

# Oak Hill NEWS

Spring 2023

## From the Mayor's Desk

Dale Grimes—Mayor

**G**reetings Oak Hill Neighbors and Friends! We are moving into Spring, and I am sure all of us are looking forward to warmer weather! I am happy to have this opportunity to report to you again on some of the issues currently being addressed by the Board of Commissioners (“BOC”) and the Oak Hill City Government.



**City Finances.** The BOC has been carefully monitoring the City’s expenditures—and especially its revenues—as I have described in previous newsletters. With the steady beat of interest rate hikes and sustained inflation, two of our primary revenue sources—shared State and local sales taxes and building permit fees—seem particularly vulnerable. However, through January, both revenue streams were running ahead of budget, while expenses were less than the budget. In this regard, we have been very fortunate indeed. With the September hiring of our new bookkeeping firm, MG Group PC of Tullahoma, TN, our monthly financial statements have finally been brought current and our bank statements are being timely reconciled, so we have confidence in the numbers we are seeing.

**Garbage Fees.** Another aspect of our financial health concerns the municipal garbage service. With the new rate structure, the City will be ahead of, or at least no worse than breakeven with, the cost of the vendor contract with Clean Earth; with all residents required to pay the fee on an annual basis, most of this year’s revenues were received close to the November due date. In addition, during the first three years residents have been responsible for paying for the service, a backlog of some residents’ unpaid garbage fees built up to a tidy sum. Our City Manager Steve Collie and staff have been working those receivables to reduce them to a much smaller amount.

**Investment of Reserves.** After a push by the BOC over more than a year, spearheaded by Vice Mayor Winston Evans, we have managed to take the “lemons” of the Fed rate hikes, and turned them into the “lemonade” of higher-earning investment of our reserves. Local governments in Tennessee are legally limited to very conservative, safe investments for their funds, such as T-bills and CDs. By now, a very large portion of our portfolio is invested at 4.5% or more—a giant step from the near zero rates we have received in recent years.

**Investment Advisory Committee and Appointment.** The BOC passed an ordinance creating a three-person Investment Advisory Committee a little over a year ago. Since then, the Committee has been involved in updating and optimizing the City’s investment practices. It has also worked on an Investment Policy Statement for the City. While it largely restates current State law, it is good to have these guiding principles in one document. The BOC is preparing to adopt it as City policy. Meanwhile, the BOC has reappointed John Gawaluck to the Committee to serve until mid-2025.

**Stormwater Issues.** We are anticipating the comprehensive study of the City’s stormwater runoff problems from Barge Design Services in the near

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## The Land Trust for Tennessee’s Glen Leven Farm



**BOC Tours Glen Leven Farm:** Left to right—Joy O’Dell, David DeMarco, Liz McLaurin (President and CEO of The Land Trust of Tennessee), Dale Grimes, and Winston Evans.

The Land Trust for Tennessee works across the state to conserve the unique character of Tennessee’s natural and historic landscapes and sites for future generations. We conserve this hidden gem—Glen Leven Farm—as a place that illuminates all aspects of our work: it is an historic, urban farm that serves as a recreational and educational resource and the office for The Land Trust’s Middle Tennessee staff.

Thomas Thompson (1759-1837) arrived with the first group of settlers in what would become Nashville during the winter of 1779-1780 and signed the Cumberland Compact. Thompson registered the farm with a 640-acre Revolutionary War land grant in 1790 and built a blockhouse near present-day 715 Thompson Lane, currently the site of the Pepsi Bottling Company.

The centerpiece of Glen Leven Farm is the historic house designed by Nashville architect A.E. Franklin and constructed in 1857. The house, which still stands today, was built for Mary Hamilton House Thompson (1823-1901), the fourth wife of John Thompson (1793-1876). It is the third house that has stood on this site. The house is Federal in style, featuring a two-story Greek Revival-style portico with four fluted wooden columns topped with cast-iron Corinthian capitals. Brick and mortar analysis confirm that the

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# More about Bluebirds in Oak Hill

## David DeMarco—Oak Hill Commissioner

There are a few odds and ends I didn't have space for in the last newsletter. I mentioned that starlings are a non-native species that were artificially introduced into North America in the 1890s in New York's Central Park. But the strange part of that story is the reason they were artificially introduced – There was a group of Shakespeare enthusiasts who wanted America to have all of the birds that were ever mentioned in Shakespeare's writings! Those 60 or so birds, now estimated to be over 200 million, almost eliminated the bluebird population, which is why I believe we have a sense of obligation to help out the bluebirds, by putting up houses specifically designed for bluebirds, that starlings cannot use (as discussed in the last newsletter).

