

The Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy was asked to create two research products as part of the “Knox County One Question” initiative. Thanks to generous support from the Seven Islands Foundation, the Center has assembled a team to complete the following reports. First is an overview or “snapshot” of local government functions, structures, and processes that is attached. Second is a more detailed report on best practices in governmental institutions in similar communities around the nation that will be completed by August 1 of this year.

The attached snapshot of local governance is intended to provide the basic facts on how local governments work in our community. Knox County, Knoxville, and Farragut are all included in this overview. The Baker Center research team has compiled a great deal of information on functions, structure, elections, and responsibilities of office holders. We believe this will serve as an excellent primer for members of the public attending the “Knox County One Question” meetings that commence on May 14.

Citizens have the opportunity to reshape local government

BY JOE JOHNSON

During the past four months, considerable attention has been centered on our Knox County government because of the historic Tennessee Supreme Court decision in the case of Jordan vs. Knox County and actions on term limits, employment practices, and appointment processes. Citizens have a keen interest in the organization, functions, and processes of Knox



County government. The Jordan vs. Knox County decision gives the people of Knox County the authority to shape and reshape their government in a fashion approved by the people. Knox County citizens have a historic opportunity to take time to get better acquainted with what now exists in county government and to explore whether it is in ideal form and fashion or whether it should be changed by vote of residents of Knox County.

Accordingly, with these points in mind, a group of Knox County citizens from across the county came together to form Knox County One Question to address the question:

“What Changes, If Any, Do the Citizens Want to Make to the Form or Structure of Knox County Government?”

To aid citizens in coming to informed opinions, we engaged the Baker Center of Public Policy at the University of Tennessee to give us a snapshot of the current structures of governments in Knox County. Furthermore, the Baker Center will conduct a best practices research project to see how other governments address their government structure and function and if some of those might be a good fit for Knox County.

You will find in today's News Sentinel a chart showing the structure of the local governments in Knox County. Take a look at it and see if you think we can do something better or if all is well with you. You may think we need to address certain issues, such as nepotism or election cycles. You may see some duplication of services, offices that should be made elective, or offices that should be made appointive. You may think everything is as it should be and no changes are needed. The point is you, the citizens, have an historic opportunity to weigh in on these matters.

Don't let this opportunity pass without your voice being heard. Some people might think we have an agenda, but our agenda will be set by what citizens tell us. You have an opportunity to make your concerns, frustrations, questions, or happiness a part of a final report to the people of Knox County by the Knox County One Question organization. Come out and participate in a public, democratic process.

We hope to see you there.

PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS

Monday, May 14, 7-9 P.M.

Halls High School
4321 E. Emory Road

Tuesday, May 15, 7-9 P.M.

Bearden High School
8352 Kingston Pike

Thursday, May 17, 7-9 P.M.

Carter High School
210 N. Carter School Rd.

Monday, May 21, 7-9 P.M.

South Doyle Middle School
3900 Decatur Dr.

Tuesday, May 22, 7-9 P.M.

Fulton High School
2509 N. Broadway

For further information visit www.knoxcountyyonequestion.org.

WHO DOES WHAT?

GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES

Local government performs numerous functions and is responsible for providing a wide array of public goods and services. The State of Tennessee established three major political subdivisions constituting local government within Knox County: Knox County, the City of Knoxville, and the Town of Farragut. These jurisdictions exercise such authority and responsibility as is provided to them by the State of Tennessee in the State Constitution and the acts of the General Assembly.

This graphic summarizes the major functions and services provided directly and indirectly by local government in Knox County. Not all public services are directly provided by government, sometimes public funds are delivered by private vendors by franchise or contract. Occasionally, governments provide the service to the public in a cooperative venture through intergovernmental agreements. Certain specialized services are provided by organizations called special districts, with service areas that cross the jurisdictional boundaries of Knox County, Knoxville, and Farragut.

