf
For grant amounts for each municipality distributed on a per capita basis, https://www.tml1.org/sites/default/files/tml/pdf/citiesandtownsallocation_fy2022_.pdf

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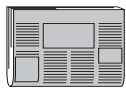


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BUILDING CODE INSPECTOR
HENDERSONVILLE. The city of Hendersonville is currently recruiting for a Building Inspector I, II, or III position in our Building and Codes Department. This recruitment is open until filled. Click on the job link to the Job Openings page with all recruitment information: Job Openings|City of Hendersonvillehttps://www.hvilletn.org/departments/human-resources/job-openings

BUILDING INSPECTOR/CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
ETOWAH. The city of Etowah is currently recruiting for a full-time or as a contractor building inspector/enforcement officer. Duties will include residential and business construction inspections, (building, plumbing, and mechanical) record maintenance, enforcing city ordinances and attending court when needed. Must hold and maintain ICC Certification within one year (building, plumbing, and mechanical), etc. High school diploma or equivalent and a valid driver's license required. Priority will be given to certified inspectors or applicants with current background in building or related trades. Salary is \$38-42k and is will be proportionate to experience. Medical, dental, vision, retirement benefit package available to full-time position only. This recruitment is open until position is filled. Applications are available online at cityofetowah.tn.com.

CLAIMS SYSTEM ADMIN
PUBLIC ENTITY PARTNERS . Under the direction of the Director of IT, the Claims System Administrator is responsible to: Support, enhance, secure, optimize, and maintain the Origami Claims Management System and supporting systems. Ensure data integrity and that the system maintains a high level of security, performance, and availability. Work closely with any IT Staff & End Users (internal, external, or third party) to resolve any issues. Provide any assistance needed to access PEP data sources to meet needs and protect sensitive information. Work closely with Adjusters and other Claims staff to understand processes and workflows, then make recommendations to automate these processes to gain efficiencies. Qualifications include: undergraduate degree in a computer related field from an accredited college or university, and six years of experience in the computer-related or information technology field, or a substantially- equivalent combination of education and experience is required. Experience maintaining, optimizing, and securing Microsoft Windows network systems. Experience supporting: Microsoft Windows 10 systems and peripherals; Microsoft Office \ 365 suite; Microsoft Windows Servers \ Networks. Experience using and supporting any of the following applications preferred but not required: Origami Risk Claim System; HTML \ XML; Microsoft SQL \ SSIS Packages; C#; Microsoft Visual Studio; Scripting; PowerShell. Full Job description can be found at pepartners.org. Salary range \$90,000 - \$102,000 DOE. Excellent benefits and retirement plan. Please send cover letter and resume to ctaylor@pepartners.org or Attn: Celeste Taylor, 562 Franklin Rd. Suite 200 Franklin, TN 37069.

CODES ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
MONTEREY. The Town of Monterey will be accepting applications for a part-time Certified Codes Enforcement Officer until Friday, May 7, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. Applications can be picked up and turned in at Monterey City Hall, 302 E. Commercial Avenue, Monterey, TN Monday – Friday between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The Town of Monterey reserves the right to reject any and/or all applications. EOE.

CODES INSPECTOR
SHELBYVILLE. The city of Shelbyville is accepting applications for the full-time position of codes inspector for the building and codes department. The codes inspector is responsible for technical work in the enforcement of building and zoning codes and city and state ordinances. Must be a high school graduate or possess equivalent. Excellent communication skills, both verbal and written. ICC/State of Tennessee Residential Building Inspector certification, ICC/State of Tennessee Residential Mechanical Inspector, and ICC/State of Tennessee Residential Plumbing Inspector certifications preferred, or ability to obtain within 2 years of employment. This is a full-time position with an hourly rate of \$18.88. The city provides a comprehensive benefits package. Applications and a complete job description may be picked up at city hall during normal business hours or download from the city website: www.shelbyvilletn.org. Applications must be returned to City Hall Administration Office, 201 Spring Street or submitted online and will be accepted until position is filled. EOE / drug free workplace. Successful applicants required to pass background check, physical, and drug screen.

