



Municipal Technical Advisory Service  
INSTITUTE for PUBLIC SERVICE

# MUNICIPAL E-NEWS

December 2020 | Quarter 4 | Issue 98

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## NEW RESOURCES

Guide to Alcohol and Beer Laws in Tennessee | [Download](#)

Newly Elected Officials Guide to Taking Office (online guide) | [View](#)

Utility Board Manual 2020 | [Download](#)

New Knowledgebase materials can be found here: [View](#)

New MRLn (MTAS Research Library Online) materials can be found here: [View](#)

New MORE (MTAS Online Resource) materials can be found here: [View](#)



### UPCOMING TRAINING CLASSES

<https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/training-calendar-0>

MTAS offices will be closed for winter holidays December 21-25 and on January 1, 2021.

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## Looking Ahead to 2021: How Can MTAS Assist You?

As we think about closing out this calendar year, I cannot ever recall hearing more people say that they won't be sad to see the year in the rear-view mirror. The year 2020, with the novel coronavirus pandemic, civil unrest, a contentious presidential election, and an economic downturn has had its share of turmoil and tumultuousness. If you are like me, then you may have become numb to some of the COVID numbers and the reality of the world today. In some ways it seems that the phrase "social distancing" has always been in our vocabulary and that we have been wearing masks much longer than nine months. It is this callousness that I would like to speak to you about. I'd like to try to put this into context. For those of you who have had loved ones and friends become victims of the disease, you are already sensitive to this issue. For everyone else, please take a minute and think about some of the numbers that get reported daily.



On November 16, the death toll due to COVID-19 for Tennessee was 3,923. To put this another way, that is close to the population of the city of Gatlinburg and the population of town of Huntingdon. Another context is the annual driving fatalities that get tracked by the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security (and are also reported on TN SmartWay message boards). Last calendar year there were 1,148 traffic fatalities and to-date for this year, there have been 1,067. Today's COVID numbers are already more than triple the annual traffic fatalities.

I've been saying: "The longer the pandemic lasts, the closer it gets." Initially, we may have known someone who knew someone who had tested positive. Then a couple of months later, it might have been a friend of a friend. Then, it may be been someone within your religious community, or a neighbor, or a relative. Today, I believe it's the exception for someone to not know someone who has been affected.

The bottom line is: 2020 has been tough. If we haven't suffered personally, we know someone who has, and the numbers are so staggering that we tend to lose touch with what they really represent. Each of those numbers is a person, a constituent, a neighbor, a friend, a loved one. You work for a local government, and whether your community is rural or urban, your municipality has been impacted.

So, with everyone else, let's figure out together how we can close this calendar year and begin to look ahead with fresh eyes and hopes and dreams for 2021. MTAS has been here to help during the crisis and we'll be here to help as you shift into planning for the future. How can MTAS help you emerge from the fog of the pandemic to see a clear and straight path to sunny days ahead?

Margaret Norris

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Norris". The script is fluid and cursive.

MTAS Executive Director

## MTAS Guide to Alcohol and Beer Laws in Tennessee

Elisha Hodge, MTAS Legal Consultant

How convenient would it be to have a single document that includes all of the most relevant statutes and regulations related to alcohol and beer in Tennessee? In the last year, several of you all have commented on your desire to have such a compilation. That compilation is now available online for your use. While the compilation is not inclusive of all of the alcohol and beer statutes and regulations in Tennessee, it does include those that are the subject of the majority of your inquiries. We hope that you find this resource helpful.

Download the guide here:

<https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/knowledgebase/guide-alcohol-and-beer-laws-tennessee>



## Tennessee Sports Gaming Act of 2019 in Effect

Now that online sports betting is active in Tennessee, below is a reminder about the legislation passed that authorized it:

Chapter No. 507 (HB0502/SB0911). “Tennessee Sports Gaming Act” enacted.

Amends Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 51, Part 3 by enacting the “Tennessee Sports Gaming Act” which authorizes online sports betting in Tennessee. Establishes the procedure for becoming licensed to operate an online sports betting operation in Tennessee and the duties and responsibilities of a licensee. Requires each licensee to pay a privilege tax to the State of Tennessee of 20% of the licensee’s adjusted gross income. Provides that 80% of the privilege tax collected must be deposited into a lottery for education account and 15% of the privilege tax collected must be remitted, quarterly, to each local government in the state, on a per capita basis. Requires that the funds remitted to each local government be allocated to the local government’s general fund and used for local infrastructure projects.

Effective July 1, 2019.

Public Chapter 507, Acts of 2019 is found [here](#). The legislation is codified in [Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-51-301 et seq.](#)

## Municipal Court Clerks Training is Essential

John Eskew, MTAS Municipal Courts Specialist

Municipal courts are the most common type of court in Tennessee. With 225 municipal courts in the state, a person is far more likely to be cited into a city court than any other court in Tennessee. City courts hear a variety of offenses, ranging from motor vehicle violations like speeding or traffic light violations, to violations of city codes like overgrown lawns. City court proceedings can affect a person's driver's license and ability to travel to work, school, or carry on with daily life. Simply put, city court proceedings have a broader impact on a person's life than most folks realize.