You won't get starlings in a bluebird box, but you might get other secondary cavity nesters, i.e., birds that can't make their own nesting cavities and have to rely on natural cavities in trees or boxes made for them. Those include chickadees, wrens, or titmice. Even if you don't actually see the birds, it is easy to tell what nest you have in your box. A bluebird nest is very neat and made of either dried grass or pine needles. A titmouse nest is made of dried leaves and moss. A chickadee nest is made of moss and a wren nest is made of small sticks, clumsily arranged. It's the male wren that starts the nest and he uses it to attract the female who adds the final touches. Note that you shouldn't remove any of these nests, even if it is a bird you don't prefer.

For bluebirds, house hunting is a courtship ritual, and they inspect several sites before selecting one. As a part of their courtship, they will greet each other with a "wing-wave" which is quick flicking of one or both wings. The female builds the nest while the male watches. In defense of the male, he will chase

away the occasional intruder. If you approach a nest, the parents may swoop down on you and make a clicking noise with their beaks.

Bluebirds were rare in Oak Hill prior to the 1980s. Oak Hill residents with whom I've spoken who lived here in the 70s and 80s don't recall seeing them until more recently and now they are abundant. My aunt, who lived at 891 Robertson Academy Road from 1951 until 1988, faithfully kept a bluebird house in her backyard for years, and never had bluebirds. Her neighbor, who lived at 884 Roberson Academy Road from 1957 until the sometime in the late 1990s finally got a nesting pair sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Those were the first bluebirds I ever saw anywhere, and it was not because I wasn't looking. If you have a recollection of when you first saw bluebirds in Oak Hill, please email me at [david.demarco@oakhillTN.us](mailto:david.demarco@oakhillTN.us)

February was unusually warm and birds have already started on their nests, even though it is premature. There more birds than nest sites. I have four nest boxes and one has a bluebird nest that was started and then stolen by a wren who has started a nest on top of it. Wrens are more aggressive birds. I have a bluebird nest in another box and chickadee nests in the other two. If you put up a nest box now, you will likely get a nesting pair sometime this spring or summer. 🌱



## The Land Trust for Tennessee Glen Leven Farm *continued*

bricks used to build the home were handmade on site, likely by people enslaved at Glen Leven Farm.

In 1971, Susan West (1939-2006), the great-great-granddaughter of Thomas Thompson, bought back the house and five acres surrounding it, which adjoined land inherited by her mother. Susan donated Glen Leven Farm to The Land Trust for Tennessee through her will, because she wanted the land to be protected forever. The Land Trust for Tennessee took ownership in 2006.

Glen Leven Farm was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008, being notable for its settlement patterns and agricultural history in Davidson County, and it earned its designation as an arboretum in 2012 by The Nashville Tree Foundation. On the farm, you'll find more than 25 labeled species of trees and shrubs. The arboretum includes the largest mass of American Yellowwood in the United States. In addition, White Ash, Basswood, American Beech, Dogwood, Ginkgo, Black Walnut, Sugar Maple, Chinkapin Oak, Laurel Oak, Pecan, Hedge Maple, and Trifoliate Orange trees on the property are all past winners of the Nashville Tree Foundation's Big Old Tree Contest.

There are also at least 16 different varieties of heirloom daffodils growing at Glen Leven Farm. In 1837, John Thompson ordered

a variety of bulbs from Holland for his two daughters, Mary and Margaret, who were suffering from tuberculosis. Their doctor had recommended that they spend time outdoors in the fresh air, and John thought cultivating flowers would bring them great pleasure. The 1837 order included 12 Narcissus Jonquilla Simplex bulbs. This diminutive flower with an intense scent still blooms at Glen Leven Farm every spring.

