

## City Spotlight: La Grange



La Grange Civic Center

La Grange is the oldest town in Fayette County, originally being a Chickasaw Indian village named "Itey Uch La," meaning "Cluster of Pines." For a number of years, it was a trading post for the Indians who would visit the town regularly to dispose of their game, hides, etc. Situated on a high bluff overlooking north Mississippi, La Grange lies 50 miles east of Memphis along State Highway 57 and three miles north of the Mississippi state line.

Date of Incorporation:  
1831

Population:  
133

County:  
Fayette

Grand Division:  
West Tennessee

Municipal Management Consultant  
Rick Whitehead  
[rick.whitehead@tennessee.edu](mailto:rick.whitehead@tennessee.edu)

## MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

600 Henley Street, Suite 120  
Knoxville, TN 37996-4105  
Phone: (865) 974-0411  
Fax: (865) 974-0423  
[www.mtas.tennessee.edu](http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)

## Building Better Cities

By Jim Thomas, Assistant Director

"The University of Tennessee (UT) Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) has developed a checklist of the basics of managing a Tennessee municipality to help Tennessee municipal officials judge whether their city or town measures up in providing services. This publication presents seven areas of services provided by most municipalities in an easy-to-use checklist format so you can conduct your own survey of how efficiently and effectively services are provided in your city or town."



Jim Thomas

This is quoted from the introduction to a publication entitled "What Every City Needs" produced by MTAS in 1988 that listed 73 basic needs of every city and town covering administration, finance, police, fire, water/wastewater, streets/roads and solid waste collection and disposal. While we are 24 years later, the advice is still sound and is the basis for a new MTAS project called "Building Better Cities."

Over the next few months, MTAS personnel will be collecting data on each city and town in Tennessee that addresses 28 criteria and factors (compared to 73 in  
*(continued on page 2)*

## MTAS Staff and City Leaders Peak Interest in Benchmarking at Municipal Managers Conference

MTAS staff who facilitate the Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project, headed to Nashville on April 11-12 to promote performance management at the Spring Conference of the Tennessee City Managers Association.



Left to right: Janet Geyer, assistant to the city manager, Collierville; Janice Casteel, city manager, Cleveland; and Kirk Bednar, assistant city manager, Brentwood

Frances Adams-O'Brien, MTAS research and information center

manager, and Sarah Young, Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project (TMBP) project coordinator, joined Outreach Coordinator John Crawford to present on TMBP, a comparative performance management project coordinated by MTAS for a decade.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Building Better Cities

(continued from page 1)

the earlier publication). The purpose of the project is not to compare one city against all others. When data collection is completed, analysis of the data will be used by MTAS to do planning for its work to accommodate each city's efforts to build that better city. While much of the information relative to the criteria is already known or available from central sources, MTAS management consultants will also be talking with city officials across the state to complete the survey.

The baseline data being collected now will be analyzed and reported on during late summer this year. The same survey will be completed in future years to measure progress that cities and towns, with MTAS's service, make toward "Building Better Cities."

## Let Me Tell You a Story – How an Annual Report Will Benefit Your Fire Department

By Dennis Wolf, Fire Management Consultant

A fire department is a valuable community asset providing emergency and essential services to residents, businesses and visitors. Regardless of the size of the community, the majority of the residents will never need the emergency services the fire department provides. This is especially true in a large city, where the percentage of people using the emergency services is small.



Dennis Wolf

Local fire officials and those who use the services know what the fire department does and the services the department provides to the community, but the majority of the population does not, and even elected officials may not be aware of all of the services provided or the department's workload.

A fire department annual report is an excellent tool for a fire department to use to tell its story to the community and to build community support for its efforts and needs, but many departments do not produce an annual report.

MTAS has a new publication, [\*Let Me Tell You a Story – How an Annual Report Will Benefit Your Fire Department\*](#), that discusses the benefits of using an annual report, suggests ways to get started in creating an annual report, lists items to include in the report and includes an example of how to organize the report. The publication also includes a list of resources to assist a fire department in creating an annual report.

## MTAS Staff and City Leaders Peak Interest in Benchmarking at Municipal Managers Conference

(continued from page 1)

The project currently boasts 10 participating cities across the state of Tennessee. MTAS staff is focused on making fiscal year 2012 the biggest year yet for the project with plans to add even more cities.

MTAS staff briefed the audience on essentials of benchmarking, a timeline for the fiscal year 2012 project cycle and sample measures calculated in its annual report. Then they spotlighted the expertise of city leaders who have participated in the TMBP for the past 10 years with a panel discussion about the positive impact of the project in their localities.

Cleveland City Manager Janice Casteel, Brentwood Assistant City Manager Kirk Bednar and Collierville Assistant to the City Manager Janet Geyer comprised the panel. Casteel celebrated the improved collaboration that occurred among city staff in the process of the project's data cleansing exercises, while Geyer emphasized how data generated by the project can aid in public relations. Bednar stressed the critical need for direction from the city manager to ensure buy-in among the staff in collecting the data, given the big commitment of work time and effort it entails.

"Performance measurement should ultimately be a tool for performance management," Adams-O'Brien relayed in the presentation. City leaders confirm the powerful impact it has made in improving and monitoring their own city service delivery.

