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Monday, January 12, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

### Athens City Council to Discuss Downtown Brewery Zoning, Grants at Jan. 12 Work Session



The Athens City Council will hold a work session Monday, Jan. 12, at 5 p.m. in the City Hall Conference Room to discuss a wide range of policy, financial, and planning matters, including potential zoning changes that could allow breweries downtown.

A key topic will be the possible amendment of city zoning regulations to permit brewpubs, microbreweries, taprooms, and similar establishments in the B-2 Central Business District and B-3 Intensive Business District. The discussion follows an inquiry from an established Knoxville brewery interested in opening a production brewery and taproom in downtown Athens. Current zoning restricts alcohol manufacturing to heavy industrial districts, effectively excluding downtown locations.

Council members will also hear a presentation from Matt Altobelli, executive director of the Tennessee Craft Brewers Guild, as part of the discussion on brewery-related zoning.

Additional items on the agenda include the continuation of HHM as city auditors for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026; resolutions declaring Athens Flood Awareness Week; and authorizing grant applications related to historical projects, transportation improvements, and emergency rescue equipment.

Other discussion items include proposed fee changes for baseball and softball field rentals, awarding a bid to renovate the Regional Park house into Parks and Recreation offices, citizen comment rules, and review of a city judge application.

Mayor and councilmember items will address recycling pickup options, the condition of City Hall, and a proposed graffiti ordinance. The session will also include appointments to boards and committees, including the Athens Municipal Regional Planning Commission.

No formal votes are held during the work session, but discussions will help shape future council actions.



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Athens, Tennessee

## Series of Small Earthquakes Recorded Near Etowah and Athens



A series of minor earthquakes were recorded in McMinn County and surrounding areas on Friday, Jan. 9, 2026, according to preliminary data from the U.S. Geological Survey and the Southeast U.S. Seismic Network.

The seismic activity included three small earthquakes ranging in magnitude from 1.9 to 2.0. Two of the events, both measuring magnitude 1.9, were centered approximately 4.4 miles east-northeast of Etowah and about 10 to 11 miles southeast of Athens, occurring at approximately 5:24 a.m. and 1:40 p.m. local time. A third earthquake, measuring magnitude 2.0, was recorded later that night at approximately 10:51 p.m., with an epicenter about 8.8 miles south-east of Etowah and 17.6 miles southeast of Athens.

uring magnitude 2.0, was recorded later that night at approximately 10:51 p.m., with an epicenter about 8.8 miles south-east of Etowah and 17.6 miles southeast of Athens.

All three earthquakes occurred at depths ranging from 11 to 17 kilometers. No damage or injuries were reported, and such low-magnitude earthquakes are typically not felt or cause minimal ground shaking.

The reports are considered preliminary and subject to revision as additional data is analyzed.

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Athens, Tennessee

## City of Athens Announces Second Round of Leaf Vacuum Season

The City of Athens Public Works Department will begin the second round of its Leaf Vacuum Season on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026.

Residents wishing to have leaves collected are asked to rake them three to five feet from the edge of the roadway. Leaves should not be placed in streets, drainage ditches, or on sidewalks, as this can create safety hazards and clog storm drains, potentially leading to flooding. In areas with sidewalks, leaves should be placed behind the sidewalk for collection.

Public Works officials also caution residents not to place leaves on or around obstacles such as mailboxes, trees, fences, poles, yard decorations, water meter lids, or vehicles. Leaf piles near obstructions will not be collected to prevent damage to property or equipment.

Residents can find out which zone leaf crews are currently servicing by calling 423-744-2745 or visiting the Public Works section of the city's website. A leaf collection map is also available online.

For quicker service, residents are encouraged to bag leaves for pickup on regular junk routes. Mulching leaves with a lawn mower or composting them for use in gardens and flowerbeds are also recommended alternatives.

For additional information, residents may contact the Athens Public Works Department at 423-744-2745.