FINANCE DIRECTOR.
BRISTOL. The city of Bristol, TN, with a budget of \$70 million, is seeking a well-rounded professional with proven leadership skills to serve as the finance director. This position is responsible for planning, directing and supervising the city's financial management, including financial planning and reporting, account practices, revenue collections, cash management and internal controls. Position reports to the city manager. Full understanding of accounting principles, GAAP, GASB, and financial management systems (including Excel) with strong interpersonal, organizational, supervisory, and decision-making skills required. Must be a team player who can work well with other city departments, the city manager, outside agencies and the public. Bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, or public administration, or a related field; supplemented by five or more years of progressively responsible work experience in finance, with demonstrated administrative and management skills; or an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience. CPA, Master's Degree, CMFO, and/or CPFO preferred. The successful candidate can expect a competitive benefits package with an annual salary range of \$67,377 to \$104,434. Salary offered will be dependent on qualifications.

To read more about the city of Bristol, TN, the position and to apply, candidates must complete an online application and upload a resume at: http://bristoltn.org/jobs.aspx.

FIRE CHIEF
FAYETTEVILLE. The city of Fayetteville is seeking an experienced, energetic, team-builder with exceptional leadership skills to serve as their fire chief. This is an extraordinary opportunity, for the right person, to serve in a progressive organization with a superb staff. The fire chief's position requires an individual that has demonstrated sound judgment, human resources skills, organizational development expertise, and a can-do work ethic. The fire chief is a highly visible municipal department head that is expected to project a professional image of self, the department, and the city in all situations. The city of Fayetteville will offer a competitive salary and benefits package to the successful candidate. The position profile is available for review at http://www.fayettevil-letn.com. Mail or email cover letter, résumé, employment application, and copies of certificates for all training, education, certifications, and professional credentials for evaluation to Fayetteville City Administrator, Attention: Fire Chief Candidate, 110 Elk Avenue South, Fayetteville TN, 37334 or scollins@fayettevilletn.com. Deadline for applications no later than noon (CST) April 30, 2021.

FIRE CHIEF
GALLATIN. The city of Gallatin an energetic, growing city just north of Nashville, which offers a rich variety of recreational, educational, and economic activities, is seeking qualified applicants for the open position of fire chief. The city of Gallatin is a full service community, with its own airport, regional hospital, community college, and excellent city services. The fire chief supports a department of approximately 90 employees, has a \$4+ million budget, and serves a diverse community with 5 fire stations. Reporting to the mayor, and responsible to the city council, this position performs professional administration work in leading, planning, organizing, reviewing, and directing the full activities of the fire department; will be responsible for annual department budget; controls budgeted expenses; formulate and implement fire policies; manages employee relations; attend community meetings; and makes presentations related to fire activities. Minimum qualifications include a Bachelor's degree in Fire Science or a related field. A Master's degree is preferred. A minimum of 15 years of work experience which includes a wide and progressively responsible nature in fire suppression inclusive of upper level management experience. Must have five years of Supervisory experience. The city of Gallatin highly desires individuals with experience in Tennessee, who have knowledge of all controlling laws applicable to fire agencies in TN. We also highly desire individuals with Fire experience in diverse communities of a similar/larger size with experience as a chief/assistant chief or command-level position in a similar size fire department. Must be willing to meet residency requirements to maintain your residence within the city limits or within two miles of the city limits, but in no event outside the boundaries of Sumner County, Tennessee. Residency requirements do not apply until 90 days after appointment. Must have a valid driver's license. To apply, please submit an online application, cover letter, and resume at the City of Gallatin website: https://cogselfserve.gallatin-tn.gov/MSS/employmentopportunities/default.aspx Current starting pay: \$89,134.86 with excellent benefits. Position will be posted until position is filled. EOE/Drug-free workplace. Contact the Human Resources Department at 615-451-5890 if you have any further questions.

HUMAN RESOURCE/PURCHASING DIRECTOR
COVINGTON. The city of Covington is currently accepting applications for a Human Resource/Purchasing Director. This position performs a variety of complex administrative, technical, and professional work in directing and supervising the personnel systems of the city including classification, compensation, recruitment, selection, benefits, and training. Also includes overall management of the Civic Center, serves as Title VI Coordinator, manages, and administers purchasing policies as set forth in city ordinance and state laws. Desired minimum qualifications include graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a degree in human resource, public administration, business management or a closely related field. Five years' experience in a human resource capacity; or any equivalent combination of education and experience which demonstrates the capability to perform the essential duties and responsibilities of the position. Salary range for this position is \$63,710 - \$70,500 DOQ with a comprehensive benefits package including health insurance, retirement through the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System, paid time off, and paid sick leave options. Interested candidates must submit a cover letter, resume, at least five job related references and a City of Covington job application by 5:00 p.m. Friday, May 14, 2021. The job application and additional information may be found at the City of Covington's website: http://www.covingtontn.com/. All materials should be emailed to: trose@covingtontn.com. Any questions, please call 901-475-7170 or email HR Director, Tiny Rose at trose@covingtontn.com. Interview times and locations will be set after the application process closes on May 14, 2021. EOE

