

# County Executive's Newsletter to the County Commission



Roane County Government

## Education Funding in Roane County

By Ron Woody, County Executive

Education funding is a serious issue. What is the problem? How did we get here?

First, let me try to address why in my opinion we are experiencing education financial issues. Over the past 30 or 40 years, education funding has gone through periods of financial crisis. These financial crises are generally not isolated to Roane County but are experienced by school systems throughout the state. Tennessee had a financial crisis in the late 1980's. Due to this crisis, school systems started suing the state for funding equity. The crisis was solved and lawsuits dropped by the state increasing the state sales tax and enhancing the funding formula. With this tax increase and formula change, school systems received abundant funds. During the funding boom, the consensus was that it should last about 10 years. The fiscal policy thought was that a sales tax increase would play out in about 10 years. The time period is thought to be when expenses would start outpacing the revenues of the tax increase. Tennessee and Roane County have been fortunate that the 1990-91 tax increase has carried us for 20 years. But look what is happening

now, large school systems are discussing equity in funding. Small rural systems are discussing equity in funding. Roane County is discussing equity in funding. In simple terms, the education expense has now outpaced the tax increase of the early 90's and all of education is calling "foul."

What's the problem? For Roane County, the simple answer is that we think funding is not equitable. Did you know that Oak Ridge City Schools receive more dollars per student in state funding than Roane County? How about Blount and Anderson Counties? If Roane County received what Anderson County receives per student we would have an additional \$2,906,000.

Roane County lost over \$1,000,000 in a change in state funding law in 2008. In addition, if metropolitan systems are successful in a suit against the state, Roane County will lose over another \$1,000,000 in state funding in the near future. The School Liaison Committee has been working with our state legislators to understand the issues and request a change in state law that will restore our lost dollars.

## Highway Department Provides Christmas Tree Recycling

Due to the success of last year's event and the calls we are already receiving this year Road Superintendent Dennis Ferguson is pleased to announce that the Roane County Highway Department is going to be offering Christmas tree recycling **January 6<sup>th</sup> through January 9<sup>th</sup>** at the Roane County Highway Department from **7am to 5:30pm**. Wreaths and garland are also welcome, but brush is prohibited. We ask you to remove all tinsel, lights, and decorations before bringing them to the Roane County Highway Department located at 3072 Roane State Highway, Harriman TN. 37748. If you have any questions feel free to call us at 882-9782.



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**Happy New Year!**

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"The function of education is to teach one to think intensely and to think critically. Intelligence plus character— that is the goal of true education."

~Martin Luther King, Jr.

# Employee Consideration

**Sharon Brackett, Roane County Register of Deeds recently graduated from the East Tennessee Regional Leadership Association. Congratulations Sharon!**

The **Accounting Department** welcomes two (2) new employees: Traci Cofer and Jennifer Bolling.

Church in Kingston. Traci is an accounting clerk and has quickly become an important part of the office.

nifer has 10 years of experience in management in the private sector. Jennifer will be working closely with Payroll Clerk Linda Stooksbury and assisting employees with understanding the benefits provided by their employment with Roane County.

Traci is a Roane County native. She graduated from RCHS in 1990. She graduated from Tennessee Tech with a Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She attends Liberty Baptist

Jennifer is married to David Bolling, Kingston City Manager. Jennifer is the new benefits and accounting clerk. She was raised in Clinton and graduated from the University of Tennessee. Jen-

**Welcome Traci and Jennifer!**

The Courthouse will be closed  
Monday, January 20th  
In observance of  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Day

*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."*

~Martin Luther King, Jr.



### **401(k) Great Benefit to County Employees**

Of the many benefits provided to our employees, Roane County is extremely proud to offer a 401(k) plan as a supplement to our regular retirement benefits.

your contributions up to \$40 per month. That's \$480 per year in free money! How can you turn that down? The great news is you don't pay income tax on the amount you put in to your 401(k) account or on the compounding interest that it earns until the funds are withdrawn.

when you can use it to benefit yourself down the road? Your money will be earning you interest, and you don't have to pay taxes on it until you need it!