## Community News You Can Use

- The Athens-McMinn Family YMCA is offering Swing Dance classes beginning on January 12<sup>th</sup> from 6:46-8:45 pm. Classes are on the first and third Mondays each month. A fee may apply. No experience or dance partner is required. Wear dance shoes or comfortable tennis shoes. Please let us know that you are coming, sign up at:  
<https://www.athensmcminnymca.org/calendar>
- The McMinn County Board of Education will meet in Regular Session on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at the McMinn County Center for Educational Excellence.
- The E.G. Fisher Noon Book Club is meeting this Wednesday, Jan. 14 at noon. The book to be discussed is "Flash Boys" by Michael Lewis and the discussion will be led by Stephen Dick. The Friends of the Library will provide a light lunch.
- The McMinn County High School Hall of Fame Committee is now accepting nominations for the Sports Hall of Fame. Nomination forms are available online. Completed forms can be mailed to McMinn County Hall of Fame, PO Box 373, Athens, TN 37371 or dropped off at McMinn County High School with ATTN to Jake Roberts. Deadline is March 31.

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Monday, Jan. 12, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

### January 8, 2026

**Chelsea Siler**, 30 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$2,000.

**Carrie Arden**, 46 of Niota, charged with child support.

**Ashland Lanier**, 24 of Harrison, charged with driving on a revoked license, Bond \$1,000.

**Stephen Hubbard**, 42 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for driving on a revoked license, Bond \$201.

**Jacasia Simpson**, 22 of Cleveland, charged with violation of probation for possession of paraphernalia, Bond \$1,300.

**Ezra Markel**, 24 of Cleveland, charged with state violation of probation, 2 counts of assault, one charge against a first responder, and one charge against a law enforcement officer, and attempted escape, Bond \$14,300.

**Shannon Huff**, 55 of Englewood, charged with failure to appear in Monroe County.

### January 9, 2026

**Laura Bowers**, 42 of Athens, charged with shoplifting, and theft of property, Bond \$1,000.

**Jeffrey Baker**, 56 of Athens, charged with DUI, second offense, in violation of implied consent law, Bond \$1,000.

**Jessica Sarmento**, 40 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for identity theft, Bond \$5,000.

**Matthew Milligan**, 24 of Athens, charged with domestic assault, Bond \$1,000.

**James Scroggs**, 34 of Etowah, charged with public intoxication, Bond \$1,500.

**Randall McDonald**, 58 of Athens, charged with DUI, and driving on a revoked license.

**Jamie Beshears**, 52 of Riceville, charged with four counts of domestic assault, and two counts of child abuse or neglect, violent, Bond \$14,000.

Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered using public sources.

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**Monday, Jan. 12, 2026**

**Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5**

**Athens, Tennessee**

## Tennessee Unemployment Drops as Workforce Grows Ahead of Holidays

Tennessee entered the 2025 holiday season with a stronger workforce than the year before, according to new data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 3.6% in November 2025, down one-tenth of a percentage point from November 2024.

Nonfarm employment increased by 7,600 jobs over the month, led by gains in private education and health services, other services, and administrative and support services. Compared to a year earlier, Tennessee added 34,800 nonfarm jobs, with the largest increases in professional and business services, trade, transportation and utilities, and leisure and hospitality.


Most counties reported low unemployment, with 87 of the state's 95 counties below 5%. Williamson County had the lowest rate at 2.9%, while Perry County recorded the highest at 6%. Pickett, Meigs, and Grundy counties followed with the next highest jobless rates.


## Obituaries

**James Roy "Junior" Brown**, 96 of Meigs County, passed away on Thursday, January 8. He was retired from Pillsbury in Chattanooga. Junior was an avid car trader and loved Ford Rangers. He was the oldest founding member of the Meigs County Coon Club. There will be no formal services at this time. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of James Roy "Junior" Brown.

**We encourage you to e-mail community events, church news, sports results or other items of interest for possible use in the Morning Fax. If you take a newsworthy photograph, send it to: [wyxiradio@gmail.com](mailto:wyxiradio@gmail.com)**

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