SUMNER COUNTY COMMISSION

355 N. Belvedere Drive
Gallatin, Tennessee 37066-5410

Commissioners

Terry Moss- 1

Terry Wright- 2

Mark Harrison- 3

Dillon Lamberth- 4

Darrell Rogers- 5

David Klein- 6

Danny Sullivan- 7

Baker Ring- 8

Mary Genung- 9

Benjamin A. Harris- 10

Kevin Pomeroy- 11

Deborah Holmes- 12

Terri Boyt- 13

Jamie Teachenor- 14

J. Wes Wynne- 15

Jeremy Mansfield- 16

Robert B Brown III- 17

Don Schmit- 18

Shannon Burgdorf- 19

Merrol Hyde- 20

Jerry F. Becker- 21

Matthew Shoaf- 22

Tim Jones- 23

Chrissi S. Miller- 24

VFD Ad-Hoc Committee:
J. Wes Wynne, Chairman
Chris Shoemaker, Vice Chairman
Ben Harris, Commissioner
David Klein, Commissioner
Scotty Bush, Chief
Chris Edgerton, Chief
Sam Thornton, Chief
Henry DeGroot, Citizen
Curtis Williams, Citizen

AGENDA
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT AD-HOC COMMITTEE
5:30 P.M.
June 9, 2026
J. Wes Wynne, CHAIRMAN

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Invocation**
3. **Approval of Agenda**
4. **Approval of Minutes from May 12, 2026 (Pages 2-3)**
5. **Recognition of the Public**
6. **Old Business**
    a. Funding Ideas for VFD's
    b. VFD Budgets
7. **New Business**
    a. Recruitment Assistance **(Page 4-6)**
8. **Adjournment**

****Persons wishing to speak on agenda items or any other item relevant to the committee shall sign up for public comment on the sheet provided at the meeting immediately prior to the commencement of the meeting.**

MINUTES
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT AD-HOC COMMITTEE
May 12, 2026

Present
J. Wes Wynne, Chairman
Chris Shoemaker, Vice Chairman
David Klein, Commissioner
Curtis Williams, Citizen
Scotty Bush, Chief
Chris Edgerton, Chief
Absent
Ben Harris, Commissioner
Sam Thornton, Chief
Henry DeGroot, Citizen

The Volunteer Fire Department Ad-Hoc Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Wynne at approximately 5:30 p.m. in conference room 112.

Invocation
Commissioner Klein provided the invocation.

Approval of Agenda
Motion made by Commissioner Klein, seconded by Mr. Williams, to accept the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes
Motion made by Commissioner Klein, seconded by Mr. Williams, to accept the April 28, 2026 Minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Recognition of the Public
None

Old Business

a. **Funding Ideas for VFD's**
This item was tabled until an appropriate time for discussion.

New Business

a. **VFD Budgets**

The committee discussed the standardized chart of accounts for the individual VFD stations at length. Chairman Wynne noted this topic will be placed on Old Business to discuss at an appropriate time.

b. Unincorporated Service Model

Chairman Wynne opened the discussions on this topic and stated the 3 Models the committee would discuss. 1) Independent Volunteer Fire Service 2) Contracted Outsourced Fire Service 3) Career County Wide Fire Service. Discussions ensued regarding the models at length.

A motion was made by Mr. Shoemaker, seconded by Mr. Williams, to exclude Private Contracted Outsourced Fire Service as an option for Sumner County. Motion passed unanimously.

Further discussions ensued regarding funding. Chairman Wynne noted that funding ideas would be discussed at the next meeting.

Discussions continued regarding the appropriate model for Sumner County. A motion was made by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Shoemaker, to recommend a combination of a Municipal/Volunteer Fire System for Sumner County. Motion passed with 5 voting in favor of the motion and 1 abstaining from the vote.

Mr. Williams stated he would research further into the 5 mile radius of stations and the areas they cover.

Adjournment

With no more discussion, Chairman Wynne called for adjournment. Motion made by Mr. Williams to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Klein, at approximately 6:45 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Michelle Oswald

From: JWes Wynne
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2026 2:09 PM
To: Michelle Oswald
Subject: Fwd: Legal Opinion- Volunteer Fire Ad Hoc

Michelle,

Please include this email thread as a part of the agenda packet for the 6/9 meeting.

