# SUMNER COUNTY COMMISSION

355 N. Belvedere Drive
Gallatin, Tennessee 37066-5410

## AGENDA

## LAW DIRECTOR SELECTION AD-HOC
**October 6, 2026**
**5:00 p.m.**

**Committee Members:**
John Isbell, Chairman
James Rohnkohl, Vice-Chairman
Merrol Hyde
Dillon Lamberth

**Commissioners:**
*Jody Garrison- 1*
*Christopher Tarlecky- 2*
*Mark Harrison- 3*
*Dillon Lamberth- 4*
*Darrell Rogers- 5*
*Adam Issa- 6*
*Daniel Bristol- 7*
*Rory Edmonds- 8*
*Paul Graden- 9*
*Benjamin A. Harris- 10*
*Nick Ivey- 11*
*Matt Campbell- 12*
*James Rohnkohl, Jr.- 13*
*Jacob Edgar- 14*
*J. Wes Wynne- 15*
*Billy Barnfield- 16*
*Suzanne Holt- 17*
*Don Schmit- 18*
*Shannon Burgdorf- 19*
*Merrol N. Hyde- 20*
*Jerry F. Becker- 21*
*Matthew Shoaf- 22*
*Tim Jones- 23*
*Matthew Wilkinson- 24*

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Invocation**
3. **Approval of Agenda**
4. **Recognition of the Public****
5. **Approval of Minutes**
6. **Old Business**
   a. Discuss/Approve contract
7. **New Business**
   a. Discussion of timeline
   b. Discussion of interview process and questions
   c. Update on applications
8. **Recognition of the Public (Non-Agenda Items)****
9. **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**
**LAW DIRECTOR SELECTION AD HOC COMMITTEE**
**JOHN ISBELL, CHAIRMAN**
**SEPTEMBER 28, 2026**

Present:
John Isbell, Chairman
James Rohnkohl, Vice-Chairman
Merrol Hyde
Dillon Lamberth

Also Present:
Steve Weiner, Interim Law Director
Jennifer Mitchell, minute taker

County Mayor John Isbell brought the Law Director Selection Ad Hoc Committee meeting to order with an invocation by Comm. Hyde on Monday, September 28, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. County Mayor John Isbell declared a quorum present to conduct business.

3. Approval of Agenda.

Comm. Hyde moved, seconded by Comm. Rohnkohl, to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Recognition of the Public.

None

5. Election of Officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman).

Comm. Hyde nominated County Mayor John Isbell, Comm. Rohnkohl seconded the nomination. Hearing no other nominations, Mayor Isbell was elected Chairman.

Comm. Hyde nominated Comm. Rohnkohl for Vice-Chairman, Mayor Isbell seconded the nomination. Hearing no other nominations, Comm. Rohnkohl was elected as Vice-Chairman.

6. Old Business.

None

7. New Business.

a. Determine timeline for selection process.

Lamberth arrived at the meeting.

Chairman Isbell presented a proposed timeline, noting County Commission

requested a candidate be presented at the October meeting. The timeline is attached.

The committee discussed the proposal to interview the three top candidates. Members expressed a preference to interview all applicants to ensure fairness and avoid an additional screening process within the limited timeframe. Chairman Isbell stated that applications would be forwarded to committee members as received so that members could begin their review.

Comm. Hyde moved, seconded by Comm. Lamberth, to approve the timeline. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Create job description.

Chairman Isbell presented a proposed job description based on the posting used for the previous Law Director. The committee discussed revisions, including requiring a current license to practice law in Tennessee, addressing admission to practice in applicable courts, and compliance with continuing education requirements. Members also recommended replacing references to a Human Resources Department with language addressing assistance to county officials with human resources matters.

Comm. Hyde requested that the job description clearly states that the Law Director serves all departments and offices of Sumner County government. Members discussed identifying the office as the Sumner County Office of Legal Affairs while retaining the title of Law Director.