We acknowledge that Glen Leven Farm sits on the traditional homelands of Indigenous Peoples. We recognize, and are grateful for, the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. We, as an organization, seek to learn more and understand our small place within the vast history of this land.

Glen Leven Farm is not regularly open to the public, but we host monthly Community Days, volunteer opportunities, events, and more. See our calendar of upcoming events and learn more about our mission at [landtrusttn.org](http://landtrusttn.org)

## Upcoming Community Days at Glen Leven Farm

Saturday, April 15th 9:00am-1:00pm—Food Waste Awareness

Saturday, May 13th 9:00am-1:00pm—Meet the Bees 🐝



## From the Mayor's Desk

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future. It should detail where our runoff “hotspots” exist or are most likely to occur. However, as we engage with this work, it would be helpful to hear from any of you who are aware of locations within Oak Hill where stormwater runoff poses serious risk of damage, so that information may be considered as part of our future plans. Some problems cannot wait for the comprehensive study, and so the City staff and BOC recently considered two possible remediation projects. We approved one but not the other. The difference was that the one we approved required only work within the public right-of-way, while the other involved a drainage ditch and creek that were entirely on private property. The City also intends to continue replacing and rebuilding deteriorated culverts as part of our overall stormwater system.

**Zoning and Related Changes.** The BOC and City staff are currently working on some ordinance changes, including to the City zoning code. These will include, for example, ordinances providing for the rebuilding of non-conforming structures after catastrophic loss, limitations on the use of a non-conforming structure's footprint for rebuilding an entirely new structure, clarifications of some apparent inconsistencies in the tree protection ordinance, construction of solar arrays, accessory structures, outdoor cooking equipment, and so forth. All proposed changes will be publicized in detail as the process moves forward.

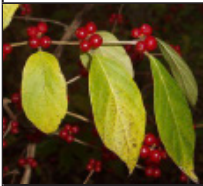


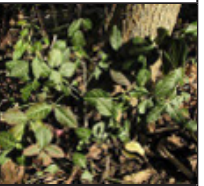




**In Closing.** Further particulars about the BOC's activities can be found in minutes as well as videos of our meetings on the City website at [www.oakhilltn.us](http://www.oakhilltn.us), so please have a look for additional information there. We always welcome your questions, concerns, and suggestions, so please feel free to seek out any member of the BOC to discuss. Happy Spring! 🌱

## Garden Club Spotlight

The **Oak Valley Garden Club** has been active for over seventy years in our community. Our members participate in the Horticultural Society of Middle Tennessee, special gardening projects in and out of Oak Hill, decorating street signs for Christmas on the six streets that made up the original Oak Valley Estates (Alder, Churchwood, Dustin, Oak Valley, Van Leer and Robertson Academy) and learning and sharing gardening wisdom! If you are interested in getting more information, please contact Peggy Noonan at [peggynoonan@gmail.com](mailto:peggynoonan@gmail.com) or Janet Clough at [janetclough@comcast.net](mailto:janetclough@comcast.net). 🌱



## Wanted! Native Alternatives to Non-Native Invasive Plants

THE TOP 4 OFFENDERS			
			
<b>Japanese Bush Honeysuckle</b> <i>Lonicera maackii</i>	<b>Privet</b> <i>Ligustrum</i>	<b>English Ivy</b> <i>Hedera helix</i>	<b>Winter Creeper</b> <i>Euonymus fortunei</i>
NATIVE ALTERNATIVES			
			
<b>Oak Leaf Hydrangea</b> <i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>	<b>Inkberry Holly</b> <i>Ilex glabra</i>	<b>Crossvine</b> <i>Bignonia capreolata</i>	<b>Christmas Fern</b> <i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>

What's the big deal? These **4 non-native invasive plants** were introduced into our landscapes through the nursery trade because they have attributes that we like. But they also have attributes that we don't! These plants have no natural pests or diseases that knock them back in a way that would allow them to play well with others—specifically native plants that have evolved over eons in their own plant communities that allow them to thrive.

