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\$1.1 million for airport on standby

By Carolynn Poythress Elder
HT Reporter

ROGERSVILLE – \$1,102,500 for the Hawkins County Airport is being held by the Aeronautics Division of the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), it was learned in a joint meeting of the airport committee and the budget and finance committee Monday.

A letter sent by TDOT to the county mayor's office June 8 explained that the

Entitlement which is subject to Federal law (49 USC 47117) and specifies the NPE funds are available "...only during the fiscal year for which the amount was apportioned and...the three fiscal years immediately following that year in the case of a non-hub airport or any airport that is not a commercial service airport."

The letter went on to say, "The primary purposes of the NPE grants are to support airport improvement projects to enhance airport safety, preserve infrastructure and

be used to produce revenue sources. It advised, "It is incumbent upon us to follow the timeline."

Chuck Hoskins, an operations manager with TDOT and a Kingsport native, explained options to the two committees. Hoskins said that money must be requested by August 8. He recommended the money first go to resurfacing the landing strip and to acquiring the surrounding land necessary for the safety zone. The committees learned that if the

be lost next year. Hoskins said that while he encouraged the airport committee to "be more conscious of a timely spend-out," that if they were going to let the money go, he would suggest they "gift" it to another similar airport. He mentioned the airport at Elizabethton as an example. He said, "My director said, 'Make sure they come in here with something they're actually going to do, not something just to tie up the funds.'"

Present at the meeting was Jeff Pike, an

er with the LPA Group, who will

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Photo by Sarah McCarty
Rogersville artist Jim Caswell has been creating paintings, drawings and T-shirt designs for decades. His latest shirt creation commemorates the upcoming Grainger County Tomato Festival.

Rogersville artist creates memories

Jim Caswell paints historical hotrods, designs souvenir shirts

By Sarah McCarty
HT Reporter

ROGERSVILLE – Rogersville artist Jim Caswell has been creating paintings and artwork for decades. One of his latest projects will be on display this weekend at the Grainger County Tomato Festival as festival attendees donning the official T-shirt for the 2012 festival parade around in Caswell's design.

Caswell, 68, started creating art in high school.

"When I was in high school I'd be drawing stick figures," Caswell says. "I got into art class because I wasn't good in anything else." He says he even got paid once when he was in ninth grade and sent in a picture of a hotrod to Holston Electric's magazine. They published the picture and sent him a \$5 check.

"I found out that I could get money

doing things. Otherwise I would still be giving it away," Caswell says.

However, he said he never really devoted his career to art until after he got back from being in the Navy. He found work at various printing companies in Rogersville, and eventually started working for a silk screen printing company. While at one of the companies, he even designed the logo for Dolly

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By Carolynn Poythress Elder
HT Reporter

ROGERSVILLE – The Athowominee Water Treatment Plant in Hawkins County's Lakeview Utility District received an award recognizing its operations staff, July 10. The Kentucky/Tennessee Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) honored the water plant for "outstanding plant operation" according to the Association at its annual Water Professionals Conference in Memphis. The Athowominee Treatment Plant was the only plant in Tennessee to receive this award in the up to three million gallon per day treatment capacity (small plant)

category.

The Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Operation Awards are given each year to water treatment plant operation staffs across the AWWA Section's territory, categorized based on plant treatment capacity. There are approximately 690 registered public water systems in Tennessee. Nominees are evaluated through a written process and a site visit. The selection committee for KY/TN AWWA endeavors to recognize those plant operations that have demonstrated exceptional performance in meeting all Federal Drinking Water Standards and

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Courtesy photo
On hand for the event were (l-r): Tim Carwile, general manager; Brad Montgomery chairman, KY-TN AWWA; and Carol Tharpe administrative manager.

Metz told *Hawkins Today*, "The Additional Powers Act Resolution initiated from the need to regulate fireworks. Commissioner Shane Bailey pushed to eliminate the ban on fireworks as a way to generate revenue for the residents of Hawkins County. If the taxpayers cannot benefit from the inconvenience of the tent retailers then perhaps the commission should reinstate the ban. But, if we have the Additional Powers Act we can regulate the sale and encourage a brick and mortar store or distributor to call Hawkins County 'home.' This will better insure the generation of revenue on behalf of the property owner. Beyond fireworks, the county can then prevent pain clinics, methadone clinics, adult entertainment

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State expert speaks on Sunshine Law

By Carolynn Poythress Elder
HT Reporter

ROGERSVILLE - At the request of the newly formed Hawkins County Ethics Committee, state expert on public records and open meetings, attorney Elisha Hodge from the State Comptroller's office conducted training for elected and appointed officials within the county and cities. The only official from a city present was Bulls Gap's popular mayor, Bill Grubb. One third of the county commissioners attended.

Public records laws are more easily understandable to most citizens than are open meetings laws. Public records laws in essence say that everything written or verbal regarding public business is the property of the public who is entitled to examine it at a moment's notice. Public records normally are tangible, therefore clearly definable, according to Hodge.