The committee discussed conflicts of interest and circumstances requiring outside counsel. Chairman Isbell stated that the proposed contract could clarify countywide representation and include the applicable statutory provisions governing the use of outside counsel.

Comm. Lamberth moved, seconded by Comm. Hyde, to approve the job description as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Authorize to advertise and post the position of County Law Director

Addressed after item 10d.

d. Approve a draft contract and/or employment agreement and proposed salary

Chairman Isbell presented a proposed contract based on the previous Law Director's contract, with revisions for the committee's consideration. He explained that the contract did not need to be approved at this meeting and encouraged members to review it further.

The committee discussed establishing a term that would provide continuity across changes in County Commission membership. Options discussed included a six-year term or an initial two-year term followed by four-year terms. During discussion, Interim Law Director Weiner noted that the private act provides for a four-year term. Members discussed the possibility of pursuing an amendment to the private act in the future.

Chairman Isbell proposed requiring monthly reports identifying pending matters handled by outside counsel and the amount expended on each case. They discussed proposed language granting the County Mayor authority over the Law Director's day-to-day operations while retaining the County Commission's appointment and removal authority. Commissioner Hyde requested safeguards allowing the Law Director to bring disagreements or legal concerns involving the County Mayor before the County Commission or an appropriate committee. Chairman Isbell agreed to develop language addressing those concerns.

Chairman Isbell stated that a proposed starting salary of $195,000 had been included for discussion, consistent with the starting salary of the Finance Director.

Members reviewed the disability provision in the proposed contract and expressed support for removing it, noting that separately paid disability coverage was not provided to other county employees.

The committee requested clearer language concerning termination of the contract and the County Commission's authority to remove the Law Director by a two-thirds vote. Chairman Isbell stated that he would consult another attorney regarding the termination provision and prepare a revised contract incorporating the discussed changes.

Comm. Hyde moved, seconded by Comm. Lamberth, move this item to old business for the next meeting.

Comm. Lamberth moved, seconded by Comm. Rohnkohl, to authorize the advertising and posting of the County Law Director position.

8. Recognition of the Public (Non-Agenda Items).

None

9. Adjournment. Chairman Isbell declared the meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m. upon motion of Comm. Hyde and seconded by Comm. Lamberth.

Prepared by Jennifer Mitchell

Law Director Timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| 9/28/2026 | Ad Hoc Committee Meeting to establish framework for selection<br>Determine Job Duties & Posting |
| 9/29/2026 | Post job on website |
| 10/12/2026 | Application deadline |
| 10/16/2026 | Interview Candidates- 3 top |
| 10/23/2026 | Candidate Meet -n- Greet with County Officials |
| 10/26/2026 | Candidate & Contract presented to Commission for vote |

## Full Job Posting

Sumner County is seeking qualified applicants for the position of the Sumner County Law Director. The Law Director is responsible for handling all the legal matters of Sumner County. The Law Director is expected to be competent in a wide range of practice areas. Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of the issues that the Law Director would handle:

- Provide legal advice to the County Commission, elected officials to include the County Mayor, department heads, and various boards and committees of Sumner County;
- Competent in parliamentary procedure;
- Represent Sumner County in all litigation in state and federal courts as well as administrative agencies;
- Coordinate with and supervise outside counsel as necessary;
- Draft and review contracts for Sumner County;
- Conduct closings for any transfer of property involving Sumner County;
- Ensure compliance with the Tennessee Public Records Act;
- Draft resolutions, legislation and any other legal documents for Sumner County;
- File suit, prepare title searches, send statutory letter and notice for tax collection and hold delinquent tax sales;
- Review grant applications and agreements;
- Oversee self-insurance, health and risk management programs, including the County Occupational Compensation Plan;
- Assist Finance Director with Bond and financial standards as well as statutory bidding;
- Support Development Services and Codes departments with interpretation and enforcement of the relevant resolutions; and
- Provide training regarding civil rights and constitutional law issues for county offices and departments;
- Manage all bankruptcy and probate claims involving county assets;
- Assist Human Resources Department with various issues;
- Advise Judicial Commissioners;
- Coordinate matters with TVA, TDOT, TDOC, Corp. of Engineers and other state and federal agencies;
- Address concerns with construction and renovation projects;
- Coordinate state filings and bonds of committees, boards, elected officials;
- Answer citizen questions related to pending topics;
- Coordinate proper handling of the remains of indigent persons; and
- Initiate lawsuits on behalf of the county when necessary.