For those who may not be familiar with a 401(k), it's not as scary as it sounds! In fact, it's a great way to help prepare for a more secure retirement!

Along with planning for retirement, this tax savings can have a real benefit for you now. For example, a single person who makes \$30,000 a year and invests \$3,000 of it into a 401(k) account only pays income tax on \$27,000. Why give your money to Uncle Sam today

None of us are getting younger, and we can't depend on Social Security or a big pension plan like our parents and grandparents did. We all need to take ownership in our futures, and start planning today for a secure tomorrow. Take advantage of this great program and put your money (and someone else's) to work for you! Contact Jennifer Bolling at 717-4114 for more information.

Under these plans, established by subsection 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Service Taxation Code, employees can contribute pre-tax dollars, which can be matched by an employer contribution. In our case, Roane County will match

### **Roane County Heritage Commission Honors Commissioner Bobbie Collier**

The Roane County Heritage Commission held its 10th Annual Gala on October 12, 2013. The Commission awarded Commissioner Bobby Collier as the first recipient of the Preservation Partnership Award.

many years. His many activities and positions include Past President of the Board of County Officials Association and serving on the board of directors of Roane Leadership.

provides Christmas gifts to 500 children and their families.

Bobby has been a Roane County Commissioner for

Bobby is also the founder of Operation R.E.A.C.H. which

The Heritage Commission expressed their appreciation of all the support Bobby had given them through the years.

Congratulations Bobby!

**Did You Know About . . . "New Deal" Programs in Roane County?**

**By Robert Bailey, Roane County Historian**

When the Great Depression came along in the 1930s, many people became unemployed. Part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal plan was to put these people back to work. There were three programs which affected Roane County: the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

In 1935, 500 jobs were given to Roane County men and women who were formerly on the relief rolls. One of the largest projects was a farm-to-market road program which was to improve the county's 2,000 miles of rural highways. Work was

done in all five civil districts and employed 260 men. Among other works were the grading of Nelson Street and other city streets in Rockwood, repairs on Race Street in Kingston and work on Roane Street in Oliver Springs. Jobs were provided for 117 men. In Harri-man 61 men worked on the High School athletic field and repaired and painted the public library. Three sewing projects were given to 72 women. Projects that may still be seen include the Rockwood Post Office and the terracotta mural done by a New York artist, Christian Heinrich in 1939 located in the post office. Heinrich named his mural, "Wild Life". Pictures of it may be seen at:

<http://www.wpamurals.com/rockwood.htm>.

Also, the eastern addition of the Historic Roane County Courthouse was built. Included in the construction were vaults which were intended to protect the county records. Historical records projects were also done in Roane County. Many early Roane County records were transcribed, typed and placed into volumes of books. Among other records projects involved the transcribing of family Bibles and recording tombstones in various cemeteries. So, the impact of these programs may still be seen today almost 80 years after they were done.

**TVA Board Takes Action to Improve TVA's Operations and Financial Health**

In November 2013, the Tennessee Valley Authority board of directors took action to further diversify TVA's power generating mix. The board approved a coal fleet plan that will retire eight coal units at three plant sites.

Based on review of the Paradise Fossil Plant near Cen-

tral City, KY, the board approved the construction of a gas-fired plant at Paradise. This new plan moves TVA toward a more balanced generation fleet of about 40 percent nuclear, 20 percent coal, 20 percent gas and 20 percent hydro, renewables and energy efficiency.

Key performance achievements for FY13 includes TVA employees delivering electricity with 99.999 percent reliability for the 14th year in a row and TVA's ability to retain or attract 52,000 jobs across the region along with capital investments of about \$5 billion.

**Changes Coming in County Publications**

January is often a time to reflect on activities of the prior year and to plan for the upcoming year. We often take this time to make changes in our personal and professional life along with establishing goals and objectives. We have been working on a new county website as

we have exceeded the capability and capacity of the current website. Who would have believed in three years we would be needing to look at ways to expand and improve our internet presence.