That is why city court clerks training is essential. A city court clerk may be most residents' only interaction with the court system or your city. Court clerks need to know how to interact with the public and diffuse touchy situations.



Courthouse in Columbia, TN

Court clerks need to stay current on motor vehicle violation reporting requirements to the state to protect the public from dangerous drivers, and to ensure the enforcement of laws and judicial rulings are upheld.

With laws changing yearly by the legislature and applicable statutes scattered all over the TCA, frequent, current training on these laws is essential to keep your court running smoothly, accurately, and citizen friendly. MTAS continually researches these legal updates and provides various forms of training for large cities and small.

Finally, with the help of many hard-working municipal court clerks across the state, we completed an updated survey for all things city courts and published it to the MTAS website here <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/knowledgebase/municipal-court-survey-2020>. This survey covers various court operations, size, offenses heard, e-citations, court costs, etc. If you would like more information on the survey and the responses received, please reach out to John Eskew at [john.eskew@tennessee.edu](mailto:john.eskew@tennessee.edu).

## When It's Needed, Will Your Employees Have Access to Mental Health Services?

Betsy Cunningham, MTAS Human Resource Consultant

I received a call from a city administrator asking for help in finding someone who could do grief counseling for the town's employees. He had just learned that morning of the sudden death of one of their young employees who had 'grown up' at the city. I was touched by his compassion and strong desire to provide help to his employees.

My first thought was to refer him to their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for help, however, as a small municipality with only five employees they didn't offer an EAP or any other insurance benefits. The good news is that, after reaching out to the community and surrounding areas, we were able to find a resource to provide help to the town's employees.

Approximately 40 percent of the cities in East Tennessee have less than 15 employees and markedly different needs than larger cities, particularly in the area of employee benefits. In a recent MTAS survey of selected cities with seven or less employees, only 37 percent of the smaller cities offer and/or provide employee health insurance. This may mean mental health resources aren't readily available for employees in time of need.

Over the past several months we have all been overwhelmed with so many new experiences, challenges and emotions and, as employers, we are continually looking for ways to support the mental and emotional well-being for our employees. This is an area of our operations that we don't always think about until a critical need arises because we have so many other responsibilities.

As a human resource professional, I've seen firsthand how valuable mental health services can be to employees and therefore have a strong desire to assist our customers in offering these resources.

If this topic is of interest to you, please take a couple of minutes to share your thoughts with us here: [Employee Mental Health 2020](#).

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "People don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care." As public servants, when we focus more intentionally on the emotional well-being of our employees, I believe we will make life better for all Tennesseans.

If you have questions or would like to look at mental health benefit options, feel free to contact your MTAS human resource consultant:

Betsy Cunningham, East Tennessee | [betsy.cunningham@tennessee.edu](mailto:betsy.cunningham@tennessee.edu)

John Grubbs, Middle Tennessee | [john.grubbs@tennessee.edu](mailto:john.grubbs@tennessee.edu)

Peter Voss, West Tennessee | [peter.voss@tennessee.edu](mailto:peter.voss@tennessee.edu)

Or call the MTAS main office at 865-974-0411



## Elected Officials: MTAS is Here for You!

Johanna Owenby, MTAS Training Consultant

In November 2020 there were more than 200 municipal elections in Tennessee. For those local municipal officials who are newly elected to their roles, MTAS can help ease the transition. For those of you who are not newly elected to office, our resources are also available to you and can serve as helpful refreshers.

The **MTAS Elected Officials Academy (EOA)** is the cornerstone of MTAS training for elected officials. The first-ever virtual offering of this program is in early December 2020 and MTAS plans to schedule another offering again in the first half of 2021. Topics offered in the program include, but are not limited to, form of government, charters, municipal finance, open records, and open meetings.

In addition to training, MTAS offers these other helpful resources for newly elected officials:

### [Newly Elected Officials Guide to Taking Office](#)

There are two resources here. One resource is a brief online self-guided course that gives a quick but thorough introduction to what newly elected officials can expect as they take the oath of office. Additionally, resources prepared by an MTAS attorney such as oath templates and other useful materials are included in a [downloadable PDF](#).

Lastly, every municipality in Tennessee has an MTAS consultant - several, in fact - dedicated to offering guidance and support to help you effectively serve your city or town. The MTAS website can help you locate your MTAS consultants - all you need to do is select your city from the [drop down](#) list of cities, and your list of MTAS consultants is available at the bottom of the page. Please get familiar with our website and [reach out](#) to your consultants as you need guidance.

