



# Public Property Naming Committee

## Regular Meeting

~ Agenda ~

400 Main St, Suite 460  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
<http://knoxvilletn.gov>

Will Johnson  
(865) 215-2044

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Thursday, April 27, 2017

5:30 PM

City County Building: Main Assembly Room

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- I. **CALL TO ORDER**
- II. **ROLL CALL**
- III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Thursday, October 20, 2016

#### IV. **REQUESTS**

##### A. **Resolution**

A Resolution naming the bridge at Holbrook Drive over Fountain Road the Mary Frances Housley Bridge.

#### V. **ADJOURNMENT**

RECEIVED



FEB 14 2017

CITY COUNCIL OFFICE

PUBLIC PROPERTIES & FACILITIES NAMING APPLICATION

Jurisdiction: City Council District 4th
Date Filed: 2-14-2017 Fee Paid: \$262.00 Application No.
Name of Applicant: Chris Hammond
Address of Applicant: 3701 Holgate Ln. Powell, TN 37849

Public Property and Facility Re-naming:

Present Property/Facility Name:
Proposed Property/Facility Name:
Location of Property/Facility Proposed for Renaming:

Reason for Proposed Naming: Mary Frances Housley was a 1944 Central High School graduate, Fountain City resident, and airline stewardess that heroically sacrificed her life saving 10 lives on a burning plane on January 14, 1951, at the Philadelphia Airport in Pennsylvania.

Have met all criteria required for re-naming (Please check)

Public Property and Facility Naming:

Proposed Property/Facility Name: Mary Frances Housley
Location of Property/Facility: The recently renovated bridge located near 2801 Holbrook Drive in Fountain City. This bridge is directly in front of Fountain City Church (formerly called First Baptist Church of Fountain City).

Have met all criteria required for re-naming (Please check)

ALL CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THIS APPLICATION SHOULD BE SENT TO:

Chris Hammond 3701 Holgate Ln. Powell, TN 37849 865-771-1463
Name (Print) Address \* City \* State \* Zip \* Phone \* Fax

APPLICATION ACCEPTED BY:

[Signature]

DATE: 2-14-2017

Attachment: Application: Mary Frances Housley Bridge (5140 : Mary Frances Housley Bridge Naming)

**FOUNTAIN CITY TOWN HALL, INC.**  
**P.O. Box, 18001**  
**Knoxville, TN, 37928-8001**

January 16, 2017

**Hand Delivered to Mr. Chris Hammond**

Dear Mr. Hammond:

With great pleasure I write to inform you that on 1-14-17, the Board of Fountain City Town Hall, Inc., unanimously voted to support the official naming of the bridge at Holbrook Drive after Mary Frances "Frankie" Housley.

Additionally, the Board unanimously voted to use monies from our Heritage Account to fund the production and installation of the marker. Attached is a check made out to the City of Knoxville, in the amount of two-hundred and sixty-two dollars (\$262.00), to cover the anticipated cost.

We ask that this letter of support be made part of the effort to achieve the official naming of the bridge after Ms. Housley, and in any other manner you deem appropriate.

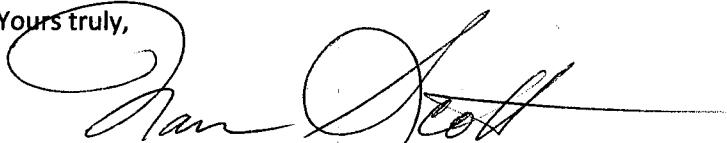
Thank you so much for bringing Ms. Housley's heroic and selfless actions to our attention and for proposing that the bridge at Holbrook Dr. be named in recognition of her bravery. For several reasons the bridge is a very appropriate structure to be named after Ms. Housley.

The bridge at Holbrook Dr. is located in close proximity to two public schools, Gresham Middle School and Fountain City Elementary. Having the bridge bear her name will ensure that generations of students and parents remember Ms. Housley and her selfless actions.

Additionally, Ms. Housley, a 1944 graduate of Knoxville Central High School, attended high school in what is presently Gresham Middle School, located just a few feet from the bridge.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our community. I look forward to hearing from you as the project progresses. Please let me know if we can be of further assistance.

Yours truly,



Nan Scott, Chair, Fountain City Town Hall, Inc.  
Naneliza7@gmail.com  
865-335-2719

Attachment: Application: Mary Frances Housley Bridge (5140 : Mary Frances Housley Bridge Naming)



## CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 18445  
Knoxville, TN 37928

January 19, 2017

Christopher B. Hammond, M.Ed., RRT  
Knox Central High School  
5321 Jacksboro Pike  
Knoxville, TN 37918

Dear Mr. Hammond,

On behalf of Central High School Foundation and Central High School Alumni Association, we are writing to express our support for the naming of the bridge at Holbrook Drive after Mary Frances "Frankie" Housley. We were proud to honor Frankie Housley with her induction into the Central "Wall of Fame" in 2003. The story of the heroism of this 1944 graduate of Central High School is worth retelling.