HUMAN RESOURCES GENERALIST
FAYETTEVILLE. The city of Fayetteville is looking for an energetic and qualified human resources generalist to fill a full-time position. An attractive salary commensurate with qualification and experience with an exceptional benefits package will be offered to the selected

candidate. Application for employment and job description can be found on the city website at www.fayettevilletn.com. Qualified candidates may send their completed application with certifications to City of Fayetteville, 110 Elk Avenue South, Fayetteville, TN 37334 or email to Pam Gentry at pgentry@fayettevilletn.com. The first review of applicants will be on Monday, May 3, 2021. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

PARKS & RECREATION COORDINATOR
FAYETTEVILLE. The city of Fayetteville is seeking applicants for the position of parks & recreation coordinator. Under the supervision of the parks & recreation director, the position will be responsible for coordinating the various recreational programs, activities, and special events of the city. Responsibilities will also include maintaining and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all areas under his/her guidance, as well as initiating and coordinating new program development. A bachelor's degree in recreation or related field or an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience for a minimum of three to five years is desired. Applications and job description may be found at www.fayettevil-letn.com. Qualified candidates may send their completed application with resume and cover letter to City of Fayetteville, 110 Elk Avenue South, Fayetteville, TN 37334, or email to Pam Gentry at pgentry@fayettevilletn.com. Position will remain open until filled. First review of applicants will be on May 3, 2021. EOE.

PLANS EXAMINER II.
FRANKLIN. The city of Franklin is hiring a Plans Examiner II. Franklin is accepting applications through the close of business on April 7, 2021. All interested applicants should apply here: https://cta.cadienttalent.com/index.jsp?POSTING_ID=95936556669&locale=en_US&SEQ=jobDetails&applicationName=Cityof-FranklinTNKTMDDReqExt

PLANNING DIRECTOR
LAKELAND. The city of Lakeland is seeking qualified applicants for the position of planning director. This employee is responsible for a broad range of administrative and support services under the general supervision of the city manager. The planning director is primarily responsible for planning, organizing and directing all planning and land development for the city of Lakeland. Duties include: advising and making staff recommendations to city boards, commissions and departments on planning and land development issues including interpretation, revision, implementation and enforcement of regulations and ordinances and the creation and implementation of development and growth plans; directs implementation of sign ordinance, zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, design guidelines, comprehensive plan and related plans and policies; provides strategic direction in short and long-range planning and growth management; researches, prepares and implements technical and operational studies, reports and projects; supervises staff with responsibility for employment-related decisions or recommendations that include hiring, disciplining, training, and evaluating performance; develops and implements the departmental operating budget and monitors costs to maintain budget integrity; evaluates and revises tracking procedures for development projects; makes presentations to boards, commissions, volunteers and other community groups. Successful applicants will possess the proven ability to maintain effective working relationships with the public, city officials, and other employees and the ability to prepare and present accurate reports to the governing body; five to seven years of progressive planning experience and a bachelor's degree with a focus in Planning and American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification required. Competitive salary and benefits offered. For more information and for a complete job description, please visit www.lakelandtn.gov/job

PLANNING DIRECTOR
SHELBYVILLE. The city of Shelbyville is accepting applications for the full-time position of planning & community development director (planning director). The planning director will be responsible for daily administration of all planning and zoning activities, including comprehensive planning, and the administration of subdivision regulations. The planning director will also implement and manage municipal projects related to the development of this growing community. The ideal candidate will have at least a bachelor's degree in urban planning or a related field (master's degree preferred), and a minimum of 5 years' experience involving municipal land use planning at local government level. This is a full-time salaried exempt position with a starting salary between \$64,896 - \$79,601, depending on qualifications. Applications and a copy of job description may be picked up at city hall during normal business hours or download from the city website: www.shelbyvilletn.org. Application/job description must be returned to City Hall Administration Office, 201 N. Spring Street, and will be accepted until position if filled. EOE/Drug-free workplace.

PLANNER OR SENIOR PLANNER
COOKEVILLE. The city of Cookeville is accepting applications for a position in the planning department. The position will be filled as either planner or senior planner, depending on qualification. Pay range: \$43,180 - \$72,737 DOE. Applications/resumes will be accepted until 4:30 pm on 4/15/21 and must be submitted online. View complete job posting/qualifications and submit applications at www.cookeville-tn.gov. EOE.

