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Monday, February 09, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Second Man Sought After Multi-County Chase Linked to Athens Stabbing Investigation



DAVID R. CRUZ

THOMAS L. BURNS

Law enforcement agencies across multiple counties are searching for a second suspect following a pursuit tied to the investigation of a January stabbing in Athens.

Police say the case began Thursday, Jan. 22, when **David Rodriguez Cruz** allegedly stabbed a person at a residence in Athens and fled the scene. The victim, whose identity has not been released, was hospitalized. Cruz has since been charged with attempted first-degree murder and is considered armed and dangerous. Authorities say he was last seen driving a silver 2005 Toyota Highlander with North Carolina license plate **LBK-9152**.

The investigation expanded Wednesday, Feb. 4, when officers with the Cleveland Police Department spotted **41-year-old Larry Thomas Burns** speaking with an associate of Cruz near the Kinser Road area off Highway 64. Officers attempted to make contact and request identification, but police say Burns put his vehicle in reverse and accelerated toward officers, forcing them to move out of the way.

Burns then fled eastbound on Highway 64 into Polk County. Deputies with the Polk County Sheriff's Office and troopers with the Tennessee Highway Patrol joined the pursuit but were unable to catch the suspect. His vehicle was later found abandoned near the 2400 block of Parksville Road in Benton. Police believe Burns, along with any other occupants, fled the area on foot.

Authorities have since identified Burns as the driver and say he is now wanted on multiple felony charges, including **three counts of aggravated assault on law enforcement officers and felony evading arrest**. He is also wanted on separate felony warrants out of Bradley County for **theft over \$2,500**. The whereabouts of both Burns and Cruz remain unknown. While police have not confirmed a direct connection between the two men, authorities say the searches are related and stem from the same ongoing investigation.

Anyone with information regarding either suspect is urged to contact 911 immediately. Officials warn the public not to approach either individual.

Source: [Local 3 News](#)

• Monday & Tuesday - Closed

• Wednesday-Decatur at the Boys and Girls Club-10:30-2

• Thursday-Athens Family Dollar 10:30 - 2

• Friday-Sweetwater-Little Drugs-10:30 - 2:30


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Monday, Feb. 09, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2

Athens, Tennessee

Community News You Can Use

Nominations Open for Young Man and Woman of the Year

- Police have issued an alert for a missing 26-year old Hispanic woman from Athens. Karen Martinez is blind in one eye, has mental health challenges and has short, black, curly hair. She was last seen in July of 2025 at the Pet-Sense in Athens with an unknown direction of travel. If you have any information about Karen's whereabouts, please contact the proper authorities.
- The City of Athens Public Works Department announces the following street closure extension. The area affected is **MAYFIELD LANE from Ingleside Avenue to Madison Avenue**. This closure was extended from Friday, February 6, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. until Monday, February 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The purpose of this closing is for Mayfield regional detention.
- If you are an alumni of E.H.S., and are interested in attending the last Etowah High School Decades Reunion on Saturday, June 14, 2025, at the L&N Depot from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, with Free Lunch served at 12:00 noon, please RSVP asap with your name and one guest to: E.H.S. Alumni Association, P.O. Box 24, Etowah, TN 37331 or by phone to 423-506-9097. Bring your own lawn chair!

Nominations are now being accepted for the Athens Area Young Man and Young Woman of the Year awards, sponsored by Tennessee Wesleyan University and to be presented during the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet on April 23.

Candidates must be 39 years of age or younger, with date of birth included on the application, and nominees for Young Woman of the Year should demonstrate leadership and contributions to community welfare.

Nomination forms are available by calling 423-746-5202, and completed nominations should be submitted to:

President's Office, Tennessee Wesleyan University,
204 East College Street
Athens, TN 37303

The deadline for Young Man of the Year nominations is Thursday, March 26, and the deadline for Young Woman of the Year nominations is Friday, March 27.

Source: Blake McCaslin, TWU

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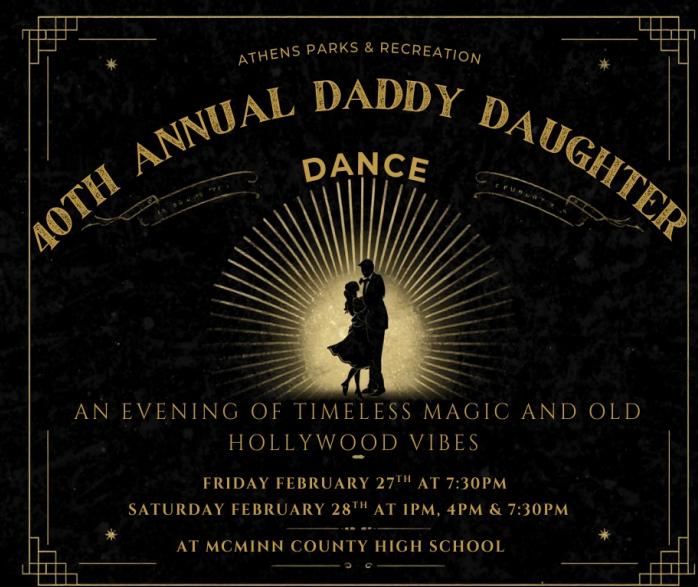
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Athens, Tennessee

Athens City Council to Hold Work Session Today



The Athens City Council will meet for a work session today; Monday, Feb. 9, at 5 p.m. in the City Hall Conference Room. The agenda includes discussion of purchasing a replacement vehicle for the Parks and Recreation Department using state contract pricing; awarding a bid to demolish six dilapidated residential structures; paving the Heritage Park parking lot; and several resolutions authorizing the city to apply for or accept grant funding for parks, trails, signage, highway safety, and fire department rescue services.

