

Planning our Future by Ron Woody, Roane County Executive

Changing Government by Research, Study, and Analysis

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This is the first in a series of article about your local government.

In 1973, Mike Hayes, a new teacher at Midway Junior and Senior High School assigned our seventh grade class a civics' project to create a city on a poster board. Each of us had to name our city, and I chose the name "Tomorrowville". The purpose of the project was not to have a creative drawing but to think through a process of planning and simple civil engineering. At the time we may not have realized and recognized the benefit of the project, but I have thought many times how important planning is to have successful projects and remember the planning that went into developing "Tomorrowville".

In creating our cities we had to ask and answer some basic questions: Where should a city be placed? What type of infrastructure would one need within the city? What type of services should our city provide? As seventh graders our minds had different levels of understanding and degrees of describing our respective cities. Many details I have forgotten from the "Tomorrowville" project but here are a few I do remember. The city was built like most cities by a river due to the need for drinking water and water transportation. At the edge of the city was placed a railroad depot and an airport in order to eliminate traffic congestion. The city had square street blocks.

What did the project help us thirteen year olds learn? If nothing else it helped us gain an appreciation and understanding that we should think and plan out our projects and try and identify the changes that could happen in the future as our city grew.

As time has passed with both education and experience my appreciate and understanding of planning has grown to include the importance of (1) visioning, which is taking time to consider the many possible changes that may take place and what the community may do to either promote or inhibit the changes; (2) taking the time to put into writing the current position provides a more concrete understanding of where we are; and (3) taking the time to write down the plans or programs being considered to help and allow us to identify the challenges and opportunities before us and how to envision achieving goals. Probably the most difficult aspect of future planning from the government standpoint (4) is formulating a consensus on the decisions needed to go forward. Another important planning premises to understand is that (5) change will happen. Whether we want change or not, our communities will change and looking back we can see the many changes outside of our control which changed our cities and county and everyday life.

Some of our communities' greatest changes have been the industries developing and declining, such as the iron ore, steel, hosiery and paper mills. TVA, the United States Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Energy or Atomic Energy Commission have changed our communities by controlling flooding, creating energy and the creation of the Manhattan Project.

Our communities have changed and we did not always embrace those changes but change happened.

The next changes to our communities will be 3D printing, carbon fiber technology, high speed computing, and advancement in energy just to name a few. The July 2014 County Executive's Newsletter to the County Commission note these as "Transition Igniters".

Roane County is set in a unique position in our nation by hosting the Oak Ridge National Lab, a premier lab in the nation. New technology is being developed and change will happen both within and outside our control.

In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carrol, the conversation goes something like this:

Alice, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where—" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"As long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

Charles Darwin probably said it best, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

Roane County and the cities within our county are positioned to change. Some of these changes can help make a better community. Some changes we will embrace and some we will try and prohibit but changes will occur. We in county government are working to have planned growth for we know we are either growing or dying. We are not standing still. We strive to have planned growth. We welcome our fellow citizens and ask that we all work together to make Roane County a wonderful place to live.

Projects and plans about Roane County Government can be found in various publications, executive summaries, newsletters to commission and other points of interest on the county website:

www.roanecountytn.gov

Come plan with us.