POLICE CHIEF.
BRISTOL. The city of Bristol, TN (pop. 27,000), due to retirement of current police chief, is seeking a well-rounded professional

with proven leadership skills to serve as the city's next police chief. The police chief will lead the nationally accredited department of 78 sworn officers and 21 civilian employees and will manage the department's \$8.3 million budget. Position reports to the city manager. Strong interpersonal, organizational, supervisory, and decision-making skills required; ability to interact and communicate effectively with local, state and regional law enforcement personnel, local officials and the public is required. Must be a team player who can work well with other city departments, the city manager, and outside agencies. Bachelor's degree in public administration, criminal justice, business administration, or a related field; supplemented by 10 or more years of progressively responsible work experience, with demonstrated administrative and management skills; or an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience. Master's degree preferred. The successful candidate can expect a competitive benefits package with an annual salary range of \$75,994 to \$121,590. Salary offered will be dependent on qualifications. To read more about the city of Bristol, TN, the position and to apply, candidates must complete an online application and upload a resume at: http://bristoltn.org/jobs.aspx.risk manager.

RISK MANAGER
SEVIERVILLE. The city of Sevierville invites applications for the position of risk manager. The essential function of the position within the organization is to manage risk exposures within the city's government. The position is responsible for identifying risk exposures within governmental operations, assessing potential impact of the risks, evaluating likelihood of occurrence, and developing appropriate measures to control, limit, and finance the risk exposures. The position develops and implements programs within organizational policies; reports major activities to executive level administrators through conferences and reports. This position's primary duties are: identifies and evaluates potential risk exposures within city governmental operations; develops and implements risk control measures in compliance with state and federal regulations and laws. Plans, administers, and coordinates a comprehensive Risk Management Program; studies safety policy and practices of organization and each department to ensure adequate scope of policy and practice. Oversees healthcare plan structure, benefits, and experience to ensure optimal operations. Evaluates validity of insurance claims and seeks appropriate resolution. Leads in management of workman's compensation claims, ensuring participation of relevant parties and appropriate claim resolution. Reviews accident/incident/injury reports and confers with insurance company to identify ways to prevent recurrences. Promotes organizational health and well-being through prescribed activity, wellness program, appropriate incentives, positive reinforcement of good practices, and balanced disciplinary actions. Utilizes analysis, research, consultation, collaboration, and innovation in seeking improvement of health plan benefits for city employees. Monitors and adapts fitness levels of Police and Fire Department personnel in positive context, based on standards developed through medical and industry research. Gathers and maintains information/data to support periodic and special reports documenting activities for area of responsibility. Attends staff and other professional meetings to exchange information; attends technical or professional seminars or conferences to improve technical or professional skills. Minimum qualifications: requires education or training equivalent to a bachelor's degree in law, risk management, insurance, business administration, or a closely related field. Requires six years of related experience. Salary: \$58,455 to \$66,058 full-time with excellent benefits. Please submit application and/or resume in an envelope marked "Risk Manager" to: City of Sevierville, Attn: Human Resources P.O. Box 5500, Sevierville, TN 37864-5500. Applications can be completed on-line at www.sevievillett.org. Resumes may be sent by fax to 865-453-5518 or e-mailed to kward@seviervillett.org. Closing date: 05/03/2021 at 5:00 p.m. Only applicants who provide a valid e-mail address will be notified when the position has been filled. EOE

SUPERINTENDENT WATER MANAGEMENT FACILITY
DANDRIDGE. The town of Dandridge is accepting applications for the full-time position of superintendent for the Dandridge Water Management Facility. The superintendent is responsible for performing administrative and supervisory work in planning, organizing and directing the operations of the Dandridge Water Management Facility. The superintendent will also manage the construction, repair, maintenance and operation of the Dandridge Water Management Facility's water distribution and wastewater collection systems. The Superintendent will exercise direct supervision over assigned employees and provide technical assistance. The superintendent will also advise the town administrator of matters relating to the Dandridge Water Management Facility and work under his or her direct supervision. Must possess state of Tennessee Grade II Water Distribution, Grade II Collections and Grade III Wastewater licenses; Must possess a valid driver's license; 10 years' experience in water or wastewater utility operations of which some experience having been in an increasingly responsible administrative or supervisory capacity. This is a full-time salaried exempt position with a starting salary between \$50,000 - \$70,000, depending on qualifications. The town of Dandridge offers a generous employee benefit package which includes: employer paid medical coverage, employer paid dental coverage, employer paid \$50,000 life insurance coverage, employer paid TCRS pension plan and employer contributions to a 457 deferred compensation plan. Applications/resumes can be submitted at Town Hall, 131 E. Main Street,

