

County Executive's Newsletter to the County Commission

Roane County Government



"2015 Budget Concerns" By Ron Woody, County Executive

Volume 6, Issue 2

February 2015
Presidents' Day—
Feb. 16th



Filed at the January Commission meeting was a letter from the State Comptroller's Office regarding the 2015 budget. The letter outlined that our budget was approved but described a couple of areas of concern.

The first concern dealt with the county adopting the budget after the prescribed date which is the third Monday of July. The Tennessee Code Annotated does make provision for the later adoption; thereby, allowing a county to remain in compliance with a later adoption date.

The second concern dealt with three (3) potential funds' fiscal operations (Ambulance, Highway & Schools) and specifically whether sufficient cash was available to cash flow operations during the course of the year.

The Roane County Commission adopted fund balance policies and the number one stated purpose of the fund balance policy is to insure sufficient cash for operations. We think that both the Ambulance and Highway policies are adequate. The School Board adopts their own fund balance policy and make the financial decisions of school operations.

The state did not consider that historically,

departments do not expend more than their respective budget (which is illegal), do not spend 100% of their budgets (which is impossible); thereby, funds go unspent, which is called "fall out" and thus allowing for more available cash to support operations.

By considering the "fall out" provision the fund balance projections in all funds are greater than noted by the state and within guidelines approved by the commission.

This being said that we have sufficient cash to operate does not reduce the Comptroller's express concerns of Ambulance and School funds operations.

The Ambulance Fund has struggled over the course of years of operations as the county has tried to make the operation self-sufficient with little or no tax subsidies.

The School Fund has been losing money for the last three (3) years and financial concerns must be addressed in fiscal 2016 through increasing revenue (a tax increase), decreasing expenditures (cuts in programs), or a combination of both.

It is 2015 so we begin the 2016 budget process.

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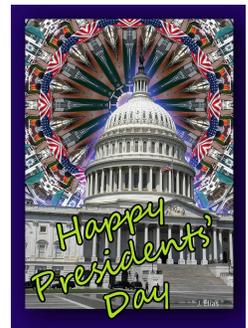
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Ambulance Service Update

Roane County has maintained a government owned and operated ambulance service since a state law change in 1973. Previously, ambulance services were provided by funeral homes. The new law required the establishment of independent ambulance services which were not associated with funeral homes. At this time, the Roane County Ambulance Service was formed.

~continued pg 2

The Courthouse will
be closed
Monday, February
16th
In observance of
Presidents' Day



"Changing Government through Research, Study and Analysis"

County Invests a Million at Riley Creek

A million pounds of rock, that is.

All that rock along with 1000 feet of drainage ditch, and 2000 board-feet of lumber are being invested at Riley Creek Campground.

Why?...to handle storm water runoff, widen driveways and improve campsite drainage to make the camping experience at Riley even better. Come by and see what your Parks and Recreation Maintenance team has been doing during the recent cold

~Cont. pg 3

Governor Proclaims March Purchasing Month

Gov. Bill Haslam has signed a Proclamation making March 2015 Purchasing Month. The Proclamation recognizes the contributions that procurement professionals make to governmental agencies throughout the state.

Roane County's Purchasing Department holds memberships in the National Institute of Government Purchasing, the Tennessee Association of Public Purchasing, as statewide association, and the East Tennessee Purchasing Association, which is a regional association.

Please join us with jurisdictions throughout the state in recognizing our own Purchasing Department and staff, Lynn Farnham, Jeanie Brown, Carol Maines, and Sandy Williams, during this time of observance of public purchasing professionals.

Lynn Farnham also serves as President of the Tennessee Association of Public Purchasing. Roane County continues to lead.

Flexible Spending Accounts by Jennifer Bolling

Those of you who signed up for a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) should have seen deductions come out the first pay period in January. You can use the money in your FSA to pay for medical, dental, and vision expenses that occur outside the scope of your insurance. These are often referred to as qualified expenses.

If you elected to contribute to the Dependent Care Account you will be able to submit expenses for child care services. The maximum allowance is \$5,000 if you file your taxes jointly-if you file separately the amount will decrease. To meet the requirements your child must be under age 13, or if the expense is for adult care the person must meet certain

guidelines set forth in the Summary Plan Description. The service can be provided in a day care setting or by a provider inside your home or theirs. After school and summer programs are also permissible as long as the organization or person has a federal tax id number. You may submit expenses for eligible dependents in your family even if they are not covered on your insurance plan. Please be advised that the services must have been provided within the current plan year to be eligible for reimbursement. To file a claim go online to mybenefitspeople.com and follow the instructions provided. As you can see this is a very important and valuable benefit that Roane County is happy to provide for our

employees.

