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Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS)

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Municipal E-News: Issue 54: December 2013

MTAS

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CITY SPOTLIGHT:

CLEVELAND

Bradley County

Incorporated 1842

2013 Population: 41,285

Municipal Management Consultant

Honna Rogers

honna.rogers@tennessee.edu

CLASS LISTINGS & INTERACTIVE TRAINING CALENDAR

Mark your calendar! MTAS training events and conferences are listed here along with information on how to register for upcoming training events on your Solution Point account. [READ](#)

RESEARCH/INFORMATION CENTER NEW MATERIALS

MTAS's Research and Information Center is always adding new materials to its collection. See what's new for this month. [READ](#)

PAST ISSUES OF THE MUNICIPAL E-NEWSLETTER

[READ](#)

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

"You are here and we are there." Sometimes not being in the same location when you're trying to get a job done can add complexity to something that should be fairly simple. [READ](#)

MTAS WEBSITE IS CHANGING

MTAS unveiled a newly designed website in mid-November. MTAS has redesigned its website to provide users with quick access to the information you use most. [READ](#)

WRITING EFFECTIVE COMPETITIVE BID SPECIFICATIONS

When it comes to competitive bidding, the process of writing specifications is likely the hardest part. Specifications tell the potential bidders what features are desired on the item for which bids are being solicited. [READ](#)

ELECTED OFFICIALS ACADEMY SESSIONS HELD IN JACKSON

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) conducted Level I Elected Officials Academy training for 16 municipal officials in West Tennessee in early November. [READ](#)

TREEDC PARTNERS WITH PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS AT KINGSFORT FORUM

The Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council (TREEDC) held its first educational luncheon forum at the Kingsport Higher Education Center in late October. [READ](#)

*Warren Nevad, MTAS
Consultant and CIS
Solutions Consultant
Dwain Raper test the
Rhoades Car Solar
bicycle at the TREEDC-
Kingsport forum.*



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From the Executive Director...

Jim Thomas, Executive Director
jim.thomas@tennessee.edu



Jim Thomas

“YOU ARE HERE AND WE ARE THERE.” Sometimes not being in the same location when you’re trying to get a job done can add complexity to something that should be fairly simple. You see it every day when it comes to dealing with issues at city hall and we at MTAS can appreciate it. MTAS is literally spread from one end of the state to the other and sometimes distance gets in our way too. We’ve overcome some of the problems of time and distance by using technologies that make meeting with somebody at the other end of the state as simple as a mouse click on a name. The result – video and audio with somebody many miles away, all on the computer monitor.

Over the past year, many of you have commented that merely getting to a location where MTAS training is being provided can be difficult. Sometimes the expense of travel is a problem. Sometimes having to be away from the office is a problem. You want to take advantage of the training, but time and distance can get in the way. We’ve heard the comments and we’re working to provide some ways to overcome the problems.

In 2014, MTAS will be rolling out more training online. While I personally enjoy the face-to-face classic classroom setting for training, I’ve come to recognize online training as a very good alternative. Once I decide on the training to register for, I get to pick the time when it is convenient for me to access it. If the need arises for me to take a “time out” while in the training, I can do so and come back to it when it’s convenient. And I can access it from anywhere where I can get to the internet...at work or from home, thus the need to travel is virtually eliminated.

Not all training is effectively delivered online and we don’t intend to move MTAS to a completely online format. But where it can be effective, we’ll work to provide it. And in fact to better serve you with online training, MTAS is pleased to announce that Cyndy Edmonds, a veteran online training specialist, will join our training team on December 9, 2013 as our online training specialist to make more online training available to you. (Look for information on Cyndy Edmonds in the next issue of the Municipal E-News.).

Lastly, when you read this newsletter, we will be well into our traditional holiday season. As the close of 2013 approaches, know that we at MTAS appreciate the work you do for your town or city and your confidence in us when we work alongside you.

*We hope for a safe &
relaxing holiday time for you,
your families & your staffs.*

MTAS Website is Changing



MTAS UNVEILED A NEWLY DESIGNED WEBSITE in mid-November. MTAS has redesigned its website to provide users with quick access to the information you use most. Frequently used links are now easily accessible at the top of the site. Navigation has moved from a fixed left-hand panel to links throughout the front page. The site also now adapts to your viewing screen – whether it be on a desktop, laptop, tablet, or mobile device – increasing its usability. And, as always, news and announcements will be readily available in the center of the home page.

