



**Honorable Jimmy Haley
Warren County Executive
State of the County Address
January 21, 2021**

Ladies and Gentlemen of the County Commission:

Let me begin with a quote from Winston Churchill...

To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years; to destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.

Certainly, these are uncertain times across our beloved nation. A year ago, we assembled in January with a robust economy and no fear of a looming pandemic that was about to strike. Much has changed over the last few months. We have been racked with both economic and political turmoil accompanied by the greatest health crisis in modern history. But...We have survived!

As Americans, we are resilient and always rise to a challenge. It is what defines us as a nation. As Tennessee Volunteers, we understand what rolling up our sleeves and helping others is all about. As Warren County Pioneers, we embrace the frontier spirit of survival and self-reliance. These are the legacies of our forefathers. Through all our previous wars, depressions, and pandemics, we survived! Why, because that is who we are and how our democracy functions. It is what sustains us through the worst of times and the best of times.

As we all acknowledge, Warren County is blessed with a remarkable environment, strong work ethic and amazing residents who take pride in our community and its success. Our people define who we are...as well as where we are going.

As a county, we continue to move toward a greater tomorrow for all of us...especially our children. They are undoubtedly the greatest resource we have and the best investment we can make for our future. The TN General Assembly convened today to begin a special session just to address schools and how best to serve the needs of our students during this COVID-19 Crisis.

The Pandemic has been a challenge, but county efforts to mitigate and contain the virus have shown beneficial...We have kept our doors of government open, our employees safe and all essential services operational. Our community has endured throughout the health care crisis.

To quote Churchill again...it is not enough to do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required!

So despite the odds, the crisis has led to opportunity and still much has been accomplished over the 871 days of this administration.

Let us celebrate some of our successes over the last year:

We have invested in criminal justice reform.

- After an ambitious Plan of Action for the WC Jail, the TCI Board granted full accreditation for the first time in our history.
- Continued sentencing reduction programs to address recidivism and inmate populations.
- Moved through all the ESG upgrades to make the Jail code compliant.
- Hired additional Correctional Officers to safely facilitate jail operations.
- Approved Behavioral Health contracts with Volunteer/Cheer Mental Health to provide counseling and assessment services for inmate populations.
- Implemented Three Star Grant Snap On Tools certification program for inmate training in partnership with the Department of Labor and TCAT.
- Continued the Hi-Set/GED diploma program also in partnership with Department of Labor and TCAT.
- Upland prepared bid documents for new program space, records room build out and safety mesh above the pod cages.
- Extended our inmate Trustee work program as a sentencing reduction measure.
- Expanded our successful Drug Recovery Court Program with the hiring of additional counselors...and transitioned their operations into a new space on the lower level of the Chamber of Commerce Building.
- Purchased new vehicles for the Sheriff's Department.

With the Governor's implementation of his own CJ Task Force and a Strategic Plan for reform, we expect new programs and additional funding opportunities to continue and for this initiative to be a main focus over the next two years.

Sheriff Myers and his staff have done a remarkable job and we hope to explore new opportunities in partnership with the State of Tennessee.

Funding law enforcement improvements has been critical to our success and we thank the Commission for all those budget considerations.

We have invested in schools and our children.

- Completed upgrades at Bobby Ray Elementary and finishing the much-needed facility improvements at West.
- Provided bonus pay for school staff using CARES ACT reimbursement savings.
- Began implementation of the \$1ml. GIVES Grant in partnership with TCAT.
- Supported collaborative programs through the TN Department of Labor with WCHS, TCAT, Motlow and TSU.
- Promoted the Citizens for Progress Scholarship Program in support of the Chamber and BRAC sponsorships.
- Provided mentors to the TN Achieves Program. (Thank you commissioners and elected officials who volunteered.)
- Welcomed a new Director of Schools, Grant Swallows, with continued support of the System's Strategic Plans.
- Continued the feeding programs for our school age children through the School System's Food Service Department. (WC has one of the highest child poverty and hunger rates in the state)
- Expanded counseling programs across all of our schools.

We all should give a shout out to the School Board, System Administrators, Department Directors and Employees, Principals, Teachers, Support Staff, Cafeteria and Food Service Personnel, Custodians, Office

Workers, SRO's and Bus Drivers who have adapted and adjusted to the challenges of COVID. The purchase of chrome books/lap tops in last year's budget went a long way to fill the needs of virtual learning over the last 11 months.