or mailed to: Town of Dandridge, P.O. Box 249, Dandridge, TN 37725. EOE.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
CHAPEL HILL. The town of Chapel Hill (Est. pop. 1,850) is seeking a city management professional to be their next town administrator. The town administrator is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. The town has a \$2.5M annual budget with 13 full-time employees. Candidates should possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in public administration, business administration, or a field closely related to municipal management and a minimum of eight years of progressively increasing city management experience, or any combination of education and municipal experience that demonstrates proficiency in managing a complex municipal corporation. Residency within the town is not a requirement. Salary range \$70,000-\$90,000 (DOQ). A position profile is available at www.townofchapelhilltn.gov. Send a cover letter and resume immediately by electronic mail to the University of Tennessee's Municipal Technical Advisory Service, attention Chuck Downham, at chuck.downham@tennessee.edu. Initial review of applications will occur on May 11, 2021. Please direct questions to Chuck Downham at the same email address.

TOWN PLANNER
ARLINGTON. The town of Arlington is a growing community of 14,000+ residents, 12 miles east of the city of Memphis. The full-time planner will perform professional administrative and technical planning work using independent judgement and discretion. This position reports to the town administrator. Duties include: administering municipal zoning, design guidelines, research, and analysis in processing land development applications from submittal to site occupancy; code enforcement; assisting town officials and committees; long-range planning; and coordinating with other local, county, and state agencies. Considerable knowledge of planning theory, principles, and practices, such as zoning, land use, comprehensive planning, economic and community development, architectural design principles, and site planning necessary. Bachelor's degree required, master's degree preferred, from an accredited college or university in urban or regional planning or a closely related field. At least five years of public management and professional planning experience, preferably in a municipal setting. AICP certification is preferred, as well as excellent project management, oral, and written communication skills. Background check will be conducted. Starting salary \$60-70k (DOQ), with a competitive benefits package. Town of Arlington, 5854 Airline Road, Arlington, TN 38002.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNER I
JACKSON. The city of Jackson is accepting applications for a transportation planner I. The transportation planner will assist the planning director with work tasks to ensure compliance with federal and state guidelines and overall assistance with administration of the transportation-planning program, such as the UPWP, TIP, LTRP, and PPP. Specific job duties include: perform studies related to transportation planning; conduct research, analyze data, and prepare written reports. Manage preparation of meeting packets or special materials for distribution to the MPO Technical Staff and Executive Board. Prepare quarterly MPO grant billings. Bachelor's degree in Urban Planning, Business Administration, or a closely related field. Transportation planning experience is helpful, or any equivalent combination of education, knowledge, skills and abilities sufficient to satisfactorily perform the duties of the job may be substituted. Generous benefit package; salary beginning at \$24.94 per hour. EOE/M/F/V/D. Minorities are encouraged to apply. Job description on city web site: www.cityofjacksontn.gov. Please contact the City of Jackson, Human Resources Department, 127 E. Main Street, Suite 303, Jackson, TN 38301: phone (731) 425-8252: Fax (731) 425-8673

UTILITY DIRECTOR
SPRING HILL. The city of Spring Hill is accepting applications and resumes for a full-time, exempt utility director. He or she will perform administrative and managerial work in the planning, organizing, and directing of overall operations amongst the water and wastewater treatment plants; and, the water distribution, and sewer collection. This employee must possess the ability to make prudent and independent decisions as they apply to daily activities. The incumbent in this position will supervise assigned employees; coordinate activities between departments, and maintain records and budgets for various projects. The utility director provides substantive and highly complex staff assistance to the city administrator and operates under his or her direct supervision. The employee will perform other related and/or non-specific work as required, some of which will be mechanical. Must possess a bachelor's degree in engineering; must possess professional engineer (P.E.) licensure from the state of Tennessee; Must possess a valid driver's license; 10 years' experience in water or wastewater system maintenance or construction, hydraulic engineering, or civil engineering of which some experience having been in an increasingly responsible administrative or supervisory capacity. The city of Spring Hill offers an extensive and generous employee benefit package, which includes an 100% employer paid medical coverage option for the entire family, optional vision insurance, employer paid dental insurance for the employee with the option to purchase family coverage, Flexible Spending Account, employer paid Life, AD&D and LTD Insurance, as well as Voluntary Life and STD. TCRS pension. Applications/resumes must be submitted online at: www.springhilltn.org/Jobs.aspx Questions to staylor@springhilltn.org No phone calls please. EOE Minorities and women encouraged to apply.

