



MAYOR • Rusty Moore VICE-MAYOR • Haley Dale COMMISSIONERS:
Louise Bryan • Neal Clayton • Tom Starkey • Jennifer Moody, City Manager • Chuck Williams, Chief of Police

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NEWSLETTER TO RESIDENTS OF BELLE MEADE APRIL 2026



FEDERAL AND STATE ASSISTANCE TO BELLE MEADE

The City of Belle Meade is working with partners within Metro-Nashville, TEMA and FEMA to seek public assistance funds that could reimburse the City for a significant portion of the emergency work performed directly in response to the storm. As of March 31, the City Manager anticipates that storm debris removal alone totals just over \$1 million in expense. More than 50,000 cubic yards of debris (more than 900 loads) has been carried out of Belle Meade since early February. We have learned that FEMA public assistance, if we are successful in receiving approval for reimbursements, would provide funding to cover 75% of all eligible expenses. Then, the State/TEMA will also provide grants to cover 12.5% or half of the remaining expenses. As a result, the local governments are responsible for the last 12.5% from local sources of funding as well as 100% of any expenses deemed ineligible for reimbursement.

City Commissioners have passed a budget amending ordinance on first reading (on March 25, 2026) to make necessary adjustments to bring in storm-related expenditures and increase anticipated use of the city's reserves or rainy-day funds to cover recovery expenses. Use of the city's reserve funds means that no property tax increase or debt issuance is necessary to aid the city in meeting the challenges of restoring the community after this disaster. The total budget amendment increases current year expenditures, in the City's General Fund which is the property tax-supported operations, by approximately \$1.4 million.

While this is a significant sum, the City is well prepared to absorb it. City leaders have contributed to creating a significant reserve over the last several years, primarily due to a combination of cost-effective service delivery and stronger than anticipated interest earnings on invested reserve funds. The City Manager anticipates that after paying all storm-related invoices, the City's General Fund reserves (unassigned fund balance) will be approximately \$7 million. With an annual operating budget of approximately \$4.5 million, the City of Belle Meade finds that due to many years of commitment to the best financial practices, city funds were available to cover emergency expenses from January's winter ice storm.

COVENANT SCHOOL TRAFFIC PLAN UPDATE

Belle Meade's Metro Council Member Thom Druffel recently provided an update to constituents regarding the plan for Covenant School to move from Green Hills to West Meade. Many area residents have shared concerns about the lack of community input about the project and are worried about traffic impact. CM Druffel explained that NDOT has already approved the school's traffic plan as presented. Here is a summary of the results from his report:

There will be a traffic light at the intersection of Brook Hollow and Harding Pike that will include a left turn lane from Brook Hollow onto Harding Pike. A center lane will be added on Brook Hollow that will support entry into and exit from the new school. There will also be an entrance/exit into the school from Harding Pike. There is planned a long driveway inside the school grounds, accommodating 100 cars. The traffic plan is designed for up to 300 students and the school anticipates starting with 200 students.

CM Druffel shares that he continues to advocate for the community and share concerns with NDOT. He also shared that Covenant School's liaison has indicated a desire to be a good neighbor.

HARDING PLACE PAVING

As many residents have noticed, there is an obvious change in the condition of the roadway surface as you leave the city limits on Harding Place heading towards Harding Pike. We have good news! CM Druffel reports that NDOT has scheduled repaving for that section of Harding Place with anticipated completion by October 2026.

Belle Meade residents should continue to reach out to CM Druffel with questions or comments at thom.druffel@nashville.gov or 615-767-6458. He also has an email newsletter that you may sign up for at thomdruffel.com/be-informed.

