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Friday, July 24, 2026**Page 1****Athens, Tennessee**

Peoples Bank of East Tennessee Announces New Name: People First Bank

Peoples Bank of East Tennessee has officially announced it will change its name to People First Bank, with all public-facing updates and signage expected to be completed by October 5, 2026.

Bank leaders say the new name reflects both the institution's continued growth beyond East Tennessee—including expansion into North Georgia—and its long-standing mission of putting people at the center of every decision.

"We are transitioning from 'of East Tennessee' and choosing People First, like we always have," said Jeremy Callias, President. "Our new name is not a move away from who we are. It is a clearer reflection of who we have always been. This is more than a name change. It is a statement about what has always mattered most to us: people."

Callias emphasized that customers will continue to see the same familiar faces, receive the same local service, and visit the same locations they know and trust.

Founded in 1997 as Peoples Bank of Monroe County, the bank has grown from its Madisonville roots into a regional community bank serving customers across East Tennessee and North Georgia. Leaders say the words "of East Tennessee" no longer fully represent the communities the bank now serves.

The new name, People First Bank, was selected to highlight the bank's culture of relationships, trust, and community commitment. "Our new name does not just stand out. It stands for something," said Chris White, CEO and Chairman. "People First Bank will be more than a brand. It will be our continued commitment to our customers, our employees, our shareholders, and the communities we serve."

Beginning October 5, customers will start seeing the People First Bank name and logo on signage, digital platforms, marketing materials, and customer communications. Updates will roll out in phases, and both names may appear during the transition. No action is required from customers, and all accounts, services, and local banking relationships will continue as usual. *Click ad below for more info.*

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Friday, July 24, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Church News & Events

- **Celebrate Recovery** meets every **Tuesday** at 6:00pm at Woodward Ave. Church of God in Athens They also meet every **Thursday** at 6:00pm at Watts Bar Community Church in Decatur and Thursdays at 6:30pm at **Spirit City Church North Etowah**.
- **St. Mary's Legacy Clinic** offers free mobile medical care for the uninsured. Anyone who is medically uninsured is eligible to receive care. **St. Mary's Catholic Church (1291 E Madson Ave, Athens) is the McMinn County location and accepts patients every 3rd Thursday of the month.**
- Allen Memorial United Methodist Church will welcome **former pastors** to lead worship throughout July. The final pastor leading will be **Rev. Austin Meadows (July 26)**. All are invited to attend.
- Trinity United Methodist Church will host a one-day VBS on Saturday, July 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 100 E. College Street, Athens. Open to children ages 3 and up for drop-off, with a fun beach party theme to celebrate the back-to-school season. **See their ad on page 4.**
- The next Christian Men's Prayer Breakfast sponsored by New Hope Methodist Church will occur on Thursday, August 6 at 8 a.m. at Maddi Mae's Cafe in downtown Athens. This ecumenical prayer breakfast is open to all men of Christian faith (regardless of church affiliation) and those men who want to establish a relationship with Jesus. Please contact Marcus Guinn marcusguinn@gmail.com or call 423-507-7769 for more information.
- A special concert is taking place with the Etowah Town Band at Keith Memorial United Methodist Church this Sunday (7/26) at 5:00 p.m. The concert is free to the public and will be in the sanctuary at Keith Memorial UMC.

Community News You Can Use

- The McMinn County Election Commission will hold a called meeting Monday, July 27 at 5:00 p.m. in the Blue Room of the McMinn County Courthouse. The purpose of the meeting is to lock extra ballot boxes for Precinct 15.
- Athens Community Theatre will hold auditions for Arthur Miller's drama **"The Crucible"** on Sunday, July 26 at 2 p.m. and Monday, July 27 at 6 p.m. at The Arts Center. Director J. Brad McKenzie seeks a large cast of adults ages 18+, including one role for a young adult Black actor. Show dates are October 2–11, 2026. Participants should bring schedule conflicts for July 28–Oct. 11 and be prepared to read from the script.
- The next McMinn Area Resource Van Outing is scheduled for Thursday, July 30. Meet at the McMinn Sheriff's Office lobby at 8:00 a.m.; departure is by 8:30 and return by noon. Participants may bring agency materials for packets and submit client names/addresses for visits. RSVP directly to McMinn Co. Deputy Tony Allman at mcminnco430@gmail.com.

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Friday, July 24, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Athens City Council Advances Mural Project, Approves Funding at July 21 Meeting

The Athens City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, July 21, at City Hall, where members moved through a full agenda that included presentations, citizen comments, and several funding measures. Interim City Manager Bridget Roberts began by welcoming her new executive assistant, Missy White, and reminded the public that the groundbreaking for the new fire station will take place August 11 at 1:30 p.m.

Jennifer Shepherd of Patriot Memorial presented plans for a downtown mural on Glenn Whiting's wall, titled "McMinn County Answered the Call." The project is expected to cost about \$34,000, with completion anticipated by October 1, ahead of Pumpkin Town. Patriot Memorial is seeking donations, and the Council will consider funding through the hotel/motel tax fund. Police Chief Fred Schultz then honored Povey Carter with a certificate as part of the 2026 Chief's Award, recognizing her positive actions inside and outside the classroom. Parks and Recreation Director Matt Siniard followed with a recap of the July 4th and America 250 celebration at Regional Park, noting attendance of more than 8,000 inside the park and another 15,000 in surrounding lots, and thanked sponsors for their support.

During citizen comments, Glenn Whiting spoke on new business item E, stating that although he had often disagreed with Dr. Randall Dowling, he believed the Council was wrong not to share the reason for Dowling's termination.