We hope you will find these changes beneficial as you use our website. We'd love to hear from you – if you have any comments or suggestions about the site, please send them to **Lisa.Shipley@tennessee.edu**.

Writing Effective Competitive Bid Specifications

Sharee Brewer, MTAS Finance and Accounting Consultant



WHEN IT COMES TO COMPETITIVE BIDDING, the process of writing specifications is likely the hardest part. Specifications tell the potential bidders what features are desired on the item for which bids are being solicited. It is imperative that specifications be clearly written to satisfy the sense of fairness that the laws were designed to promote. Written specifications should share four characteristics: 1) set the minimum acceptable quality, 2) encourage competitive bidding not restrict it, 3) contain provisions for reasonable tests and inspections for acceptability, and 4) provide for an equitable award to the lowest and best responsive bidder. Unfortunately, sometimes an employee wants to purchase an item that requires competitive bidding and proceeds writing specifications for the item desired in a manner that is exclusionary. They are attempting to ensure that they get to purchase the exact item they want. Occasionally they will even use promotional materials provided by the vendor to

write the specifications, in effect creating a sole-source item. This is inappropriate and violates the spirit of the laws addressing competitive bidding, which in fact don't require automatic acceptance of the lowest bid. To prevent this, it is best to focus writing specifications on the needs of the entity and how it can be best served with the process.

There are times when rejection of the lowest bid is appropriate. Reasons can range from believing that cost is a lower priority than other specifications like timeliness, quality, poor business practices by the bidder, to length and coverage of the warranty offered. When rejecting the lowest bid, the reasons should be adequately documented and communicated to all parties involved in the decision-making process, including the bidders. The sense of fairness that the general laws were designed to promote should be there even in the face of rejecting a vendor.

Elected Officials Academy Sessions Held in Jackson

NOV 2, 2013. Persons attending the Level I Elected Officials Academy in Jackson included: [front row, left to right] Alderman Randy Edwards, Martin; Alderman Sherri Gallick, Lakeland; Alderman Deanna Chappell, Troy; Alderman Debbie Baldwin, Camden; Alderman Johnny Maddux, Alamo; Alderman Flynoide Gregory, Alamo; Alderman Terry Janda, Gates. Back row: Alderman Richard Smith, Camden; City Manager Jeffrey Robertson, Collinwood; Alderman David Sudberry, Martin; Mayor Dwayne Dixon, Gates; Alderman Larry Conder, Alamo; Alderman P.B. Conley, Alamo; Mayor Allan Sterbinsky, Stanton; Alderman Troy Reed, Collinwood; and Mayor James G. Brown, Collinwood.

THE MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE (MTAS) conducted Level I Elected Officials Academy training for 16 municipal officials in West Tennessee in early November. A total of eight Tennessee municipalities were represented at the training, which was held at the University of Tennessee West Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station.

The Elected Officials Academy is a program designed for the elected official. The curriculum designed for the academy was developed to give municipal officials an overview of the varied aspects of their role as a municipal leader.



The academy is a component of the comprehensive municipal training program provided by MTAS.

The academy provides municipal officials a comprehensive outline of municipal leadership responsibilities, and offers networking opportunities with other local officials to share ideas and gain new insight from each other. Topics covered in Level I of the academy include:

foundations and structures of municipal government; an overview of charters, codes and open records; municipal finance; ethics and open meetings; and how to be an effective council member. Participants completed 10 hours of training over two days.

EOA Level II training sessions are somewhat more specific, dealing with such topics as economic development, fire department operations, police department operations, human resources, public works, risk management, and water/wastewater operations.

Persons interested in attending sessions of the Elected Officials Academy should contact their MTAS municipal management consultant or check out the MTAS website for sessions taking place nearby.



NOV 2, 2013. Ronnie Neill, MTAS municipal management consultant, facilitates a session on municipal Charters, Codes, and the Open Records Law at the Elected Officials Academy in Jackson. A total of 16 elected officials, representing eight municipalities, attended the EOA sessions.

Facilitators at the west Tennessee EOA Level I sessions included MTAS employees Sharee Brewer, Ronnie Neill, Dana Deem, and David Angerer.