WAUFORD

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

Ezell focused on getting Tennessee tourism on track post-COVID

By KATE COIL
TML Communications Specialist

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Tennessee Department of Tourism (TDTD) Commissioner Mark Ezell found himself tapped to head the state’s Economic Recovery Group, the public-private partnership established by Gov. Bill Lee to help guide the state’s economy safely through the health crisis.

While the challenge facing the state has been unique, Ezell is no stranger to finding innovative ways to meet challenges. Tourism is the No. 2 industry in the state behind agriculture, and the state’s tourism industry has been one of those hardest hit by the pandemic.

“As we’ve seen now more than ever, travel and tourism are vital to restoring economic health and recovery in Tennessee,” Gov. Bill Lee said. “This year has presented significant challenges for the tourism industry, but I thank the Tennessee Department of Tourism Commissioner Mark Ezell for his leadership in supporting safe travel that drives economic growth.”

Since being appointed tourism commissioner in 2019, Ezell has overseen the development of numerous tourism innovations in the state including the recently-launched interactive Tennessee Music Pathways program, the Discover Trails program, and the installation of viewfinders for the colorblind at parks across the state.

Prior to coming to work for the state, Ezell served for nine years as a senior vice president for sales and marketing at Purity Dairy and as a general manager at Dean Foods for nearly 20 years. He is nationally recognized for coordinating creation and implementation of the iconic “Milk Mustache – Got Milk?” campaign.

A seventh-generation Tennessean born and raised in Middle Tennessee, Ezell holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration and management from Lipscomb University and a master’s of business administration (MBA) from Tennessee Tech.

TT&C: The Economic Recovery Group (ERG) has played an important role in Tennessee’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. What was your reaction when Gov. Lee asked you to lead the economic recovery group for the state? How do you feel your work in the private sector helped prepare you for this unique role?

Mark Ezell: I was honored to get to serve in that role. Our department quickly saw the devastation that our tourism and hospitality partners were experiencing. Clearly, that industry was the tip of the spear in terms of industries being affected the fastest by the shutdown and seeing a loss of economic activity in Tennessee. Because I had several decades of experience being a businessman, I understood how important economic activity was going to be to maintaining people’s livelihoods, and to get jobs and revenues back to those businesses. We knew we needed to quickly put together a team to face that battle.

TT&C: What were some of the early challenges ERG faced and how were they met?

ME: We had a lot of challenges early on that were focused around how you do something well and as quickly as possible. We created the economic recovery group and brought in trade associations and their leaderships. These associations represented more than 200,000 jobs in Tennessean. We also brought in a number of people from the Lee Administration and other commissioners like me. We asked health department officials how to do this in a safe and methodical way, but also how do we do it quickly.

One of the things we were really pleased with is the Tennessee Pledge, which ended up being copied by multiple states. I think that is a tribute to how hard our health department and unified command worked. We had 300 industry leaders come together to serve as working committees. We had a restaurant committee with the president of Hardee’s International, the senior vice president of Cracker Barrel, and a whole lot of other key restaurateurs from across the state working on how to bring back restaurants safely. We were the second state in the nation to bring back in-restaurant dining at 50% in April.

TT&C: How is Tennessee’s situation with COVID when compared to this time last year? What has improved and what do we still need to improve upon?

ME: We are thankful for the way Tennesseans responded and for the way Gov. Lee set a path for us to follow that could work on COVID on both fronts. When we look back, Tennessee was in the top five states in the nation in terms of economic recovery. Our focus on livelihoods was really important. But we also launched the Tennessee Strong mask movement last summer to promote public health and safety. We were hoping to get 100,000 masks donated, and we ended up getting 1 million masks donated by brands like the Nashville Predators, FedEx, and UT that helped us keep economic recovery going while battling the pandemic.

What we are seeing is that once people get vaccinated they are ready to return to normal in terms of getting out and traveling, spending money, and going to see family members. All of these things provide for economic recovery. As of April 5, we have opened up vaccination to the entire population. We hope that people realize vaccination is a great way to protect themselves as well as get to enjoy the great things the state of Tennessee has to offer.

TT&C: What are some of ERG’s major priorities as the state continues to move through its vaccination program?

