



January 2024 City Newsletter

Community Bands Together to Fight Fire

Earlier this month, Morristown was hit with a tragedy that no one could have predicted. When an act of arson consumed the historic Parks-Belk Building, Morristown residents watched in sadness as walls of the iconic building crumbled to the ground. The night of January 2nd, 2024 was truly heartbreaking, however it was also a testament to the resilience and teamwork of our community.

Morristown Fire responded to the scene of the fire immediately and began to battle the flames. As the fire grew, it was clear they needed assistance. Thankfully, other area agencies came to their aid.

Morristown Public Works and Police(MPD) departments were quick to respond to the incident, bringing barricades to redirect traffic away from the site. Freezing temperatures that night were causing water to become ice on the ground near firetrucks and other areas that first responders needed to hurriedly cross. Public Works staged a salt truck nearby to address those areas of concern. Another valuable service our Public Works provided that night was a refueling truck. Since the fire engines were running for a considerable amount of time, they needed refueling. Given the severity of the fire, shutting down one fire truck at a time to go refuel was not ideal. Public Works shuttled fuel all night and through the early morning hours, keeping all fire trucks refueled and able to stay on-site to battle the fire. The MPD drone unit deployed their equipment to help identify hot spots within the fire to direct fire abatement. MPD got to work immediately investigating the case to determine what caused the fire. Their investigations determined a suspect who was then apprehended and placed in custody within 24 hours of the start of the fire.

Surrounding organizations came to the aid of the City. Hamblen County Rescue Squad set up a station on-site, helping to evaluate the health of our fire fighters as they worked. Jefferson City Fire Department brought a ladder truck to fight the fire right alongside the Morristown crews. Hamblen County Volunteer Fire Departments provided personnel to man the city fire stations while all hands were on deck at the Parks-Belk Building. Because of the mutual aid from all involved, crews were able to prevent the fire from spreading to other downtown buildings.

During and after the fire, donations came in of food and supplies for our fire fighters. Many thanks were offered up to all who helped with the event and citizens voiced their support for the downtown businesses affected by the fire.

Unfortunately, it seems that the Parks-Belk Building will unfortunately be a total loss, but something will rise from the ashes. The owner of the building, who had recently purchased it and was in the process of renovation, has announced his plans to rebuild. That corner will once again be a thriving location for our historical downtown.

It will take some time until the roadway at W. Main and N. Cumberland can be reopened. Clean up of the site will be an extensive process, but when all is cleared and the smoke settles, new vibrancy will grow in its place. Morristown is resilient and not even this can keep us down.



Community Events

Breakfast & Bingo

January 29th@9:30am
at Talley Ward Rec Center

City Council Meetings

February 6th & 20th@5pm
at City Center

Live at Rose Center

February 23rd@7pm
at Rose Center

Morristown City Center

100 W. First North Street, Morristown, TN

(423)581-0100

Youth Basketball League Sees Growth

This year's youth basketball season is well underway at Morristown Parks & Recreation. Morristown Athletics staff members Eric Hogue and Adam Wilson had the daunting task this year of organizing 659 players into this year's league. This is a huge increase of players from last year's number of 515 players. This growth is partly due to the addition of a coed league for 5 and 6 year olds this year. There has been much desire from the public for more athletic opportunities for younger children. The 5-6 division will focus on development and teaching basic basketball skills to help them as they move forward in our basketball programs.

This year was the first year Parks & Rec had registration completely online, utilizing an online platform called RecDesk. The streamlined process has helped staff to track numbers with ease and communicate more efficiently. This online platform will be used for all Parks & Rec activities moving forward.

Since the City does not have sufficient facilities to host all the teams' practices and games, Parks & Rec has partnered with Hamblen County Schools to utilize their basketball courts. The program could not exist without this great partnership and thanks is offered to the school system. Games have also been hosted at Morristown Landing which can provide multiple courts of play at a time. Parks & Rec would also like to thank all the coaches, refs, bookkeepers, scorekeepers, gym supervisors and volunteers who donate their time, without whom this season would not be possible.

Later in the season, Morristown will host the 2nd Annual All-Star Tournament which will gather teams from across the area including Greeneville, Cocke County and Rogersville. Staff is excited to welcome teams from across the region later this season to compete in our community.



Message from Mayor Gary Chesney

SALUTE

And make it a big one! A hat's off "Thank you" to our Morristown Fire Fighters, City Police, and our Public Works Department for the tremendous efforts made on the night of January 2nd in response to the emergency created by an arsonist setting fire to the old Parks-Belk building downtown.

Our firemen showed their hours of training and preparation had allowed them to execute in the face of danger and prevent the blaze from spreading to any other building.

Police investigators were quickly onto early clues that led to a heavy accumulation of evidence and the eventual arrest of the individual they believe to be the arsonist.

Public Works was on the scene with emergency street surface safety and refueling duties for the many vehicles in use for long hours.

It was a bad night for Morristown's historical downtown, but after the immediate danger was quelled, a proud morning - for our City to have a group of first responders who take their jobs of public safety, seriously.

We are Morristown.

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