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What Does 2016 Hold for Roane County?, Part 2

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In a previous article, I wrote about the federal government and private sector influence and opportunities in the future. I also addressed the question of where do we want or what do we want our communities to be?

In this article I want to share what the local county government is doing or is positioning itself to do in 2016 and beyond.

First, I want to say that we have created a firm financial foundation to achieve success. Our debt service budgets have been projected out for 25 years. Our capital plan is on its fifth year and continues every year to improve. Replacement of our capital assets keeps our organization strong and vibrant. The capital plan is not where we want it to be but we are making improvements each year. Our operational budget continues to improve as this year we will begin to focus on development of 2 year budgets.

Here are some successes and continued plans. First, our retirement system has been changed to a defined contribution that limits our tax revenue risk exposure. Future employees also benefit from a more mobile retirement plan while limiting the county's risk. (Improves Operational Budgets)

Capital projects have been moved from the operating budgets (improves operational budgets) and improves focus on capital needs.

Health insurance programs will be studied and vetted in 2016 (operational budget issue)

Improvements will continue at the Riley Creek Campground which is a self-sufficient operating program with its own capital needs and revenue that pays for the capital improvements. The improvements continue at Riley Creek with a new shelter, boat docks, and drainage infrastructure. The next project at Riley Creek is to rework the bathrooms, road and sewer infrastructure.

Swan Pond Sport Complex is under construction with a soccer field, restroom and shelter scheduled to be completed during spring 2016.

Caney Creek RV Park expansion is planned to add approximately 30 additional campsites.

Hopefully, a successful TDEC grant will allow installation of boat docks and shoreline work at TWRA and TVA boat access areas along the Watts Bar watershed with additional boat docks in Kingston and Rockwood and shoreline work in Harriman.

The Roane County Parks and Recreation Department continues to review opportunities for the old Caney Creek Campground area as the county decides first to replace the old bridge to have access to approximately seventy (70) acres.

Long term plans see Roane County replacing the Caney Creek Bridge off Bowman Bend Road to New Hope. Also Roane County is positioning itself to acquire the Kingston Dollar General Store building for the next jail expansion, which would necessitate a move of the Office of Emergency Services to a new location near the interstate on Swan Pond Road. In anticipation of this future move, clearing of the new Swan Pond site took place in December 2015.

A joint project involving the state, county and city governments is the widening of Highway 70 to four lanes from Midtown to Rockwood.

One of the biggest issues facing Roane County will be the discussion and vetting of the future delivery of educational service. Are our schools prepared to deliver our next generation workforce? If not, what needs to change in education both from the operational side (operation budget) and facility improvement/changes (capital/debt budgets)?

Keep up with Roane County's plans by reading our monthly newsletter, executive summaries, and other information found on our website. www.roanecountytn.gov