Congratulations on being elected to local office! MTAS wants to help you make the most of the responsibility you have to your city as an elected official. We understand the challenges that arise for elected officials, and our resources for elected officials are here to enhance your capacity to lead.

### Contact Us!

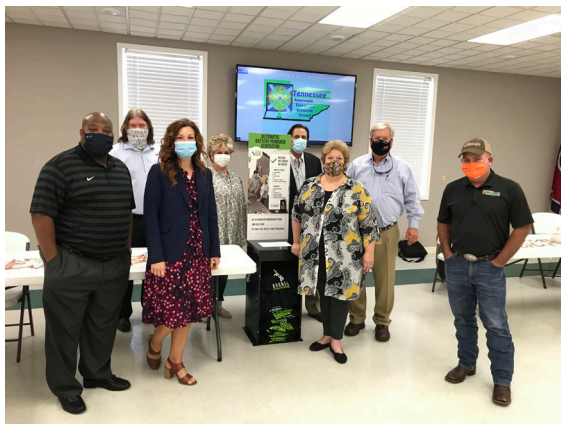
To find out about attending the EOA, contact Training Coordinator Doug Brown, at 865-974-0411 or at [doug.brown@tennessee.edu](mailto:doug.brown@tennessee.edu).

For general questions about the EOA, contact Training Consultant Johanna Owenby, at [johanna.owenby@tennessee.edu](mailto:johanna.owenby@tennessee.edu).



## MTAS/TREEDC Host Lunch and Learn

MTAS recently hosted a lunch and learn session about renewable energy with Tennessee Renewable Energy and Economic Development Council (TREEDC) Board Member/Livingston Mayor Curtis Hayes and members of the Overton County Chamber of Commerce. The group discussed the origins of TREEDC, the progress of renewable energy since 2008 and outlined future TREEDC objectives. Contact MTAS if your community is interested in a Chamber of Commerce lunch and learn event with TREEDC.



Front left to right: Jason Garrett, UT Extension, Livingston Mayor/TREEDC Board Member Curtis Hayes, Overton County Chamber of Commerce President Shannon Cantrell, Tammy Mangrum, Willis Layne Insurance, Warren Nevad, MTAS, back row - Dr. Dennis Tennant, Director of Tennessee Tech University External Relations, Jill Robbins, Willis Layne Insurance, Dan Black, Vice President Bronco Power Boost



Mayor Hayes, Shannon Cantrell, Warren Nevad, Dr. Dennis Tennant. Thank you.

## MTAS/TREEDC Intern Christy Haddad Assists City of Harriman

Christy Haddad, a graduate student in the University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK) Masters of Public Administration, recently began her internship with MTAS. Christy has been assisting Harriman City Manager Kevin Helms with personnel research and the development of job descriptions. She is also assisting MTAS with preparation of job descriptions for communities in the Upper Cumberland Region. She has also conducted research in best practices for municipal renewable energy programs. Christy earned her undergraduate degree in political science at UTK. Throughout her undergraduate career, Christy has developed skills such as community outreach, polling and statistics data, field organizing and public service. Christy proudly hails from New Jersey.



From left to right Harriman City Manager Kevin Helms, MTAS/TREEDC Intern Christy Haddad and MTAS Management Consultant Warren Nevad.

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# UPCOMING CONFERENCES

## Tennessee Municipal League Legislative Conference

March 15-16, 2021 | Nashville, TN

Look for more information [here!](#)



## [TLG Govapalooza! Alliance for Innovation](#)

March 1-5, 2021

The Movement for Tomorrow's Local Government Today.

Winter is coming, but so is Govapalooza.

OK, so there may not be an actual zombie apocalypse on the way, but at this point, would we really be that surprised if there were? With concurrent crises in public health, education, economic recovery, social cohesion and the very legitimacy of government - local government has never been under greater stress.

In response to this challenge, a diverse coalition of committed partners has come together to create an antidote for these difficult times - a beacon in the night to inspire and support the local government community - TLG Govapalooza!

This massive virtual festival will feature world-class keynote speakers (announcement coming shortly - stay tuned!), local government legends, and next-gen talent you won't want to miss. Experiences will range from soaring inspiration to hands-on implementation tactics and tools.

A truly historic event, TLG Govapalooza will bring together thousands of elected officials, appointed leaders, department heads, local gov employees, academics, students, business executives, nonprofit partners, and committed individuals to engage in an incredible celebration of the very best in local government.

Think of it as a virtual SXSW for Local Government, and you'll get the idea...

We don't use the term "Movement" lightly. Thousands of local gov professionals will come together at Govapalooza, brought there by rock-star keynotes (to be announced shortly); engaging, cutting-edge presenters, and by the power of the group of folks behind the curtain.

Registration open [here](#). (\$299 per person. With MTAS member discount, \$199 person.)

Look for more information [here!](#)

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