All of these offending plants have copious berries that birds gobble up and spread into our wild places like Radnor Lake State Natural Area and Ellington Agricultural Center. The lovely walk along Seven Mile Creek, for example, is literally a landscape of invasive plants that don't belong there and have crowded out the huge variety of our beautiful native plants, along with their associated insect and bird life.

**Japanese Bush Honeysuckle** is usually the first shrub to leaf out in spring. This creates early shade that disrupts the growth cycle of early spring ephemeral wildflowers like Spring Beauties and Cutleaf Toothwort. After several years of this early shade many of our wildflowers just give up.

**Privet** is an evergreen non-native shrub with a healthy growth rate and a need for expensive trimming on a very regular basis. Plus, it has those berries that get spread around by our unsuspecting bird population just out for lunch.

**English Ivy** and **Euonymus (Winter Creeper)** are vines that grow so rampantly that they can literally strangle a tree to death. Meanwhile, the birds spread their fruit far and wide.

Remove these junk plants so they don't have a chance to litter our wild places. Make good choices when purchasing new plants for your landscapes by choosing NATIVES! Most plants for sale are marked as “natives” now so it is easier than ever for gardeners to create more ecologically fit yards.

For a comprehensive list of non-native invasive plant species and alternatives for them check out the Native Plant Alternatives brochure on the Tennessee Invasive Plant Council's website (TNIPC.org).

Happy Gardening!

Marian Tidwell

*The Good Earth Gardener and Fellow Oak Hill Resident* 🌱

Visit us at: [oakhilltn.us](http://oakhilltn.us)

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Our goal is to eventually make the *Oak Hill News* available only in electronic form. If you wish to subscribe to this publication and receive additional important updates on Official City Business, please scan the QR code below or visit our website —*Thank you.*



Do we need to update your mailing information? If so, please email any corrections to [comments@oakhilltn.us](mailto:comments@oakhilltn.us).

## Stormwater Master Plan



### J. Steven Collie—Oak Hill City Manager

The Oak Hill Board of Commissioners has approved Barge Design Solutions, Inc. to develop a Stormwater Master Plan for the City.

Barge is now in the “data collection phase” of public drainage infrastructure data in our area. This data will be used for the purpose of developing a Stormwater Master Plan for the City. The data collection efforts for this project will begin this month and will continue into April. The Barge crew will bear a copy of a letter signed by the Oak Hill City Manager and the surveyors will be clearly identified as Barge employees. We kindly ask that you permit them temporary access to your property for the sole purpose of gathering infrastructure data.

If you have any additional questions or wish to inquire about ongoing activities, please feel free to contact me at (615) 553-7213. Thank you for your cooperation. 🌱

#### City of Oak Hill Staff

**Steve Collie**, City Manager  
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**Tommy Campsey**, Safety Coordinator  
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### City of Oak Hill Boards and Commissions

#### Board of Commissioners

Regular Meetings—6:00 pm the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month at the Oak Hill City Office

#### Members

**Dale Grimes**, Mayor  
**Winston Evans**, Vice Mayor  
**David DeMarco**, Commissioner  
**Joy O’Dell**, Commissioner  
**Scott Price**, Commissioner

#### Commission Term:

2022-2026  
2020-2024  
2020-2024  
2022-2026  
2022-2026

#### Board of Zoning Appeals

Regular Meetings—6:00 pm the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month at the Oak Hill City Office

#### Members

**Chris Taylor**, Chair  
**Zach Baldwin**  
**Kathryn Booth**  
**Mary Catherine Bradshaw**  
**Chris Goetz**

#### Term Expires:

June 30, 2025  
June 30, 2023  
June 30, 2025  
June 30, 2024  
June 30, 2024

#### Planning Commission

Regular Meetings—6:00 pm the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month at the Oak Hill City Office

#### Members

**Wade Hill**, Chair  
**Robert Diehl**, Vice Chair/Secretary  
**Mitch Barnett**  
**Michael Barry**  
**Flynn Doyle**  
**Winston Evans**  
**Dale Grimes**  
**Shali Scott**  
**Greer Tidwell**

#### Term Expires:

August 31, 2025  
August 31, 2024  
August 31, 2025  
August 31, 2024  
August 31, 2023  
August 31, 2024  
August 31, 2024  
August 31, 2024  
August 31, 2023