BELLE MEADE RECEIVES “CLEAN” AUDIT FOR 2025

Each year, the City of Belle Meade opens its books to independent auditors to review the city’s financial reporting processes. Additionally, the City conducts a competitive selection for qualified firms every five years and this was the first year of a new contract with the auditing firm of Crosslin, PLLC. At their regular board meeting in March, City Commissioners received a presentation and

received a “clean” or “unmodified opinion” from the auditors. This is the highest and best audit outcome and confirms that the City has presented its financial statements in compliance with all required accounting standards and best practices. They found no significant misstatement during the audit process. Join us in congratulating Finance Director Leigh Mills with another excellent year of transparent financial reporting. To view the City’s financial reports, visit www.citybellemeade.org/finance/.

ANNUAL BUDGET SEASON IS HERE

City Commissioners have already begun looking ahead to the next annual budget, which will cover operations and capital expenditures for July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. At a budget workshop on March 25th, city leaders shared information on three significant challenges impacting budget assumptions for the upcoming year’s spending plan.

First, the City is a service organization that provides, primarily, essential public safety services in Belle Meade. As an organization providing services, the City relies upon its people to carry out these services. As a result, personnel costs from salaries and benefits make up 55% of the City’s total annual expenditures. Finding a way to address the city’s pay for police officers will be a challenge this year. Since the City’s last pay study, conducted in early 2023, starting salaries for police officers have risen, sometimes dramatically, at agencies throughout middle Tennessee with all agencies competing with one another from what continues to be a shrinking pool of talented individuals seeking law enforcement roles.

Second, the City is going to be negatively impacted by a new state policy intended to more equitably address population growth across Tennessee. Starting January 1, 2026, the state’s new population estimates program changes how taxes collected at the state level, also known as “state-shared revenues”, are distributed to local governments by moving away from population estimates based on the decennial census (changing only every decade). Instead, moving to annual, revised estimates that will be produced by the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee. This change means that growing cities will see these revenues increase annually as their population estimate grows. However, Belle Meade and other cities with little to no population growth, will receive a smaller share of the state-shared tax revenues, with the greatest impact occurring in this first year (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027). This first year of this change will necessarily adjust populations from the last U.S. Census in 2020; population estimates will account for six years of change (2020 through 2026). In future years, the population estimate will only represent population change over the prior year so the impact or reduction should be less significant to Belle Meade’s annual budget.

Third, the City is challenged to find new revenue to fund operating costs. On the other hand, the cost of providing services (including contracted services like garbage and recycling collection) continues to increase significantly. Additionally, the cost of utilities, fuel (for patrol cars), software licenses, and more have grown on average between 4-5% annually.

Each year, the City first looks at its fees and charges to see that they are at adequate levels; however, no revenue source is as large and reliable for income purposes as the property tax. The City’s general fund, primarily public safety operations, depends upon income from property tax proceeds. Those revenues have not increased in five years, including last year after reappraisal. Last year, City Commissioners opted to forego a property tax adjustment and instead reduced the property tax from \$0.50 per \$100 in assessed value to \$0.3011 per \$100 in assessed values. The result was that the City received no new property tax income despite historic increases in the valuation of homes in the reappraisal process conducted throughout Davidson County.

Additionally, city leaders are watching interest earnings carefully as they have become a significant source of income over the last few years. So significant in fact that these earnings have contributed to relatively large surpluses at year-end for the last four years. While these earnings have filled the budget gaps in the past and held back pressure to increase the property tax rate in the past, we have seen in the current year a drop in interest rates and anticipate that interest earnings to be only less reliable in the upcoming year. In summary, the City is facing increasing costs to maintain the same services, while challenged with limited new and recurring revenue to meet these needs.

In light of these challenges, more discussion is anticipated around the proposed budget and City Commissioners will be weighing the pros and cons of an intentional use of city reserves to meet operating needs against a proposal to increase the Belle Meade property tax rate to meet these needs. Commissioners and the city’s leadership team will meet with the Belle Meade Budget and Finance Committee on April 30th to present a proposed, balanced budget for their review. The Budget and Finance Committee consists of a diverse and invaluable group of five Belle Meade residents that annually act in an advisor capacity to review and make recommendations to the City Commission on the annual budget, annual financial statements, and assist in selecting the City’s independent audit firm.