ME: The governor met with the unified command and leadership literally six days a week for



Tennessee Department of Tourist Development Commissioner Mark Ezell

the past year. He is still regularly meeting with the commissioners and legislators on how we drive economic growth and recovery. We have a number of rural communities we want to work with to grow and create sustainable economic growth. Unemployment has now dropped to under 5%, but that is still higher than before the pandemic. We know that there are jobs that need to be created and jobs that need to be filled. There is a prioritization for having a path for all Tennesseans to get jobs in order to support their families.

We also know a lot of companies are interested in coming to Tennessee. They have seen how we have responded to COVID and the fiscal responsibility our state has taken – and not just with Gov. Lee but also past governors like Gov. Bill Haslam and Gov. Phil Bredesen. This has made Tennessee an attractive place to live and work. The state government needs to make an easy path for the state to grow. We still have a lot to accomplish, and we feel the vaccine is going to help with that, especially with our group activities, business travelers, convention groups, music venues, and sports venues.

TT&C: What have been the biggest challenges Tennessee tourism has faced during the wake of COVID-19? Have different areas of the state experienced different challenges than others? What is being done to meet the challenges faced by the tourism industry?

ME: There were lots of challenges. Even the groups that were very successful had to deal with the challenges of COVID, the challenges of quarantine, and how to navigate through all of those things. Its worth mentioning the tremendous sacrifice that all Tennessee businesses, employees, and employers have been through. It has been a sad and difficult time, not to mention the people who we lost during the pandemic. And there have been many frustrations when dealing with all the extra measures that everyone needed to follow.

What we saw was that if you were in East Tennessee and you had a lot of those outdoor assets, like the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and our 56 state parks, you saw some of the best years ever. A lot of our smaller communities were really blessed, too. They had a chance to show that southern hospitality that brings people back in, and people really came out to enjoy Tennessee’s great outdoors. Destination analysts have shown that Tennessee was in the top five most visited states in America during COVID.

On the other hand, you had big urban cities like Nashville and Memphis that have tremendous tourism business that is built around a lot of visitors, whether its music venues or business travelers who want to enjoy the bars on Broadway or Beale Street. A lot of those venues couldn’t operate or if they could operate were operating at very low capacity, which was hard on them. Those places have suffered the most.

Our department with the help of the CARES Act was able to really rally. Tennessee got the largest CARES Act for tourism of any state in the nation, which is really attributable to the financial stimulus accountability group and Gov. Lee’s understanding as a businessman. It has been fun for me to come in as a businessman to show the value of dollars that tourism brings in. We were able to get \$4 million for Nashville, \$2 million for Memphis, and were able to get money for the tourism organizations in all 95 counties. Our department is going to be partnering with Memphis and Nashville again for events in the spring, summer, and fall. People are ready to come out and enjoy our music, and nobody has music like Tennessee.

TT&C: Outdoor attractions like state parks have seen a major increase in visitation as a result of the pandemic. Do you think this visitation will be sustained in the long-term, especially as more indoor opportunities become available again?

ME: We do think there could be some slippage because some people may return to how they normally spend a family vacation. What we have seen is that people had a great time and they were treated well. They found a new experience in the Tennessee outdoors. I’ve heard a lot of people say they used to only go to the beach, but this year they went to the mountains and now they want to make the mountains a part of their regular vacation schedule. We have also heard people say they fell in love with a community they visited during the pandemic, and they will continue to take excursions there when they get back to their normal patterns. I think we have won over some new people. Our challenge is how to grow back those big music venues and those urban areas that are so awesome and still hold onto the additional people who are interested in our outdoors.

That is why those CARES Act funds were



Left to right, Commissioner Ezell, Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts, musician Charlie Cushman, and Visit Clarksville Chair Gina Holleman unveil the new Tennessee Music Pathways marker dedicated to Cushman. The Tennessee Music Pathways program was started under Ezell as a way to highlight the many musicians and musical contributions that can be found in communities across the state. The group is also wearing Visit Clarksville masks, part of the branding strategy under the Tennessee Strong mask movement.



After participating in the ribbon cutting at Paris’ new Eiffel Tower Park splash pad, Commissioner Ezell tests out the splash pad’s water cannons along with a fellow patron. In his role as tourism commissioner, Ezell often gets to traverse the state to see and experience the unique tourism offerings Tennessee has to offer.

so important. They helped our smaller communities and that will continue to be a priority with our department. We have a new office of Rural Tourism and Outreach that will help communities grow and improve their visitor experience so folks will continue to spend more time and money in Tennessee.

TT&C: How do you expect COVID-19 will change the way tourism operates both in Tennessee and nationally?