In addition to a new website, you are already seeing

changes in the newsletter format. As we change our website management, we also saw the need to incorporate changes to our newsletter format. Be patient as we grow in our delivery of information to our county leaders and public.

**Prayer Gathering  
at Courthouse**

**Tuesday, January 21st**

**9:00—10:00 a.m.**

*"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."*

~Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Happenings at Roane County Park**

The county was fortunate to obtain grant funding through the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation to construct a new playground at the park.

It will be located in front of Pavilion #1 where the present playground stands. The existing playground will be demolished and a new bigger, accessible play structure will be constructed. Approximate timeline for the project is to begin construction in March and complete it by May. In addition, renovations to Pavilion #1 will be going on simultaneously. In addition to the new playground structure and pavilion, watch for improvements to the Splash Pad.

So, this summer look for new adventures and fun at your Roane County Park.

If you have any items of interest for the newsletter, please submit to Melanie at [mtownsend@roanegov.org](mailto:mtownsend@roanegov.org) by the 20th of the month.

~Ron

## Roane County Government

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**Roane County Government**

## UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Date	Meeting	Location	Time
January 6th	Budget Committee	Conf Room	6:00 pm
January 6th	Sheriff's Liaison Committee	QCR	6:30 pm
January 7th	Environmental Review Board	CCR	6:00 pm
January 13th	County Commission	QCR	7:00 pm
January 14th	Beer Board	QCR	5:30 pm
January 14th	Fire Board	QCR	6:00 pm
January 15th	Board of Zoning Appeals	Chancery	6:00 pm
January 15th	Planning Commission	QCR	7:00 pm
January 28th	Public Utility Board	Conf Room	5:30 pm

## Leadership Roane County Hosts Local Government Day

On December 11, the current Roane Leadership class listened as Department Directors and Elected Officials offered information regarding Roane County's local government structure and services.

The day began with a round table discussion by our city Mayors describing their city system, accomplishments and the many ways they all work together.

The morning session was filled with information from the county Budget Director, Kaley Walker, representing County Executive Ron

Woody, who was out of town, regarding the many "hats" worn by our County Executive. She followed that with details about the county's fiscal system and tax structure.

Solid Waste Director, Ralph Stewart, explained to the class the operations at the Recycling Center, Convenience Centers and old land-fill.

Lunch was then provided by Energy Solutions and everyone enjoyed barbeque from Famous Dave's.

County Historian, Robert

Bailey hosted a tour of the Historic Courthouse and provided many interesting and informative stories and facts about our county.

Josh Strickland of the County Animal Shelter and Grant Palmer, our County Extension Agent, talked to the class about the animals of Roane County and processes both entities go through in caring for those animals. Most folks were surprised at the cooperation between the two departments.

Road Superintendent, Dennis Ferguson, led a discussion on the responsibilities and day-

to-day operations of keeping our roads in excellent condition and handling storm and other emergencies.

The day ended with interim Emergency Services Director, Scott Stout, explaining the operations of both Emergency Operations and Medical Emergency Services to the group.

Each year the class is asked to evaluate the day. We think the response by one class member who said, "My favorite part of the day was seeing/hearing the pride that each person had in describing their role and job responsibilities" means we are headed in the right direction. If our community and county officials /employees are filled with pride, we must be doing something right.

## Capital Update by Kaley Walker, Budget Director

Recreation– **REC**– Playground Contracted; Shelter #1 designed not bid yet; Cottage Upgrades open; Splashpad shoreline design

TVA Equipment– **TEQ**– Turnout gear-open

Utility Grant in RRBTP– **RED**– in process of having contract change order

Swan Pond Sports Complex– **SPC**– will be phased project, no money budgeted, 60% design complete

Industrial Development– **IND**– available as grant match money; no money programmed

VW Road– **VWR**– Road work– complete; remaining match money will transfer to IND

State Industrial Access– **SIA**- decommitted; remaining match money will transfer to IND

VW Land-**VWL**-Site Development-complete; remaining match money will transfer to IND