For more information, the proposed budget document for July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 will be available in the agenda packet for the Board of Commissioners regular board meeting in May. Final presentation of the proposed budget is anticipated for the regular June board meeting and an annual budget must be adopted in accordance with state law by June 30, 2026. All agendas for Board of Commissioners’ meetings are available at least 48 hours in advance on the city’s website or by request. Additionally, all meetings of the Board of Commissioners are open to the public.



FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT – CHIEF CHUCK WILLIAMS

OUTSTANDING POLICE WORK

Sergeant Kate Cloxton, Officer Zach Donegan, and Dispatcher Lisa Byington received the David and Cindy Wilds Outstanding Service Award for their response to an HVAC fire at Belle Meade City Hall on January 19th, 2026. Their quick recognition of the problem and immediate response prevented what could have become a much more serious incident.

Master Patrol Officer (MPO) Tyler Parrish and Officer Seth Norris received the same award for their response to an ATM theft at a gas station on Page Rd on February 8th, 2026. MPO Parrish

was on his way home when he noticed a pickup truck backed into the convenience store at the gas station on Page Rd. The suspect had driven his truck through the storefront and attempted to steal an ATM. The vehicle fled the scene but turned down a dead-end street off Highway 100. The suspect bailed out of the vehicle and attempted to hide in a pile of leaves but was located by Officer Norris and MPO Parrish.

Congratulations to these award winners; all received recognition during the Board of Commissioners’ meeting on March 25, 2026.





4TH ANNUAL

CITY OF BELLE MEADE'S SOCIETY OF CERES PRESENTS

2026

GARDEN Visits

APRIL 25 FROM 10AM -12PM

**GARDENS OF LESLIE AND GUS GROTE
AND ELIZABETH AND JACK WALLACE**

Garden Visits are open to Belle Meade residents and their guests.
Information and registration at
<https://citybellemeade.org/ceres-society/ceres-events/>
or scan the code.



A donation of \$50 is requested per person for this Garden Visits event.

GOOD NEIGHBOR

REMINDERS: Replanting and New Landscaping Tips

With Spring finally here, many residents of Belle Meade are planning new landscaping due to damage from Winter Storm Fern. City staff makes the following recommendations to help with the reestablish of the beautiful landscapes of our City:

- Call 811 to mark underground pipes and wires before digging.
- Consider mature height and canopy spread to avoid power lines and buildings (at least 15-20 feet away).
- If a tree must be replaced, choose a new location 6-8 feet away from the old stump to avoid old root systems.
- Choose trees suited to your local climate (hardiness zone), soil type, and drainage.
- If a small tree or shrub has been bent or partially uprooted, it may be possible to stake it back into place after the ground thaws.
- Avoid heavy pruning until new growth appears in spring, as seemingly dead branches may recover.
- Water young or newly replanted trees during dry spells in the summer and fall to help them establish.

Additionally, consider planting a tree in celebration of **National Arbor Day on April 24, 2026.**



RECAP OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETINGS



The Commissioners took action on the following items at the **March 25, 2026** meeting:

The Commissioners took action on the following items at the March 25, 2026 meeting:

- Special Presentation of Belle Meade Police Department's Outstanding Service Awards Recognition for Dispatcher Lisa Byington, Sergeant Kate Cloxton, and Officer Zach Donegan, for their actions detecting and responding to a fire inside City Hall in January.
- Special Presentation of Belle Meade Police Department's Outstanding Service Awards Recognition for Master Patrol Officer Tyler Parrish and Officer Seth Norris, responding quickly to suspicious activity that resulted in the arrest of the suspect in an incident at a local gas station.
- Held a Public Hearing on Ordinance 2025-13 pending adoption on final reading.
- Special Presentation and adoption of the city's audited financial statements for FY 2025.
- Adopted on the 2nd and final reading, ORDINANCE 2025-13 to Amend Title 14 of the Belle Meade Municipal Code to restrict the provisions for the Front Yard Setbacks.
- Adopted on the 1st of 2 readings, ORDINANCE 2026-01 to Amend Title 12 (Building Code) to Adopt the 2024 International Residential Code in place of the 2018 International Residential Code, to take effect on July 1, 2026.
- Adopted on the 1st of 2 readings, ORDINANCE 2026-02 to Amend Ordinance 2025-4, "Budget Amendment No.2", to Provide for the Increase or Decrease in Various Expenditure and Revenue Appropriations. This budget amendment primarily reflects \$1.4 million in emergency and recovery expenditures related to the winter storm with an

