



Commissioner Gary D. Deaton

March 31, 2026

Mayor AJ Massey
Madison County Mayor's Office
Jackson, Tennessee

Mayor Massey,

I am writing to you in a spirit of respect and with a shared commitment to serving the people of Madison County, only after receiving many calls and having multiple conversations with a great number of other County Commissioners.

Over the past several weeks, I have reviewed a number of public communications and campaign materials that reference accomplishments attributed to you and to "my administration" (as stated in your campaign materials).

Lets be clear: These representations are inaccurate, misleading, and inconsistent with Tennessee law governing county government. In several instances, they rise to the level of being knowingly false.

I believe it is important, for all of us in public service, that the information we present to our great citizens is clear, accurate, and reflective of how county government actually operates under Tennessee law. I believe your campaign materials diminish this belief and cause the general citizens to not understand the workings of Madison County government.

As you know, the role of the County Mayor is defined by state statute as the chief administrative and financial officer of the county, while the Madison County Commission serves as the legislative body responsible for approving budgets, appropriations, capital projects, and tax decisions, among many other obligations. All actions require approval by the Commission, and no major initiative moves forward without that legislative process. In Madison County, that means a minimum of 13 commissioners must vote in favor of any such action.

With that in mind, I feel it is important to address a broader concern. As has been presented by your campaign, your materials give the impression that many of these accomplishments were the sole result of your individual leadership or solely the work of "my administration" (as stated in your campaign materials). Respectfully, that is not an accurate reflection of how these outcomes were achieved. Also, I would like to know the definition of "my administration" (as stated in your campaign materials).

You cannot continue to present these actions in a way that suggests they were accomplished by you alone, or even your office. As a matter of fact, very few of the items listed in your materials can be personally attributed to any one individual. Several of these initiatives were



underway prior to your election, and none of them could have been completed without the approval and support of the County Commission and the involvement of multiple departments and partners.

To ensure clarity for the public, I would like to respectfully address several specific examples:

*** School Resource Officers (SROs):**

The expansion and placement of the SROs in our schools were led operationally by Sheriff Wisner and the Sheriff's Office, in partnership with the Jackson-Madison County School System, and supported through funding approved by the County Commission. This was a coordinated effort across agencies, not an act on the part of the Mayor.

*** "No New Taxes" / "No New Debt":**

These outcomes reflect decisions made through the Commission's budget process and long-term fiscal planning. They are the result of collective action, not unilateral authority. As you should be aware, the mayor does not have the ability to raise or lower taxes, nor to reduce or increase debt.

*** Pope School:**

The development and opening of Pope School involved the Jackson-Madison County School System, Board of Education, and Commission-approved funding. It represents a collaborative effort that began prior to your term. As a matter of fact, the County Commission unanimously approved this action, as the motion was brought by a commissioner, not the mayor. There were many of us at the opening of Pope School. While you were also there, I think it is a long stretch to claim that you opened the school, giving the citizens of Madison County the impression that you were solely responsible either as Mayor or a member of the school board.

*** Parks, Roads, and Infrastructure Improvements:**

These projects are authorized and funded through Commission appropriations and planning, with implementation carried out by multiple departments. You specifically named a park that was donated to Madison County prior to your election. All other parks and recreation improvements that you mentioned were brought forth by the conservation board and other county committees overseeing this process, not the mayor.

*** Debt Reduction and Financial Progress:**

These results reflect sustained fiscal decisions made through the legislative process, supported by administrative execution. The budget committee of Madison County, working with all



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commissioners and department heads, is primarily responsible for the financial outcomes that you claimed. Again, the mayor of Madison County has no vote. Being on the budget committee, I fail to remember a time that you even spoke up about reducing debt or had a part in financial progress. I could be wrong in this, but I do not think that I am.

There is more, but I think these are the major observations that I will address in this letter today. I share these observations not to diminish the role of your office, but to ensure that the public has a complete and accurate understanding of how these accomplishments come to fruition. Each of these successes represents the work of many individuals and offices across Madison County government.

I would respectfully ask that future communications and campaign materials be adjusted to more clearly reflect this shared responsibility and collaborative structure. Doing so helps maintain public trust and ensures that credit is appropriately recognized. The work of the Madison County Commission should never be diminished, nor should it ever be seen as secondary.

***A Matter of Public Trust and Integrity**

This is not a matter of political disagreement; it is a matter of truthfulness in public representation.

Repeated references to “my administration” and “under my leadership” in this context create a false impression of authority that does not exist under Tennessee law.

Public office demands accuracy, accountability, and respect for the law. Those standards are not optional. We will continue to uphold them.

Respectfully,

Gary D. Deaton

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Madison County Commissioner

cc: Madison County Commissioners

cc: Media Partners