

**TODAY MARKS THE LAST DAY OF KIM BLAYLOCK'S
TENURE AS COUNTY EXECUTIVE.**

“I’m extremely proud of my tenure,” she said. “I left the county in a much better position than it was in when I took office.”

Blaylock first assumed office in 2001 as interim county executive when she was



appointed by the Putnam County Commission after her predecessor, Doug McBroom, resigned during his unexpired term. At the time, Blaylock was chair of the county school board, which she resigned from shortly after being named executive.

Today marks Kim Blaylock’s last day as county executive for Putnam County, an office she served in for 13 years. Photo by

Ty Kernea, Herald-Citizen.

Born in Cookeville and raised on a farm in Monterey, Blaylock hails from a politically influential family as the daughter of the late State Senator Tommy Burks and State Senator Charlotte Burks, who will retire from her seat once her term expires this November. She is a certified public accountant who graduated from Tennessee Tech University with a business administration degree and major in accounting. Before becoming executive, she accumulated 17 years of experience in county government.

After she was appointed, Blaylock, who is a Democrat, ran for the office in the 2002 and continued to win until this year’s county general election. Randy Porter, a Republican, will instead take her place tomorrow with the start of the new four-year term.

Looking back on her 13 years and five months in office, Blaylock believes she made a positive difference for the people of Putnam County. Her goal was to help citizens with her skills and knowledge.

“I had always wanted to run for county executive because that’s what my background was suited for,” she explained. “And I didn’t want to run against the one who was in office, so when he retired that opened the door.”

Her first significant accomplishment upon taking office, she said, was researching and implementing a uniform employee pay scale and drafting its policy.

“The elected officials and department heads had been working on it for years. The reason it never came together and didn’t happen was because they didn’t have the expertise. It was pretty easy for me to come in and do that.”

According to Blaylock, her most important achievement overall has been her work to improve the financial condition of the county. The county’s reserve funds were low when she came in, she said, and money had to be borrowed in order to pay bills until taxes started rolling in.

“We have \$10 million more in reserves. When I came in we had \$1.7 million, and I’m leaving the county with \$11.8 million.”

The county also improved its Moody’s bond credit rating by two levels to Aa2, one of the highest on the scale.

“There are not many counties in the state that have a bond rating that high,” Blaylock said.

She also saw the county through one of the worst economic crisis in the United States when the economy tanked several years ago and the Great Recession began.

“We went through the worst time since the Great Depression,” she said. “...When we went through the recession, nobody lost their job, nobody’s hours were cut, no taxes were raised and employees still got their step raises. And we still bought patrol cars and we still bought ambulances... We didn’t do anything different and we didn’t raise taxes.”

The county general and operating funds did not see a tax increase in the last seven years, she said, while there was a 16-cent increase for the school system to build new schools.

Blaylock noted various capital projects and expanded services that have taken hold during her terms.

“...My tenure has probably been the most progressive compared to any administration prior.”

This includes various school projects, such Algood Elementary, Jere Whitson Elementary, Cookeville South Elementary and Middle School, Monterey High School and Baxter Middle School, and also new county buildings, including the Emergency Services facility, county health department and election office. Emergency services were expanded, such as the creation of a full-time county fire department and construction of new fire stations. Recreation saw improvements too, such as a partnership to build the eight-field soccer complex, improvement of rural community centers and expansion of the Monterey library. And new departments were created with the codes department, regional planning department and County Archives and Veterans Hall.

Probably one of the county's most notable projects under Blaylock was its partnership with the City of Cookeville to build the Highlands Industrial Business Park near I-40.

"The thing that's probably going to impact the future of our county more so than anything is the Industrial Park," Blaylock said. "The county and city both have taken a lot of criticism, but it was an investment for the future.

"We did all the right things," she continued. "Through the recession, most counties were going backward or just treading water. And our county and the city kept moving forward. Even though there were bad times, we kept moving forward. And we knew that (with the park), we would be in a position for when things did get better..."

She noted retailer Academy Sports & Outdoors' decision to establish a distribution center near the park, which the company revealed earlier this month.

"While Academy didn't go into the business park, it was because of the park that they're here," Blaylock said.

Currently, there is a Project UNO in the works for the park and Oreck announced last week it will be moving 200 jobs to the area.

"We were doing the right things and it's going to pay off in a huge way," Blaylock said.

As for what is next, Blaylock doesn't know just yet.

"I'm just kind of playing it by ear," she said. "God's always had me where I needed to be when I needed to be there. And I plan to keep using what I know to make our county or state better.

"I've always liked to use what I know to help people, and I plan to continue to do that."

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