For more information on the municipal benchmarking project, contact Sarah Young at [syoung27@utk.edu](mailto:syoung27@utk.edu) or (865) 974-8964 or Frances Adams-O'Brien at [frances.adams-obrien@tennessee.edu](mailto:frances.adams-obrien@tennessee.edu) or (865) 974-9842.

## Newly-Updated TnPRIMA Website Has Been Launched



Visit [www.tnprima.org](http://www.tnprima.org) to explore our association's newly-updated website!

Be sure to check out the new "Roundtables" tab for all of the current issues and materials

being discussed around the state at the regional Risk Management Roundtable luncheons.

Also, we hope everyone is getting ready for the national PRIMA Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville June 3-6. Make plans now to attend!

## Fund Public Administration Internship at the UT IPS Golf Tournament

You have two opportunities to have some fun and raise some funds to help build the future of the profession!

The Paula Muscatello/Bill Rodgers Local Government Internship Endowment at the University of Tennessee supports students studying public administration, finance, communications, engineering or other related fields who are interested in pursuing a career in local government.

**TUESDAY, JUNE 5 • SEVIERVILLE**

*in association with the*  
Tennessee County Services Association  
Legislative Conference

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information

**SUNDAY, JUNE 10 • KNOXVILLE**

*in association with the*  
Tennessee Municipal League Annual Conference

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information

For more information or to register, contact:  
Rhonda Campbell at (865) 974-6587 or  
e-mail her at [rhonda.campbell@tennessee.edu](mailto:rhonda.campbell@tennessee.edu).

## Complete MTAS Classes at Your Desk! New Online Courses Available to All Tennessee Cities

MTAS has added 35 new online courses to its training catalog representing a wide variety of courses that are suitable for all levels of municipal employees. These courses are easily available from the Solution Point website at <http://www.solutionpoint.tennessee.edu/>.

One new course, which is particularly recommended by MTAS for all Tennessee cities and towns, is the Open Records course. One law that municipal employees and officials often struggle to understand and comply with is the Tennessee Public Records Law (also known as the "Open Records Law"). This course explains the law, provides resources that make the process easier and describes how to handle certain specific requests such as personnel, business, financial, utility, computer and electronic records.

The courses currently offered are:

- Choosing the Best Applicant
- Creating a Positive Attitude
- Culture and Its Effect on Communication
- Decision Making: The Fundamentals
- Delegation: The Personal Approach
- Difficult People in the Workplace Environment
- Dynamics of Leadership
- Effectively Communicating in Teams
- Employee Sexual Harassment Awareness
- Energizing and Empowering Employees
- First Time Manager: Meeting Expectations
- Leadership and Change
- Leadership Essentials: Leading with Emotional Intelligence
- Leadership Essentials: Motivating Employees
- Listening Basics
- Listening Essentials: Improving Your Listening Skills
- Listening Essentials: The Basics of Listening
- Making Decisions Ethically
- Management Essentials: Confronting Difficult Employee Behavior
- Management Essentials: Managing a Diverse Team
- Managing Change: Building Positive Support for Change
- Managing Change: Dealing with Resistance to Change
- Managing Delegation
- Managing Your E-mail

(continued on page 4)



## Complete MTAS Classes at Your Desk! New Online Courses Available to All Tennessee Cities

(continued from page 3)

- Open Records
- Performance Reviews
- Presenting Successfully
- Selecting the Best Applicant
- Sexual Harassment at Work (HRCI/PHR – aligned)
- The Reasons Why Diversity Matters
- Understanding Organizational Ethics
- Using E-Mail and Instant Messaging Effectively
- Working with Difficult People: Identifying Difficult People
- Workplace Conflict: Recognizing and Responding to Conflict
- Workplace Conflict: Strategies for Resolving Conflicts

If you have any questions or need assistance, call the MTAS office at (865) 974-0411 or e-mail Doug Brown at [doug.brown@tennessee.edu](mailto:doug.brown@tennessee.edu).

## Mark Your Calendar! MTAS Training Events and Conferences

### HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ISO RATING

This class is designed to give the participant an overview of the ISO rating system. At the conclusion of the class, participants will know the various factors that go into an ISO rating; how the ISO rating impacts their community; and how to develop a plan to improve the ISO rating in their city. The course material will cover communications, water supply, divergence factor and other fire department components.

May 10 Franklin                      May 17 Jackson

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information or to register.

### DRUG FUND OVERVIEW, PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE DISPOSAL

This course covers all aspects of drug fund administration and the proper disposal of sensitive property and evidence items, such as drugs, firearms and vehicles. Discussion will include the accounting process required for confidential expenditures; allowable expenditures; and how the special revenue account (drug fund) differs from the confidential expense account.

May 3 Franklin                      May 10 Collegedale  
May 15 Johnson City              May 16 Knoxville  
May 22 Bartlett                      May 23 Jackson

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information or to register.

### EOA LEVEL III – TML PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

MTAS will host pre-conference sessions this year at the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) Annual Conference in Knoxville. The sessions offered are part of Level II of the Elected Officials Academy program. Each session is designed specifically for the elected official and allows time for networking and sharing ideas with other cities.

June 8-9 Knoxville

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information or to register.



The Municipal E-News is produced by the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, an agency of the University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service, in an effort to meet the challenge of providing timely, valuable information and assistance to Tennessee cities to build better communities. The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. MTAS1686 • E4-1050-000-049-12