TREEDC Partners with Pew Charitable Trusts at Kingsport Forum

▶ From left to right: Phyllis Shelton, Rhoades Car International, Warren Nevad, MTAS/TREEDC, Erwin Mayor Doris Hensley, Jennifer Alldredge, Alliance to Save Energy, Max Shilstone, Clean Line Energy Partners and Emily Bryan, Pew Charitable Trusts

THE TENNESSEE RENEWABLE ENERGY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (TREEDC) held its first educational luncheon forum at the Kingsport Higher Education Center in late October. TREEDC partnered with Founding Member Pew Charitable Trusts and the city of Kingsport to showcase area renewable energy initiatives to stakeholders. Representatives from the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Eastman, Erwin, Johnson City, Bristol Congressman Phil Roe's staff and area local officials attended the first TREEDC- Tri-Cities forum. Emily Bryan, Martin Penny and MTAS Management Consultant/TREEDC Director Warren Nevad crafted the agenda. Max Shilstone, director of business development for TREEDC Gold Member Clean Line Energy Partners was the keynote speaker.



Kingsport Vice Mayor Tom Parham welcomed the audience and expressed his appreciation to TREEDC's 92 mayors for helping to advance renewable energy awareness to the Tri-Cities. Emily Bryan with Cooley Public Strategies urged the audience to look into Combined Heating and Power because it captures waste heat and puts it to efficient use while providing significant economic and energy security benefits. She added that job growth in the clean energy economy outperformed overall job growth in 38 states and the District of Columbia between 1998 and 2007. Jobs include engineers, plumbers, construction workers, machine setters, teachers and others with annual incomes ranging from \$21,000 to \$110,000.

Jennifer Alldredge of the Alliance to Save Energy gave an overview of the organization's mission and goals. The Alliance's PowerSave Schools Program educates students about energy and the link between energy efficiency and the environment, providing hands-on, real-world learning opportunities that empower them to make a real difference. Nick Safay, vice president of Eco Logical Systems gave an overview of the 200 kilowatt solar landfill project in Bristol. Eco Logical Energy Systems has also developed solar projects in Watauga and in Dante, Va. He also explained how his organization was successful in developing a 50 kilowatt solar array in Bristol, which is used in part to educate area students.

Nevad gave an overview of the PHG Energy Covington project. This downdraft gasification system was designed to convert wood trimmings and sewer sludge to electricity to offset energy use by the city's waste water treatment plant.

The forum ended at 1:30pm. Please contact TREEDC at www.treedc.us if you are interested in hosting a future event. The TREEDC 2014 membership drive will begin soon.

MTAS Training Opportunities December 2013



CONFERENCES

TN MUNICIPAL ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
February 20-21, 2014
Brentwood

ICMA SOUTHEAST REGIONAL SUMMITT
March 6-7, 2014
Williamsburg, VA

TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE 2014 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
March 17-18, 2014
Nashville

TN GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION 2014 SPRING INSTITUTE
March 21, 2014
Jackson

TN CITY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION 2014 SPRING CONFERENCE
April 23-25, 2014
Murfreesboro

TRANSFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2014
April 23-25, 2014
Denver, CO

Administrative Hearings Officer 2013

12/5 8:30 AM Nashville TML Conference Room

Business Tax Administration Update

12/3 8:30 AM Bartlett Bartlett Station Municipal Center
12/10 8:30 AM Johnson City Johnson City Memorial Park Community Center
12/16 8:30 AM Nashville TBI Headquarters, 901 RS Gass Blvd
12/18 8:30 AM Collegedale Collegedale City Hall

GASB Update Course Viewing

12/5 1:00 PM Knoxville Univ of Tenn - MTAS Conference Room

MMA11 Making Effective Decisions

12/13 8:30 AM Morristown Morristown City Hall

MMA12 Developing Teamwork

12/18 8:30 AM Franklin Williamson County Ag Expo Park

CMFO-Purchasing

12/4 8:30 AM Knoxville Tusculum College Knoxville
12/4 8:30 AM Jackson Univ of Tenn - West Tenn Research & Education Center
12/11 8:30 AM Columbia Local Government Corporation (LGC)

Procrastination: Defeating the Thief of Productivity and Time

12/5 8:30 AM Jackson West Tenn Research & Education Center
12/6 8:30 AM Franklin Embassy Suites - Cool Springs
12/18 8:30 AM Johnson City Carnegie Hotel
12/19 8:30 AM Knoxville Univ of Tenn - Conference Center