Open meetings laws can entail the intangible, making those waters a little



File photo
Elisha Hodge

reach the best decision.

Tennessee Code Annotated 8-44-101(a) says, "The general assembly declares it to be the policy for this state that the formation of public policy and decisions is public business and must not be conducted in secret."

T. C. A. 8-44-102(a) stat

murky. The Tennessee Open Meetings Act was passed in 1976 and defined as attempting to balance the public's need to know with the need of an elected or appointed body to

meetings of any governing body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times, except as provided by the Constitution of Tennessee."

T. C. A. 8-44-102(b) adds, (1)(A), "Governing body means the members of any public body which consists of two or more members with the authority to make decisions for or recommendations to a public body on policy or administration."

(2) "Meeting means the convening of a governing body of a public body for which a quorum is required in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward a decision on any matter."

Those in attendance at the training session were especially curious regarding chance meetings which often occur in a county as small as Hawkins or any of its municipalities. Hodge cited T. C. A. 8-44-102© as covering this. "...No such chance meetings, informal assemblages, or electronic communication shall be used to decide or deliberate public business."

that if one official expresses his or her opinion to the other, that is not in circumvention of the spirit of the law. However, she advised, attempting to persuade another to one's own opinion most certainly does.

Voting by an elected or appointed body must be public, according to T. C. A. 8-44-104(b). She stressed that secret balloting is illegal and the vote of each individual must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. She emphasized that the public's business must be done in the presence of the public.

Violations are subject to legal action, and any vote taken where a violation has occurred is void. This can make the offending body subject to a circuit chancery or other equity court and cause it to be under governmental jurisdiction for a year.

Hodge is employed by the State of Tennessee and is therefore available to answer the public's questions and

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assist the committee in planning the engineering of the local project. He led the committee in an informal discussion of the paving and a drainage problem brought to their attention by Surgoinsville Mayor Johnny Greer. Hoskins added that for a while the match will be 95 percent—5 percent instead of the usual 90 percent—10 percent. In essence the county would be "buying" dollars for five cents.

Commissioner Charlie Freeman, one of only two members of the budget and finance committee present, estimated the county's contribution to be \$25,100.

Jeff Hasson, who identified himself as an aircraft owner, encouraged the airport committee to increase the use of the airport by developing the fuel farm. David Morris who said he was speaking on behalf of a flying club that had been flying out of the county airport for forty years echoed the same sentiment. He told the committee, "Basically all we need is a card reader. Basically the fuel farm is already in place."

Commissioner John Metz, who was acting as chairman of the committee in the absence of Stacy Vaughan, said it was his understanding there was a grant which would fully fund everything needed to make the airport ready to begin selling

fuel. Commissioner Linda Kimbrell said that this was her understanding also. She was agreed this would be looked at quickly. That cost is estimated to be \$10,000. The fuel pumps will be installed and service and open around the clock.

Mayor Greer stressed the positive impact of the airport on Surgoinsville business, even in attracting residents to the town. Commissioner Freeman stressed the necessity of a viable airport for the entire county's industrial and economic development.

The budget and finance committee was unable to act on any of the recommendations of the committee due to lack of a quorum. Because the July meeting of the commission was cancelled, it was agreed a called meeting would be held in September to get approval to match the grant before it expires.

As the meeting was ending, Commissioner Hughes asked for the display of American and Tennessee flags at the airport. Hughes said, "It is the only I have seen across the country which does not fly the colors." Hughes requested a flagpole and proper lighting. Proper etiquette requires it be lighted and displayed after dark.

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overall initiative to excel at the business of producing safe water for its customers.

The Lakeview Utility District of Hawkins County Tennessee placed the Athowominee Regional Water Treatment Plant in full operation June 24, 2011, the culmination of more than 14 years of planning, training, design and construction of six major water system improvement projects by the Lakeview Utility District. The total cost of these projects, funded by the USDA Rural Development Agency, was approximately \$8.7 million.

Officials with the Lakeview Utility District said before constructing the Athowominee water treatment plant, the district was faced with spiraling increased water purchase costs, TDEC Director's orders, notice of violations and fines due to not being able to meet drinking water quality regulations. They said it was primarily due to the quality of the purchased water for the system. In addition there were water usage restrictions from the "parent" system and internal water outage problems due to the "tree" design of the district's system.

By placing the water treatment plant in

the middle of the system, multiple connections installed within the system and development of new water sources, the previous deficiencies are part of the past.

In addition, Lakeview's system was designed to be able to interconnections with several surrounding water systems as backups to or in order to maintain water service during emergencies or droughts.

The Athowominee Water Treatment Plant follows the tradition of Lakeview Pressmen's Home Water Treatment Plant in the recognition of the history of Hawkins County. Native Americans such as the Cherokee and Shawnee used local trails created by herds of buffalo which once roamed the region. They call this path the Athowominee, which translates as "Path of the Armed Warriors." The Lakeview Utility District says Athowominee has more than a path, road or trail. It has changed to an idea, a direction, a belief that is instinctual and indefinite. Officially, the Lakeview Utility District has taken heart and is looking ahead, ready for the future of Hawkins County.