- Wes

Begin forwarded message:

> **From:** Eric Sitler <esitler@sumnercountytn.gov>
> **Date:** June 2, 2026 at 2:00:08 PM CDT
> **To:** Christopher Shoemaker <cshoemaker1984@icloud.com>, JWes Wynne <jwes.wynne@sumnercountytn.gov>
> **Cc:** Steven Weiner <sweiner@sumnercountytn.gov>, Ben Harris <ben.harris@sumnercountytn.gov>, David Klein <david.klein@sumnercountytn.gov>
> **Subject: Legal Opinion- Volunteer Fire Ad Hoc**
>
> Chairman Wynne,
>
> I was asked a question by a non-commissioner member of your Ad hoc concerning vehicle registration and Tax exemption. To ensure that I maintain my ethical requirement as legal counsel solely for the Commission, I am treating this as a full committee question.
>
> Tenn. Code Ann. § 55-4-140(a) provides two separate potential benefits for qualifying volunteer firefighters.
>
> First, upon certification by the chief of the fire department to which the volunteer firefighter is attached, the individual may receive an exemption from the regular state registration renewal fee.
>
> Second, the statute authorizes a county legislative body to waive the county motor vehicle tax (wheel tax) for vehicles that qualify for the registration fee exemption. This exemption is not automatic. Rather, the county must affirmatively adopt the waiver.
>
> The statute provides that the waiver must be approved "in the same manner as the adoption of the motor vehicle tax under § 5-8-102." Accordingly, my reading is that a county commission may adopt a resolution waiving the wheel tax for qualifying volunteer firefighters, provided the resolution is approved using the same procedural requirements applicable to adoption of the wheel tax itself. Generally, that would require approval by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the county legislative body at two consecutive regular meetings.
>
> In regard to the certification requirement and what constitutes a bona fide "chief" for purposes of the statute, the statute does not define the term "chief." In my view, the county may reasonably

rely upon a certification executed by the individual who is the duly appointed or elected chief of a bona fide volunteer fire department. The key consideration is whether the person signing the certification is the recognized head of an actual volunteer fire department and has authority to certify membership on behalf of that department.

If there is any question regarding the legitimacy of the department or the authority of the individual signing the certification, the county could reasonably request documentation establishing the department's existence and the chief's authority, such as organizational documents, bylaws, board minutes, or other records showing appointment or election to the position of chief.

As a practical matter, if the county chooses to adopt a wheel tax waiver, I would recommend including an administrative process for annual verification of eligibility. This could require a certification on department letterhead signed by the chief confirming that the individual remains an active volunteer member in good standing. Doing so would provide consistency in administration and create a record supporting each exemption.

In conclusion, based on the language of § 55-4-140, I would be comfortable concluding that the county commission may authorize the wheel tax exemption by resolution approved in the same manner required for adoption of the wheel tax under § 5-8-102, and that eligibility may be verified through certification from the duly authorized chief of a bona fide volunteer fire department.

Sincerely,

Eric W. Sitler

Law Director
Sumner County, Tennessee
355 North Belvedere Drive, Room 303
Gallatin, TN 37066
(615) 451-6060, x1064

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From: Christopher Shoemaker <cshoemaker1984@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2026 6:32 AM
To: Eric Sitler <esitler@sumnercountytn.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Volunteer Fire Ad Hoc

Mr. Sitler,

I have a quick question that I think I already know the answer to, I just wanted to make sure I was reading and understanding a tca correctly.

TCA 55-4-140 states that the volunteer fire can be exempt from the regular registration renewal fee from the state with a certification from their chief. This is exempting the $29

from the state. Further down in subsection (a) it states, " In addition to the exemption provided by this subsection (a), the legislative body of a county is authorized to waive the motor vehicle tax for motor vehicles receiving an exemption under this subsection (a) from the registration fee if the waiver is approved in the same manner as the adoption of the motor vehicle tax under § 5-8-102."
Am I understanding this correctly to say, a resolution from the county approved by 2/3 vote at 2 consecutive meetings would allow the wheel tax exemption from that same vehicle?

We are going to be discussing this at next weeks meeting and I wanted to try and make sure I understood what this was saying before I brought it up.

Thanks,

Chris Shoemaker
615-927-1859
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