With the Governor's Special Session on Education in the General Assembly starting today, we expect a roll out of new programs and additional funding mechanisms to address learning losses and bring up test scores due to the pandemic closures. Commissioner Schwinn is scheduled to give an update on the session on my BLTV Livestream on the 26th.

We invested in fiscal responsibility and government efficiency.

- Passed a balanced budget and met all our fiscal needs without a property tax increase.
- Received a successful audit from the State.
- Completed the new assessment cycle with property values increasing over 15%.
- Collected over \$235,000 in deed registration fees with over 1700 real estate properties recorded.
- Implemented new finance procedures including electronic PO's and digital filing.
- Consolidated payroll employees from the School's Central Office into Finance as recommended by the State to be compliant with the 1981 Act.
- Contracted with Five Points to provide additional benefit support insurance package options for employees, plus HR support services.
- Completed a Finance Audit through Barrett Services to locate lost or uncollected revenue collections for Hall's Income Tax.
- Raised our bid limit for procurement to \$25,000.
- Continued all our Buy Board Cooperative Agreements and utilized existing State/Municipal/County bid contracts to speed up approval process.
- Expanded the sales of surplus property and "in house" Sharing across all departments.
- Scheduled a Spring On-Line Delinquent Tax Sale in partnership with the City of McMinnville.
- Made plans to close out our ESG energy savings program with a walk through and punch list of items to address with project manager John Waddle.
- Identified additional options to improve website, email communications, our Granicus management operations while working with an IT Specialist to address cyber-security protective measures for county government.
- Utilized ZOOM platform for meetings to protect the safety and well-being of all county officials and our employees.

We invested in buildings and infrastructure.

Kudos to the Building and Grounds Committee for taking a pro-active approach to facility concerns and needs after many years of neglect. I encourage all commission members to do walk throughs at your convenience or wait until we schedule one in the Spring to do a collective assessment of the progress made to our buildings.

- Completed roof, HVAC and LED lighting and water savings upgrades across county buildings.
- Began compiling a capital maintenance plan with a list of needs and concerns to be addressed.
- Partnered with FEMA to mitigate mold and repair water damage to the lower level of the Administration Building.
- Received funding through FEMA and NRCS for road and bridge repairs across the county, including Turner's Bend.

- Completed much needed upgrades at Animal Control, while exploring options for a build out and grade work to correct some facility deficiencies. I will be giving a report from David Grissom on some cost estimates.
- Made substantial improvements for the buildings at our convenient centers, including a new office space at the Belmont Central Station.
- Approved landscaping maintenance contract with the City for Courthouse grounds.
- Brought our Jail up to code with physical plant improvements.
- Received over \$1ml. from the Governor for possible capital improvement and other projects.

We invested in economic and workforce development.

- Received \$100,000 Displaced Worker Grant from the Dept of Labor.
- Opened discussions with the State on expanding workforce programs for TCAT and Motlow.
- Transitioned the American Job Center to the TCAT Campus.
- Landed Hotel/Retail project through the efforts of the IDB.
- IDB Secured the 200-acre Elam Site in Morrison for future industry expansion.
- Implemented a Plan of Action for our Agri-Tourism Task Force to market farms products across the state.
- Supported the MDFRC efforts to recruit new investment in downtown McMinnville.

We invested in quality of life.

- Received Census Grant to facilitate a complete count of county residents to secure our representation and qualify for additional federal and state funding.
- In partnership with the City of McMinnville, we were allotted a Dept of Health Build Grant to install repair stations and bike routes across the community.
- Thanks Hank Patton and staff for landscaping and holiday decorations at the Courthouse, which tied the whole downtown theme together this year.
- Initiated a CDBG for North Warren Fire Department to purchase new equipment.
- Discussed with developers an opportunity to expand affordable housing for working class residents.
- UCDD were granted funds to expand migrant housing in Morrison.
- Awarded a \$500,000 THDA Home Grant to make upgrades to substandard houses across the county.
- Supported our community non-profit agencies in their efforts to address poverty, hunger and child abuse.
- Made repairs and improvements at our local health department and purchased a covered pavilion with CARES ACT money to aid in drive thru testing and vaccine distribution.

Across all departments we could measure success.