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countywide referendum for the entire county, and for the cities of Mt. Carmel and Rogersville. The Rogersville petitions, unlike the others, include package stores. Commissioner John Metz says, "Creating the proper environment for retail growth can add to other successes. Each new retail business brings in sales tax revenue, property tax revenue, personal property tax revenue, and new jobs. Each individual chooses where he spends his money. Unfortunately consumer choice is quite limited in Hawkins County. Creating more consumer choice is what this initiative is all about. We may not be able to control whether or not a new industry comes to the county, but we can control where we spend our personal income."

In his first term on the commission

Metz has been vocal about protecting property owners out from under the burdens. He told *Hawkins Today* he likes to be sure that residents over fixed incomes are aware that the program operates under the Property Relief Act that they can apply.

The program is funded by the state and by the county. He said that it makes their advantage to fill out the paperwork to see if they can qualify.

Advocates of the Retail and Restaurant Initiative point to all the lost jobs going out to restaurants and other establishments in adjoining counties. Metz said, "When we spend our money out of county, we are helping other counties build roads, bridges and schools. It should be our goal to do all we can to make sure that money stays here."

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venues, bars and the like from operating within residential neighborhoods."

Despite the fact the county currently has less control in these matters than do any of the towns, some commissioners remain adamant against any sort of regulation. Metz stated that this resolution would require the "yes" vote of 14 of the 21 commissioners and any action taken once the resolution has passed also will require 14 votes. County Attorney Jim Phillips has explained to the commission

that the requirement is 14 votes, not two thirds of those present.

Some commissioners intend to be proactive in economic development because neither Hawkins County nor any of its towns have a paid economic developer. Commissioner Virgil Jones has said, "We have to bring in additional business and additional money. This resolution will be reintroduced at the next meeting of the Hawkins County Commission Monday, August 27."



Photos by Sarah McCarty
The original Dollywood sketch.



Caswell's home is a piece art, fashioned after a Cracker Barrel restaurant.

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Parton's Dollywood theme park. Caswell recently found some of his original sketches for the logo and framed them along with finished pictures of the design.

In 1995, the company he worked for was sold.

"I've been on my own since '95 and I've done all right by myself," Caswell says. "I've worked every day."

His work all begins in what he calls his "workroom," a back room in his Rogersville house—also a work of art. Caswell modeled his home after the old style Cracker Barrel restaurant, complete with rocking chairs on the porch. Throughout his home, his art covers the walls. In addition to his paintings, decorations include one-of-a-kind works such as adding his own artwork to the face of a clock he bought or painting old-timey refrigerators that he uses to hold art supplies and some of his 200 to 300 pencil drawings.

Born in Rogersville in 1943, Caswell is known around the region for his detailed drawings and paintings, often of 1960s-era cars. He calls it hotrod art. He's also done custom automotive work, including flame work on a car that D.A.R.E. used in its presentation to students. Last week his work was shown in Kingsport as part of a Fun Fest event. He's also designed posters for events around the region. In 2007 he designed a license plate for Rogersville and a few later he designed and painted a sign for the restored Hale Springs Inn.

But, Caswell's T-shirt designs have been a major part of his repertoire since the beginning.

"Paintings weren't selling worth a dime but I found I could sell a little idea for a T shirt pretty cheap and maybe get a little royalty off of the shirt," Caswell says. One of his first shirt design projects dates back nearly 30 years ago when he and a friend created and sold a shirt commemorating Rogersville's Heritage Days festival. Since then, he has designed a shirt for the

event almost every year.

Now, he's also received recognition for designing shirts for the Tomato Festival in neighboring Grainger County. Caswell says he knew the shirt printer and she called him about five years ago to see if he would try to design the shirt.

"I did and they sold out. So the next thing I know, they called me again the next year, and then again the next year," Caswell says.

He says the hardest part of doing a design is coming up with the idea. He says his designs, which are all hand-drawn, are such an important component to his work because he "pulls them out of my head instead of off a computer."

"Once you get the idea, it ain't too bad. It's got to look good to me too. One man's ceiling is another man's floor and you don't always please everybody," he says.

However, for the past two years, Caswell says he's tried to please more people with his Tomato Festival designs, particularly the guys.

"Sometimes the guys don't buy shirts that's got a tomato on it so I started putting a tractor or some kind of mechanical aspect to the shirt and the guys started buying it."

This year's shirt, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the festival, features a tomato warehouse with an Oliver tractor, one of the oldest brands of tractor.

"It looks good setting there and it's pulling a big bunch of tomatoes in off the field, and I usually try to put some of the lake and the fields in the background if I can."

He's already started thinking a little bit about a design for next year, mentioning he might go a new route and draw a sliced up tomato and a pocketknife.

"There is just so much you can do with a tomato. I don't know what I'm going to do next year to top this year, but I'll come up with something to just blow their doors off."