offsetting increase in revenue from a transfer from reserve funds.

- Failed Resolution 2026-02 to Establish a Multi-way Stop at the intersection of Belle Meade Boulevard and Tyne Boulevard on a 3-2 vote following much discussion on the matter. The City Manager was directed to proceed with some recommendations received from engineers and the Commissioners.
- Approved Amendment No. 1 to a 2026 Grant Contract with the Tennessee Highway Safety Office, Traffic Enforcement Program, reducing the total award by \$4,000 as a result of a reduction in state funding for the program.
- Approved Amendment No. 1 to a 2026 Grant Contract with the Tennessee Highway Safety Office, Traffic Safety Coordinator Program, reducing the total award by \$4,000 as a result of a reduction in state funding for the program.
- Added an item for discussion to the agenda under "other matters" and invited Luke Sullivan, engineer with Neel-Schaffer, to present options for signage and markings on the left lane of Belle Meade Boulevard (in keeping with final recommendations from the City's Boulevard Advisory Committee); comments were provided on the options and the engineer will revise his recommendation for consideration at next month's board meetings.
- Received monthly reports from all departments, including monthly financial reports, investment schedules, and reviewed monthly check registers for January.
- The City Board's next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 15th at 4:00 p.m. Additionally, a quarterly workshop will be held immediately prior beginning at 2:00 p.m.



Belle Meade Newsletter

REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS

APRIL & MAY 2026

All Meetings Held at Belle Meade City Hall

Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, April 15th at 4:00 pm

Wednesday, April 15th at 2:00 pm a quarterly work session will be held with City Commissioners

Wednesday, May 20th at 4:00 pm

Historic Zoning Commission

Tuesday, April 14th at 3:00 pm

Tuesday, May 12th at 3:00 pm

Municipal Planning Commission

Tuesday, April 14th at 4:30 pm

Tuesday, May 12th at 4:30 pm

Board of Zoning Appeals

Tuesday, April 21st at 4:30 pm

Tuesday, May 19th at 4:30 pm

Agendas are available online at
www.citybellemeade.org

CERES SOCIETY DONATIONS – FEBRUARY and MARCH 2026

OAK SOCIETY-\$1,000 or more

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Martin
Dr. & Mrs. Scott Standard

TULIP SOCIETY-\$250-\$499

Mr. & Mrs. Philip Head
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Lawton
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Pickel
Ms. Sandra Welborn

MAGNOLIA SOCIETY- \$500-\$999

Mr. & Mrs. John Cheadle, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Bryan Frist
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Lechleiter
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Stanley

Reminders:

FREE COMMUNITY SHRED DAY – SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2026 from 9am to Noon at Belle Meade City Hall. Bring all your paper documents for shredding at this community event. Individuals will be limited to no more than 8 boxes or bags. This event is only open to residents, please no businesses. Boxes will not be shredded, only their paper contents. You do not need to remove paperclips or staples. PAPER ONLY – absolutely no batteries, no computers, no tablets will be accepted. This service helps prevent identity theft and fraud by properly disposing of confidential paper records, such as credit card statements, old checks, tax returns.



CITY HALL WILL BE CLOSED FOR A CITY HOLIDAY ON FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026.

CITY OF BELLE MEADE
4705 Harding Road
Nashville, Tennessee 37205

return service requested