KNOX COUNTY GOVERNMENT

FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES BY JURISDICTION

	Knox County	City of Knoxville	Town of Farragut
General Government Administration	✓	✓	✓
Record Keeping			
Birth/Marriage/Death/Certificates	✓		
Registration of Deeds	✓		
Public Meetings & Other Records	✓	✓	✓
Revenue Sources			
Sales Taxes	✓	✓	✓
Property Tax	✓	✓	✓
Miscellaneous Taxes, Fees and Fines	✓	✓	✓
Administration of Justice			
Court of Limited Jurisdiction (traffic and ordinance violations)	✓	✓	✓
Court of Limited Jurisdiction (misdemeanors; minor civil suits)	✓		
Court of General Jurisdiction (civil and criminal cases)	✓		
Juvenile Court	✓		
Prosecutor's office	✓		
Public defender office	✓		
Probation Services	✓		
Law Enforcement & Corrections			
Law Enforcement	✓	✓	
Jails	✓		
Codes Enforcement	✓	✓	✓
Business Licensure & Regulation	✓	✓	✓
Animal Protection and Control			
Animal Shelter & Adoption Services	◆	◆	
Animal Control	✓	✓	
Economic & Community Development			
Economic Development	■	■	■
Community Development	✓	✓	✓
Neighborhood Outreach	✓	✓	✓
Public Education (K-12)	✓		
Emergency Services			
Ambulance & Rescue	●	■	●
11 Emergency Service	▼	▼	▼
Emergency Management	▼	▼	▼
Fire Protection	●	✓	●
Parks & Recreation	✓	✓	✓
Libraries	✓		
Planning & Zoning			
Land Use Planning and Regulation	✓	✓	✓
Subdivision regulation	✓	✓	✓
Sign Regulations	✓	✓	✓
Engineering & Public Works			
Street/Road Maintenance	✓	✓	✓
Stormwater Management	✓	✓	✓
Solid Waste Management			
Waste Collection	●	✓	●
Waste Disposal	✓	✓	✓
Waste Recycling	✓	✓	●
Environmental Protection			
Air Quality	✓		
Environmental Codes Enforcement	✓	✓	✓
Utilities			
Water	▲	▲	▲
Sanitary Sewer	▲	▲	▲
Electricity	▲	▲	▲
Natural Gas	▲	▲	▲
Cable services	●	●	●
Public Transportation		✓	
Arts, Culture and Entertainment	◆	✓	✓
Historic Preservation	✓	✓	
Social Services			
Public Housing	✓	✓	
Senior Services	✓	✓	
Veteran Services	✓		
Public Health	✓		
Miscellaneous Services			
Leaf and Bush Pickup		✓	●
Street Sweeping		✓	■
Street Lights		✓	✓

CHART KEY

- ✓ Government provides service directly
- ▼ Function performed jointly by intergovernmental agency
- Government pays for service provided by private contractor
- ◆ Service provided by nonprofit organization supported by government
- Service provided by private company on subscription basis
- ▲ Service provided by public utility company/special district

Sources: Shirley R. Keller, Knox County Governments (League of Women Voters of Knoxville and Knox County, 1998); Websites for Knox County, City of Knoxville, and Town of Farragut; Interviews with local public officials in each jurisdiction.

Knox County One Question

KNOX COUNTY



WHO DO WE ELECT?

Offices Elected by Voters in Knox County

Voters elect a total of fifty-five (55) public officials to Knox County Government. A number of these officials are elected to executive offices and are responsible to citizens for the conduct of the business in their office.

They supervise numerous other subordinate officials within these offices. Judicial officers and the Judges of the Courts in Knox County are also elected. In addition to electing Knox County officials, voters living within the city limits of Knoxville or the Town of Farragut elect municipal officers.

HOW AND WHEN DO WE VOTE?

Basic Election Information

Candidates for public office in Knox County run with party labels; elections are partisan with the exception of the school board. Candidates in Knoxville and Farragut run without party labels; elections are nonpartisan. Legislative and executive officials in all jurisdictions serve four (4) year terms. County judicial officers and judges of the courts have eight (8) year terms.

The election cycle varies depending on the jurisdiction and the office.

On Jan. 12, 2007, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that eight of the County Commissioners, the Clerk, Trustee, Register of Deeds, and Sheriff who were elected in 2006 were ineligible to serve due to term limits imposed by the County Charter. Subsequently, the County Commission appointed individuals to serve in these offices until the next election, which occurs in 2008. In 2008, voters choose among candidates for these offices who will then serve until the 2010 election.