For those of you who made changes to either your healthcare provider or HMO those changes also took effect in January. The premiums did not increase this year so any difference will be negligible. Anyone enrolled in the Partnership will be able to begin satisfying those requirements at this time. Vision premiums did increase 2.4% anyone participating in our vision coverage will see a slight change.

I hope the coming year is filled with success, prosperity, and health. I look forward to working with you and as always please call me if I can be of any assistance 717-4109.

Ambulance Service Update (continued from pg 1)

In prior years, the county has subsidized the operation as much as 3.6% of the property tax levied. In fiscal year 2015, the ambulance operation receives less than 1% of the property tax levy. Some people ask why we subsidize at all?. The Roane County Ambulance Department responds to all emergencies regardless of the patient's ability to pay. The ambulance department is also a service that operates on "standby." This means that we have ambulance crews on the clock waiting to be called to an emergency. If there is no call, we still pay

the employees for their time so that they can be ready at a moment's notice to respond.

Looking into fiscal 2016, the county is considering going from four (4) – 24 hour trucks to adding an additional 12 hour truck. This addition would improve service response and reduce the times when the service goes to code 1 or code 0, which means the service has either 1 or 0 ambulances available for additional calls. The county is also considering making available capital funding to improve the ambulance

fleet along with support equipment.

These improvements in service would mean the tax subsidy would have to increase as the department does not anticipate any substantial business growth. The question then becomes, "Are we willing to improve our services by adding a fifth ambulance and improving our fleet and equipment?" If so, the cost could be an additional 4¢ of property tax which keeps the subsidy at less than 2% of the total tax levy. Do you want an improved ambulance service?

Did You Know About . . .Burt’s Hair Reviver ?

By Robert Bailey, Roane County Historian

There are two bottles in the collection of The Roane County Heritage Commission that are embossed “Burt’s Hair Reviver, Harriman, Tenn.” An advertisement in the Harriman Industrial Supplement of “The Harriman Record” in 1902, states that the product “Invigorates the Hair, Restores its Natural Color, Cures Dandruff, Prevents Falling Out, Cures Eczema and all diseases of the scalp.” On the box it also says that it “contains no

poison, not a dye” and “the only non-poisonous, clean, healthy preparation for restoring Gray or Faded Hair to its life-like original color and beauty and promoting the growth of young hair.” The product was sold by Friend H. (F.H.) Burt who had come to Harriman from West Virginia before 1900. He was born in New York and the 1900 Roane Census lists him as a real estate agent living on Cumberland Street. As most products of those days, it

probably contained alcohol. It is interesting to note that about 10 years earlier, Emma Burt, the wife of F.H. Burt, sent letters to the saloons in Kingston stating that they are “not to sell, give, furnish or procure for my said husband, who is an habitual drunkard, any intoxicating liquors, whether spirituous, vinous, malt or mixed liquor or liquors.” So, did F.H. Burt stop drinking or did he find a different way to get alcohol by drinking his hair reviver?

Riley Creek –continued from page 2

weather. Take one look and you will be hoping for an early spring and start to dust off your camping gear. Our winter campers have been watching the progress and are getting a head-start on the season.

What comes next?

.....Permit applications have been submitted to TVA for a picnic pavilion and boat docks. We have big plans for your spring and summer....start making yours.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Date	Meeting	Location	Time
Feb. 3rd	Tourism Cmte	Alliance	5:00 pm
Feb. 3rd	Property Cmte	QCR	6:30 pm
Feb. 5th	ERB	CR	6:00 pm
Feb. 9th	Commission	QCR	7:00 pm
Feb. 10th	Fire Board	QCR	6:00 pm
Feb. 12th	Emergency Services Cmte	OES	6:00 pm
Feb. 17th	Back Tax Cmte	QCR	6:00 pm
Feb. 18th	Board of Zoning Appeals	QCR	6:00 pm
Feb. 18th	Planning Commission	QCR	7:00 pm
Feb. 23rd	Agricultural Ext Cmte	Ag Ext	6:00 pm
Feb. 24th	Commission Workshop	QCR	6:00 pm
Feb. 26th	Public Utility Board	WWP	5:30 pm

Roane County Commission
 Special Work Session
 Tuesday, February 24th
 6:00 pm Qualls CR

Consolidation of Schools and Districts by Ron Woody

I was recently forwarded a copy of a study on consolidation of schools by the National Education Policy Center (www.nepc.colorado.edu) dated February 2011. I read with interest a brief regarding arguments against and recommendations for consolidation. The executive summary states, and most parties agree, that there are “two presumed benefits: (1) fiscal efficiency and (2) higher educational quality. The recommendations outlined in the brief state that one should closely question claims about presumed benefits of consolidation.”

I think it goes without saying that all decisions, especially large financial ones, should be made after thorough research, study and analysis.

Please submit articles/items of interest to Melanie at melanie.townsend@roanecountytn.gov by the 20th of the month. ~Ron