

HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MAYOR

WESTON WAMP

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Hamilton County Posthumously Honors County Trailblazers Dalton Roberts and Claude Ramsey with Unveiling of Two Plaques Memorializing Their Legacies

Current and former Hamilton County and City of Chattanooga officials today posthumously paid tribute to the first Hamilton County Executive, Dalton Roberts, and former County Mayor, Claude Ramsey, with an unveiling of two plaques commemorating the landmark achievements of both pioneering men.

“Dalton Roberts and Claude Ramsey guided Hamilton County for 32 years as the first two county executives, and both played a pivotal role in the transformation of Southeast Tennessee’s economy,” said **Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp**. “There’s no doubt that the quality of life in Hamilton County would not be what it is today if it weren’t for these two men of humble beginnings who made bold investments in the future while leading our county.”

The vision for this well-deserved dedication to both former leaders was set forth nearly seven years ago by Ramsey’s loving wife, Jan Ramsey, and current County Commissioners, Greg Beck and Joe Graham.

“Dalton Roberts and Claude Ramsey were two of the most honorable and distinguished county leaders that I have encountered in my life of politics in Hamilton County,” said **Commissioner Beck**. “Their commitment to the development of our community has set a standard of service that will be remembered for years to come.”

“Many of the Hamilton County successes that we cherish today were built upon the vision of these two gentlemen,” said **Commissioner Graham**. “Their hard work and dedication throughout their decades of service is the reason our county remains in great shape to this day.”

Serving as the first County Executive— now known as County Mayor— Dalton Roberts laid the groundwork that has made Hamilton County the ideal place to live, work, play, and retire. Known for his vivacious and colorful personality, Roberts doubled as a visionary of county government as well as a passionate musician, author, and philosopher.

Born in 1933, Roberts was raised in the rural Highway 58 area of Hamilton County and attended Tyner High School, Kirkman Technical School, Trevecca College, and the University of Tennessee, where he earned a master’s degree in special education. When the Tennessee Constitutional Convention of 1978 enacted a new executive-commission form of government, Roberts, the county manager at the time, offered himself to serve as first Hamilton County Executive, defeating his Republican opponent in the 1978 race. As the inaugural head of

Hamilton County, Roberts took the bull by the horns and led the transition to a new form of county government, implementing a forward way of thinking that set the bar high for his successors.

Roberts was instrumental in the development of four industrial parks, including setting forth initial plans toward acquiring the former Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant– now the Volkswagen assembly plant site. The forerunner and original thinker on several successful projects in Hamilton County, Roberts was re-elected as County Executive three times before retiring in 1994.

Current Hamilton County Commission Chairman Jeff Eversole says the whole of county government is better, to this day, due to the laudable example set by both Roberts and Ramsey.

“As Commission Chairman, I am honored to recognize the work of these extraordinary men,” said **Chairman Eversole**. “Mr. Roberts and Mr. Ramsey set the precedent for how county government should operate, and it is my continued duty to lead this body in a manner they would both be proud of.”

Claude Ramsey rose from a third-generation strawberry farmer to deputy governor of Tennessee, known for never losing an election in his more than 40 years of public service.

Ramsey began his career in 1972, when he scored an upset win for a state House seat over incumbent Laban DeFries. After two terms, he won a seat as a delegate on the state’s last constitutional convention in 1977, and in 1978, Ramsey was the only Republican elected to the nine-member Hamilton County Council, which is now known as the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners. Following his brief role as a County Commissioner, Ramsey was elected Assessor of Property in 1980 and served for fourteen years before his sixteen year run as County Mayor. In 2010– shortly after winning his fifth term as County Mayor– Ramsey was appointed by former Governor Bill Haslam to serve as deputy to the governor, where he would go on to retire from politics three years later.

The longtime public servant was known for his steadfast commitment to expanding opportunities in economic development in Hamilton County, most notably continuing the work of his predecessor by playing a key role in attracting Volkswagen to Chattanooga.

“Claude was always quick on his feet and up for a challenge,” said **Jan Ramsey**. “It didn’t matter where he was or what he was doing– if someone needed him, he would be there in a heartbeat. Everything Claude did, he gave it 100%. He would always say how blessed and humbled he was to have the opportunity to represent the great people of Hamilton County. His legacy of hard work and passion for serving will live on forever.”

In the coming weeks, both plaques will make their way to their new homes–one on the Tennessee Riverpark and the other on what will be known as “Claude Ramsey Parkway,” adjacent to Enterprise South Industrial Park.

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