ME: It is hard to know what stays and what changes forever. I do think our state really rallied around some collaborative efforts, whether those were interdepartmental in state government or the business community. The virtual ability to cooperate and plan things without meeting face-to-face is a new way to conduct business. We will have to dive into the research of what we learned, what was meaningful for the traveler experience, and how to capitalize on or recreate that.

I think sanitation and public health will continue to be important. We have taught Americans to wash their hands more often and to take safety precautions when they travel. Our businesses care about our visitors and they realize the value of that visitor coming to their community. Caring about our visitor’s public safety not only provides a great quality of life for the people who visit but also for the people that live here.

TT&C: How has COVID-19 changed the way business operates in the state? What changes do you think will be permanent and what is temporary?

ME: What we are seeing is there have been some things people have been able to take advantage of during COVID as far as remote work and flexibility. We are also getting to see how people are re-engaging in personal connections. We know that people want to get in a room, dance together, and sing as loud as they can to the song the band is playing. People want to do that because its relational and it feeds our emotional soul. Yet, I think we have learned how to do things where we take our family and go off to a quiet stream or a new special place. We do believe there will be a blend of all of that. How we build back our schedules is going to be a fun challenge for all of us. I think our businesses will respond to that over time.

TT&C: There is a lot of talk about “getting back to normal” after the pandemic. Will things ever return to a pre-pandemic normal, or is there a new normal post-pandemic?

ME: We are regularly meeting as a group of team leaders with our state departments, local tourism departments, and with industry leaders to answer that question. I think we definitely believe there will be a new normal moving forward that can hopefully be a better normal. Families have had to prioritize during this time and make decisions. We need to make sure Tennessee can take advantage of what people want. Right now, all the options aren’t open to them. You can’t go to a Pred’s game in Nashville with 16,000 fans screaming or you can’t experience a fully-packed house at a music venue that’s also a cave in Grundy County. But those opportunities are going to be available again. Tourism creates excitement, memories, and fun experiences that everybody has missed in some ways or looks forward to defining a new way. That is what I am committed to because it drives jobs and tax revenues, which the government can then use

to serve 6.9 million Tennesseans. And that is really special.

TT&C: When do you think that we will be able to safely declare that the Tennessee economy has fully recovered from the effects of the pandemic?

ME: We are in a positive position because so much of our economy has recovered. It’s why I am glad I am in this position working with economic recovery and economic growth because tourism is sort of the last group that still has so much to accomplish. Nashville’s streets are not full because we don’t have those convention travelers, and musicians can’t play because many venues haven’t opened to full capacity. We believe the vaccine is going to be key. We don’t believe the government should mandate vaccines. But we do appreciate the business and health communities who are encouraging people to take their vaccine so we can not only focus on the battle to save lives, but to also focus on the battle to save our livelihoods.

We think by the summer and fall people will have had the opportunity to get a vaccine and will be ready to come out, spend money, and do the activities they have been missing. Tennessee is in a fortunate position because many businesses have already recovered, but tourism is one of those industries we have to keep working on. We have to make sure we have all the jobs filled for those businesses and industries, which is a challenge we are working on to solve.

The one thing economically for a place like Nashville and Memphis is that for several years in a row we have had an amazing economic boost from our international communities. So, for now, we will not be in control of that recovery—not until those countries allow international travel again.

TT&C: What do you enjoy most about your work as the commissioner of tourist development? What is your favorite tourist destination in the state?

ME: I was new to the tourism industry after 40 years in the milk business and then working for Dean Foods. When I got here and saw the real money of tourism and hospitality, I could really appreciate the missional value. We have a bunch of talented people at the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development who work to drive more people to Tennessee. The more people who spend money in our state, the more we can accomplish as a state. About 98% of the state tourism dollars goes to the general budget for education, safety, and other key services.

I have fallen in love with a lot of things across the state that I didn’t get to enjoy as much in my milkman career. For an old rock ‘n’ roll, soul guy, the music in Memphis has been really amazing for me to see. I also love the great outdoors of East Tennessee. I’m a seventh generation Nashvillian, so I have gotten to see the spirit of that tourism team and all they’ve done here. But I would have to agree with my granddaughters and say its Tennessee’s biggest tourism attraction that had more than 3 million visits pre-Covid, and that is Dollywood. I have five granddaughters, and a couple of them have now taken me to see Dollywood. The others have let me know they haven’t gone with me to Dollywood, so we have trips planned to do that. My wife and I are pretty thrilled to get to experience that whole Pigeon Forge-Sevierville-Gatlinburg area with them.