All interested applicants should submit a resume no later than 4:30pm on October 12, 2026, by email to **johncisbell@sumnercountytn.gov**.

## Job Posting

Sumner County is seeking qualified applicants for the position of the Sumner County Law Director. The Law Director is responsible for handling all the legal matters of Sumner County. The Law Director is expected to be competent in a wide range of practice areas. Below is a non-exhaustive list of practice areas with which the Law Director should be comfortable:

- Litigation—primarily civil defense of claims involving contracts, Governmental Tort Liability Act (GTLA), and Constitutional rights;
- Workplace and employment law;
- Compliance with laws and regulations governing county governments;
- Knowledge in parliamentary procedure;
- Drafting and reviewing complex contractual agreements; and
- Drafting legislative resolutions.

A more detailed, but not exclusive description, of the duties of the office of Law Director is posted at sumnercountytn.gov. All interested applicants should submit a resume no later than 4:30pm on October 12, 2026, by email to **johncisbell@sumnercountytn.gov**.

# EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT made as of the ____ day of October 2026, between Sumner County and _____("Employee").

**WITNESSETH:**

IN CONSIDERATION of the mutual covenants herein contained, the County hereby hires Employee and Employee accepts employment as the Sumner County Law Director upon the following terms and condition which are hereby agreed:

(1) **Employment.** County employs Employee and Employee accepts employment with the County as its full-time Law Director. Employee shall serve as the Sumner County Law Director pursuant to Resolution _____, passed on _____, 2026.

(2) **Term.** The term of this Agreement shall begin _____, and end on _____. Should Employee voluntarily terminate his employment before the end of his term he shall forfeit his right to be compensated for any unused vacation time.

(3) **Compensation.** The County agrees to pay the Employee an annual salary equal to $195,000.00 payments shall be subject to income tax withholding and other payroll deductions required by law.

(4) **Benefits.** The County shall provide the Employee with health, dental and life insurance, county holidays, vacation days, sick days, retirement benefits and salary adjustments as provided other County employees.

(5) **Disability.** The County shall provide the payment of the premium for a disability insurance policy of Employee's choosing, providing disability income to the Employee of approximately 60% of salary, with a ninety (90) day elimination period. In the event the Employee is disabled permanently from performing his duties under this agreement, the Employee agrees to accept the benefit due him from the disability policy and the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System and resign his position as the Law Director.

If the County Commission decides by a two/thirds vote of the body to ask that a determination of mental or physical incapacity exists as to the Law Director and the Law Director qualifies for the payment of benefits under the disability policy, then the term of the Law Director shall end at that time.

(6) **Disciplinary Action.** If the Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility rules the Law Director has committed an offense which requires a public disciplinary action, then the County Commission can vote, by a two/thirds vote, to end the term of the Law Director at that time.

(7) **Reporting.** The Law Director reports to the County Mayor for day-to-day operations and represents the County Commission at all committee and Commission meetings. To promote communication and transparency with the County Commission, the Law Director shall submit a monthly report to the Legislative Committee detailing all pending cases and any expenses incurred for outside counsel.

(8) **Choice of Law.** This Agreement shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of Tennessee.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement that date and year first above written.

**EMPLOYER:**

John C. Isbell
Sumner County Mayor

**EMPLOYEE:**

Law Director

Mark Harrison, Chairman
Sumner County Board of County Commissioners