Council unanimously approved the consent agenda, which included participation in the Judy Housley Safety Partners Matching Grant Program, roadway improvements, multiple professional services agreements with Kimley-Horn, construction materials testing for Fire Station #3, new municipal court software, police vehicles and equipment purchases, surplus property declaration, and participation in a fire equipment antitrust litigation class action lawsuit.

Under new business, Resolution 2026-18, authorizing reimbursement of up to \$15 million in municipal and AUB project expenditures, passed 4-1 with Councilmember Sherlin opposed. Funding for TDOT entrance improvements at Congress Parkway and Lee Drive was unanimously approved. The first reading of Ordinance 1159, establishing compensation for the mayor and councilmembers, passed 3-1-1, with Councilmember Eaton opposed and Duggan abstaining. The first reading of Ordinance 1160, rezoning property off Spruce Street from light industrial to medium density residential, passed unanimously. A letter of recommendation for Dr. Dowling passed 3-0-2, with Sherlin and Duggan abstaining. Review of the travel policy was dropped without discussion.

Reports from Community Development, Finance, Fire, and Police departments noted no significant updates, and the City Manager had no additional report. Citizen comments at the close of the meeting came from SOCM members, who spoke about the North City property. While opinions varied on its future use, all agreed it should be transformed for community benefit. The meeting adjourned after completion of the agenda. *Source: Simon Rhodes, City of Athens*



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Friday, July 24, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

July 15, 2026

Michaela Atkins, 44 of Madisonville, charged with forgery, Bond \$6,000.

Peyton Burnett, 23 of Decatur, charged with driving on a suspended license.

Brian Morgan, 18 of Athens, charged with simple possession of schedule 6 marijuana, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Brian Watson, 38, charged with interference with a 911 call, and domestic assault by intimidation.

Dustin White, 31 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for shoplifting, and restitution, Bond \$1,657.45

Aubrey King, 27 of Ten Mile, charged with violation of probation for public intoxication, and aggravated burglary, Bond \$41,000.

Angela Bishop, 39 of Athens, charged with child endangerment of a child under eight years old, domestic assault, and driving without due care, Bond \$20,000.

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

Athens to Break Ground on New Fire Station August 11

The City of Athens will break ground on its new fire station with a ceremonial golden shovel event on Tuesday, August 11, at 1:30 p.m. at the future site, 300 Elizabeth Street. City officials say the project represents a major investment in public safety and underscores Athens' commitment to delivering high-quality emergency services for residents and visitors.

The new facility will expand the Athens Fire Department's service area, improving response times and strengthening coverage for fires, medical emergencies, vehicle accidents, and other incidents. It will be staffed by nine firefighters, including three new positions approved in this year's budget, ensuring the station is fully equipped to protect lives and property.

Members of the Athens Fire Department, city leaders, project partners, and community members will gather to mark the start of construction, which is expected to serve the city for decades to come. Media representatives are invited to attend and will have the opportunity to speak with officials following the ceremony.

BENEFIT

For David & Shannon Self

Due to unforeseen health challenges, they are facing significant medical expenses and ongoing treatments

Cruise-In Food Auction

Bring your family and friends for an evening of great food, classic cars, and exciting auction items while helping support David and Shannon Self.

Saturday, July 25
2:00pm - 7:00pm

Englewood First Baptist Church
13 Church St., Englewood

All proceeds and donations from this event will help ease the financial burden for David and Shannon. Every donation, no matter the size, helps lighten the load and reminds them they are not alone on this journey.
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Friday, July 24, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Dolores Mynatt Reynolds, 91, of Englewood, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on July 21, 2026. A native of Red Bank, Tennessee, Dolores attended Tennessee Wesleyan College, where she was a proud member of the college's first full four-year graduating class in 1957. She was preceded in death by her husband, Hugh Reynolds. The family will receive friends on Saturday July 25 from 12:00 until 2:00 p.m. at Smith Funeral Home in Athens. A celebration of Dolores' life will follow at 2:00 p.m. in the chapel, with interment afterward at Chestnut Campground in Madisonville. [Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens](#) is in charge of arrangements.

Russell "Rusty" Eugene Grill, age 62, a native of Dayton, Ohio, and current resident of Athens, passed away on Wednesday, July 22, 2026. A Celebration of Life Service will be held at a later date. Family and friends are invited to sign the online registry at: [Obituary for Russell "Rusty" Eugene Grill | Ziegler Funeral Home](#). Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Russell "Rusty" Eugene Grill.

Betty K. Blair, 91 of Etowah, TN passed away on Thursday, July 23, 2026. A graveside service will be held at 11:00 a.m., Monday, July 27th at McMinn Memory Gardens with Rev. Jimmy Dunn Officiating. A full obituary will be posted soon. [Bordwine Funeral Home](#) is in charge of the arrangements.

Obituaries-continued

Jack L. Isbill, 84, of Athens, passed away on Monday, July 20. He served in the Army National Guard. In 1967 he began his career as an agent with National Life and Accident Insurance Company. Jack earned numerous honors and awards over his more than forty-year career. Jack retired as manager with AIG in 2009. He was a volunteer with the Boy Scouts of America. Jack spent many years as a member of McMahan Calvary Baptist Church and most recently Eastanallee Baptist Church. The family will receive friends from 1-3 PM Sunday in the chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. The funeral service will follow Sunday at 3:00 PM in the chapel. [Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home](#), is in charge of arrangements.

Nadine Walker, 78, of Athens, passed away on Monday, July 20. She attended J.L. Cook School and Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. She was a lover of good music and a great cook. Family will receive friends Saturday, July 25 at 12:00 noon with the funeral to immediately follow at 1:00 p.m. at [M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home & Cremation Service](#) with the interment at Hammonds Cemetery.



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