Council members will also discuss public comment rules and decorum, proposed amendments to the city's beer ordinance, a City-Whiting mediation update from the city attorney, and councilmember items, including Christmas lights at Regional Park. The meeting will also address vacancies on the Board of Adjustments and Appeals and the Historic Preservation Commission.

Authorities Searching for Stolen Hyundai Elantra in McMinn County

Authorities are searching for a stolen 2015 silver Hyundai Elantra reported taken from near County Road 504 in Englewood.

The vehicle has damage to the driver-side quarter panel and a dent on the front passenger side. Officers say the car may be occupied by three individuals, possibly two females and one male, including a 36-year-old woman named Mikayla Smith. An Athens city officer last spotted the vehicle traveling west on Highway 30 toward Etowah.

A possible residence connected to one of the occupants was mentioned, but no address has been confirmed.

Anyone with information is urged to contact local law enforcement.

Source: [CrimeRadar](#)

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Athens, Tennessee

“Hold Fast” Joins the Chamber



A ribbon cutting was celebrated recently for new Athens Area Chamber of Commerce member, Hold Fast Barber Shop, located at 913 N. Congress Parkway, Athens. Shown here are chamber and business representatives, family members and the staff and co-owners, Nathan Tullock and Mike Cardoso, of Hold Fast Barber Shop.

Source: Julie Simbeck, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

McMinn County Arrest Reports

February 02, 2026

Philip Goka, 33 of Madisonville, charged with DUI, driving on suspended license, schedule 4 xanax, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$12,000.

Jennifer Menina, 38 of Cleveland, charged with driving on a suspended license, Bond \$2,000.

Michael Wise, 54 of Ten Mile, charged with theft of property \$2,500 to \$10,000.

Robin Teague, 56 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for shoplifting, Bond \$2,000.

Gabriel Onby, 26 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for possession of paraphernalia, Bond \$1,441.90.

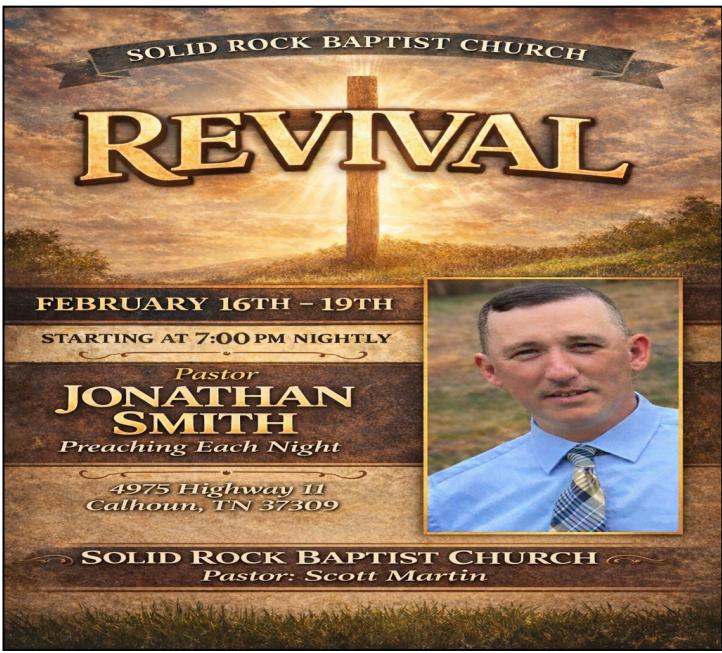
Borden Derrick, 72 of Etowah, charged with indecent exposure, and nonverbal harassment, Bond \$3,000.

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

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Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Jo Ann Sanders, 88, passed away during the morning of Friday, February 6. Survivors and services to be announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home & Cremation Service in charge of the arrangements.

Renate Anna Hohmann Richards, 81 of Athens, passed away, Wednesday February 4, at her residence. She was a native of Germany and resident of Athens for more than 20 years. She was a former employee of Hardees where she worked as the store manager before her retirement after 18 years of service. She loved animals, reading and shopping. There will be no formal services. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home in Athens is in charge of the arrangements.

Samantha E. Davis, 78 of Etowah, passed away on Saturday, February 7 at Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga. A proud graduate of Polk County High School in Benton, Samantha had a commendable career, being employed for many years at Athens Builders Supply and also providing her services to the Robinson family across Athens, Cleveland, and Charleston. Samantha found joy and solace in her faith as a member of Delano Baptist Church. Her church community was a source of support and companionship, and she cherished the relationships she built there. Visitation will be held on Monday, February 9 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Bordwine Funeral Home, located at 203 Ohio Ave, Etowah followed by a Funeral Service at 7:00 PM. Family and friends will assemble at Friendship Baptist Church Cemetery on February 10 for the 11:00 AM committal service. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

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