- Trustee Bryant received approval for a drive thru window.
- Codes Director Thompson received accreditation to permit electrical inspections for county construction.
- Sanitation Director Roberts purchased a new garbage truck, applied for CARES ACT reimbursement for excess solid waste fees, built new office space at Belmont's Central Station, did convenient center building upgrades for employee safety.
- Election Commission and Director Davenport successfully and safely conducted Primary, General and National elections without any major incidents or challenges.

- Archivist Brown began scanning and inventorying vital records for the county.
- Finance Director Cotton transitioned into new space at the Admin Building.
- EMA Director Cunningham secured TEMA funded COVID PPE supplies for all local governments and their departments.
- EMS received a new ambulance and did HVAC upgrades to the Main Station.
- Animal Control received accreditation from the State and has completed most of the internal and external improvements while exploring a future build out.
- Airport hired a new manager John Baugh who has shown interest in completing upgrades, including the maintenance hangar, at the facility grounds.
- Practical Solutions received HR contract to develop a new employee handbook for the county.
- Discussed consolidating county HR with that of the school system.
- County Commission adopted new policy plans drafted by the Special Legislative Committee.
- County received over \$600,000 in CARES ACT/COVID-related reimbursement dollars to cover any pandemic related expenses and for possible employee bonuses.
- Looked at several more grant opportunities that could be used for transitional housing.
- Pursued the Opioid Lawsuit with a possible settlement coming this year. Attorney Bratcher will be supplying a Resolution for the County to adopt in February if we wish to continue the suit.
- County Executive will continue to lobby for continued 911 Funding and additional TennCare reimbursements for our Ambulance Service.

In summation, it has been and amazing, but truly challenging last 12 months...

With 2020 behind us and a promising new year ahead, your continued support and teamwork approach will create endless possibilities.

No one knows the future of COVID, but if we focus on positives outcomes, we will stay ahead of the curve. When the economy rebounds, we will be ready for the next opportunity. The State's new initiatives are aimed at rural communities just like us. Our successful track record has been noted and we are poised to benefit from future investments from the State.

I will be working with all our stakeholders to establish more partnerships and collaborative strategies. I will be asking the Chamber and MYP to help us move forward with our County Strategic Plan funded by Three Star. With new tourism opportunities on the horizon, a partnership with the City and the TDB would endorse new marketing projects across the community. Passing an Air BnB tax or earmarking a portion of the Hotel/Motel Tax aimed at funding tourism would secure an investment in the State's new marketing plan.

As County Executive, I have shared my vision with the Commission, but would emphasize the importance of:

- **Exploring employee pay and benefit packages**
- **Expanding workforce programs within the criminal justice system**
- **Installing security in our buildings for employee safety**
- **Developing a 5- and 10-year capital improvement plan for all facilities**
- **Sanitation expansion and Fairgrounds site**
- **Exploring location for new WCACAC**
- **Landscaping upgrades at County Buildings**
- **Continuing to fund education and workforce development**
- **Building a gym for West Elementary**
- **Securing storage for county records**

- Scanning and digitalizing all available county records...including indexing and cloud storage
- Looking at recodifying our county resolutions and private acts
- Adopting an Employee Handbook and HR Policy Manual
- Repairing gutters at Admin Building
- Paving parking lot at Admin Building
- Extending hours of Veterans Service officer
- Hiring an IT Manager
- Completing the build out and program space at the jail
- Funding our support agencies
- Working together as a team

Let me use another quote from Churchill...

I know in my heart that man is good...that what is right always eventually triumphs...and there is purpose and worth to each and every life.

Let us all rally to the cause of changing lives...one day at a time.

We salute all our county employees, who regardless of the pandemic, have rallied to sustain our operations.

They all enjoyed the Holiday Breakfast and appreciated your support and participation.

Our employees continue to have hope and despite the obstacles, morale is high.

Your support is crucial to that winning formula.

Warren County is surely blessed with proven leadership and those who have the tools to build a better tomorrow for all our residents. Our citizens expect no less.

To put it simply as Ronald Reagan once said...

There are no constraints on the human mind; no wall around the human spirit; no barriers to our progress...except those we ourselves erect.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen of the Warren County Commission, all officials and residents of this blessed community, the State of the County is sound. Progress is being made. The future looks bright.

Here's hoping for a 2021 that delivers all it takes to carry our success to a new level. Thank you for your leadership and service to all 45,000 residents of Warren County.

Thank you and God Bless America.

County Executive Jimmy Haley