KNOX COUNTY VOTERS ELECT

(55 PUBLIC OFFICIALS)

Legislative	Executive	Justice Administration
Partisan (Commissioners) Non-partisan (School Board) 4-Year Terms 28-Officials	Partisan 4-Year Terms 7-Officials	Partisan Terms Vary 20-Officials
■ Commission (19-Members) 2-Elected from 8 Districts 3-Elected from the 5th District	■ Mayor ■ Clerk ■ Trustee ■ Property Assessor ■ Register of Deeds ■ Law Director ■ Sheriff	■ Circuit Court Clerk (4-Year Term) ■ Criminal Court Clerk (4-Year Term) ■ Attorney General (8-Year Term) ■ Public Defender (8-Year Term) ■ Judges of the Courts (8-Year Terms) Circuit Court (4-Judges) General Sessions Court (5-Judges) Criminal Court (3-Judges) Chancery Court (3-Judges) Juvenile Court (1-Judge)
■ School Board (9-Members) 9-Districts X 1-Per District		

WHAT DO ELECTED OFFICIALS DO?

Duties of Elected Officials

Those elected to serve the public in Knox County, Knoxville, and Farragut perform a wide variety of important duties. These range from the very general, basic policy making and administration as is done by legislative bodies and executives—to the very particular, the collection of specific fees and taxes. In Knox County elected county and judicial officials are administratively autonomous. The salaries for those working in several County administrative and court offices are paid from the fees received for the services they provide. That is why these are commonly called fee offices.

DUTIES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN KNOX COUNTY

County Commissioners (19): The legislative body for Knox County

- Adopt ordinances and resolutions governing the conduct and affairs of residents
- Create executive departments and divisions within the County Executive
- Approve the County budget and set the property tax rate; review and approve the Knox County School system budget and property tax rate for education
- Approve the issuance of bonds or other indebtedness to finance capital improvements projects
- Adopt resolutions authorizing the borrowing of monies by various debt instruments or relating to subject matter of either a special or temporary nature
- Approve proposals for roads in approved subdivisions, the sale of county property, and condemnation of property for public welfare
- Consider and approve general and specific plans and ordinances prepared by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, as well as building regulations and other ordinances that promote public welfare
- Appoint members of the Commission to serve on the County Beer Board and the County Pension and Retirement Board
- Hold public meetings, gather information, subpoena, witness and investigate allegations of violation of the County Charter, ordinances or emergency ordinances.

Members of the Board of Education (9):

- Set operational policy for the County school system
- Prepare the budget for the school system and submit it to the County Mayor
- Appoint and can remove the Superintendent of Schools to serve as the school systems administrative officer

The County Mayor: The chief executive of Knox County Government

- Responsible for the exercising of all executive and administrative functions of the County Government
- Administers, supervises and controls the county departments and agencies
- Appoints department heads subject to approval of the County Commission
- Serves as a non-voting ex-officio member of the County Commission
- May veto ordinances, resolutions, and

specific budget items adopted by the County Commission—subject to an override by the Commission

- Serves as the accounting officer, general agent and chief fiscal officer of the county
- Examines all contracts, orders and other documents incurring financial obligation by the county and assures the availability of funds to meet these obligations
- Prepares budgets and financial reports, including a consolidated county budget for the approval of the County Commission
- Examines the accounts, records and operations of county departments, offices and agencies
- Makes regular reports to the County Commission on county affairs and keeps the Commission appraised of the county's financial condition and needs

The County Trustee: The custodian of Knox County funds

- Applies the tax rates set by the County Commission to individual properties
- Prepares and mails county property tax bills
- Collects taxes when due
- Receives fees for each transaction to defray salaries and other office costs—fees gathered in excess of salaries and costs are transferred to the County General Fund

The County Clerk:

- Keeps the official minutes and records of the County Commission
- Maintains marriage records and automobile titles and collects taxes for automobile sales and business taxes for the State Department of Revenue
- Issues permits such as vehicle, game, and fishing licenses
- Collects business and hotel/motel taxes
- Receives fees for each transaction to defray salaries and other office costs—fees gathered in excess of salaries and costs are transferred to the County General Fund

The County Register of Deeds:

- Records and maintains records of deeds, mortgages and other legal papers relating to land and personal property within Knox County
- Receives fees for each transaction to defray

See **QUESTION on B5**

