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THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

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Airport board appointments announced

Corey Davis
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

There will be some familiar names along with some new ones on the revamped Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority (MSCAA) board of commissioners that was officially announced on July 21.

A new Tennessee state law has changed how airport authority board members are appointed, shifting power from local to state officials. The MSCAA board will expand from seven to nine members, with state officials appointing the majority.

According to officials at the Memphis International Airport, outgoing MSCAA board members Michael Kenney, Jack

Sammons, Capt. Albert Glenn, Belinda Anderson and Pamela Clary were appointed to the new nine member board.

Four new appointees include David McKinney, vice president of human resources and public affairs for AutoZone, Skip Taylor, mayor of Fayette County, Demar Roberts, vice president and chief growth officer for First Choice Sales & Marketing Group, and Craig Weiss, ex-

ecutive vice president of Memphis-based Tower Ventures.

First meeting in August

Mia Harvey, media and public relations program manager for Memphis-Shelby Airport Authority,

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Elon Musk’s Colossus xAI facility in Memphis is photographed on Sept. 11, 2025. The data center is located at 3231 Paul R. Lowry Road near Memphis’ Boxtown neighborhood. KAREN PULFER FOCHT / REUTERS

City discussing how to spend xAI taxes

Lucas Finton
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

The City of Memphis during the last fiscal year collected just over \$12 million in property taxes from SpaceXAI, and is now having discussions about how to spend a quarter of it.

Per an ordinance passed last year, a quarter of Elon Musk’s xAI’s property taxes are to be used in the immediate vicinity of the company’s first location at Paul R. Lowery Road, frequently called Colossus I. From the last fiscal year’s tax revenue, the city will allocate \$3,259,282 to various local initiatives.

Memphis Mayor Paul Young said during a July 21 Memphis City Council committee meeting, this marked the first round of tax dispersions following last year’s ordinance. During the meeting, he and Deputy Chief of Staff Renee Sekander pitched nine programs to receive the money.

City council members have the ability to change how the money is allocated, and the July 21 presentation did not include a resolution to approve the Young administration’s proposed allocations.

More inside

The Memphis City Council confirmed July 21 Mayor Paul Young’s nominees for chief administrative officer and chief financial officer, **4A**

Home repair tops money allocation

Of the programs pitched, the one receiving the most amount of money, or \$1.4 million, includes helping Memphians repair and weatherize their homes. Within that program, the city proposed spending \$200,000 for direct home rehabilitation and \$150,000 for contractors.

Homeowners, according to Sekander, will be able to apply for loans up to \$30,000 for repairs with 0% interest. If the homeowner remains in the home for five years, Sekander added the loan would be fully forgiven.

“So families are not taking on some new debt, they’re actually building equity into staying in their homes,” Sekander told the council. “This is really important to us because we know that there are over 11,000 homes in 38109 that were built before the year 1916. So

being able to repair these homes through our home repair program you think would be essential.”

Other programs included blight remediation, installing better cooling systems in homes, environmental education offered at Memphis’ public libraries, and funding for air quality testing and reporting.

Young criticized for not itemizing health care costs

Young did, however, face criticism for not including explicit line items for health care costs.

Councilwoman Jerri Green said during the meeting the advisory council had discussed how to spend the tax revenue and recommended offering grants for people seeking healthcare and asthma treatment, such as inhalers.

Air pollution concerns arise over turbines

The arrival of xAI, and its use of gas turbines, in Memphis sparked concerns over air pollution from the data center.

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State workforce grows stagnant

Hadley Hitson
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Tennessee business owners feel more optimistic about the economy’s near future than economists can explain.

While new business filings just hit a 10-year high, the job market itself has grown stagnant, according to economist and Middle Tennessee State University professor Ben Jansen.

Plus, at least 5,117 Tennesseans have been laid off since the start of 2026, according to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Still, the latest survey from Middle Tennessee State University says that a record high 55% of Tennessee business owners surveyed assert positive sentiments toward the state’s economic outlook.

The Tennessee Business Barometer Report attributes the seeming contradiction between economic conditions and business owners’ stability to executives classifying current headwinds as a “transitional phase.”

“Overall, we’re in a low hire, low fire labor market,” Jansen said.

That means that unemployment remains relatively low, at 3.6% in Tennessee, but anyone who is fired or laid off might have a harder time finding a new job.

University of Tennessee economic research associate Alex Norwood said factors like people voluntarily leaving the workforce and President Donald Trump administration’s immigration crackdown have simply led to there being fewer workers in Tennessee.

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The industries most impacted by 2026 layoffs so far in Tennessee have been manufacturing and transportation, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development data shows. NICOLE HESTER / THE TENNESSEAN