As you know, the 24 year old flight attendant died after rescuing at least ten passengers from the flaming wreckage of a crashed plane in Philadelphia International Airport in 1951. Her repeated rescue trips and cool demeanor earned her the title of "the Bravest Woman in America" from the Reader's Digest. She died with a 4 month old baby in her arms as she attempted to save additional passengers. For many years, the story of Frankie's professionalism and heroism inspired other flight attendant trainees. One attendant wrote me that "Frankie left quite a heritage for all of us to follow." We would like to think that her story can continue to inspire future generations.

Central High School Foundation and Central High School Alumni Association ask that this letter of enthusiastic support be made a part of the effort to obtain the formal naming of the bridge. We appreciate the efforts made by you and the Fountain City Town Hall to honor Ms. Housley with this highly appropriate commemoration. If there is any additional support which we can give to you in this effort, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Thank you

Sincerely yours,

R. Larry Smith for Central High School Alumni Association

Courtney Shea for Central High School Foundation

Board Members: Courtney Shea, Carolyn Thompson, Jean Payne, Larry Smith, Dr. Jim Tumblin,, J.D. Lambert, Michael Reynolds, Principal.

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J.C. Tumblin, O.D.

## FOUNTAIN CITIANS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

### Photo

#### Mary Frances Housley (1926-1951)

*Saving lives in a burning airplane is a job for stalwart men in asbestos suits, not for pretty 24-year-old girls. But Mary Frances Housley went back into the flaming wreckage 11 times. What made her do it? (Kantor, 1966 (1))<sup>1</sup>*

Mary Frances Housley was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on October 12, 1926 in the North Hills area, but the family moved to Fountain City and Mary Frances attended Central High School from 1940-1944. The 1944 *Centralite* indicates her wide-ranging interests and accomplishments: Girl Reserves, Bowling Club, Science Club, Glee Club, Cantata, Commercial Club--yet she was also a member of the honor society.

John H. Housley (5/3/1888-3/17/1959) and Fannie Mayer Housley (10/17/1894-1/15/1977) and their two children, **John Jr. and Mary Frances**, lived at 300 Forestal Drive during Mary Frances' high school years. Her father, a native of \_\_\_\_\_, was owner of the Housley Cigar Company (2).<sup>2</sup>

In preparing his *Reader's Digest* article, famed author, MacKinlay Kantor, interviewed some of her teachers. Pace Moore Johnston, Latin teacher, told him, "But I have never contented myself with teaching Latin as a language. We examine the economics, the political factors of Rome. I have taken my classes to city-council meetings, so that we might learn something by comparison with the structure of an ancient state.

"Sometimes I have been criticized for this. People have said, 'If you are teaching Latin to young folks, you should merely teach Latin.' But on the day when I may not include the wider and more important studies of humanity in my courses, I will walk out of the classroom."

Kantor observed, "... Mrs. Johnston included those studies of humanity. Frankie appeared to have picked up some ideas along that line (3)."<sup>3</sup>

The Central High principal, Miss Hassie K. Gresham, also molded character as she stimulated young minds to be active participants in the learning experience. As she taught the Bible and the works of Shakespeare in senior literature class or during the weekly chapel meetings in the main auditorium, Miss Gresham drew on her years of teaching and administration for object lessons. Those were war years and she held students spellbound relating incidents of servicemen who once attended Central. She referred to the marble tablet on the auditorium wall which bore the names of seven Fountain City boys who died in World War I. Above that list a paraphrase of John 15:13 was engraved, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

These early influences from dedicated educators, together with the lessons she learned from her parents at home, must have prepared Mary Frances for the events of Sunday, January 14, 1951.

After high school she worked for a succession of doctors in Jacksonville, Florida as an office assistant. When her current employer was recalled for active duty in the Navy in 1950, she applied for a position as stewardess with National Airlines. She was hired the next day.

She and another fledgling stewardess, Peggy Egerton, found an apartment in Vernon Terrace, Jacksonville. Mary Frances had acquired the nickname Frankie by now. Peggy recalled how Frankie was loving life and loving people. More than once an exuberant Frankie awakened her roommate as she returned from a date to announce, "Peggy, wake up! I've got to tell you all about it. He's the most wonderful man! I'm in love!"

But, even during those times, Frankie had a serious side. Eddie George, who had been a B-24 pilot during World War II, told author Kantor about it. "One night I called Frankie and asked her for a date, but she already had one. ... I had been struggling with the tax return for my tobacco store, and just couldn't lick it. I had to send it in the next day, but I had bogged down.

"I came into this place, sat down, looked around--and there was Frankie. She had left her party and came to me right away. 'Eddie, have you finished your tax?' she asked. I told her it was too much for me; I guess I'd have to be delinquent. 'But you can't,' she said. 'You're supposed to have that done by tomorrow!' ... Frankie's response was, 'Come on Eddie. We're going over to your place to work on the tax. I've told my date good-bye. Now come along.' It took us almost all night to work it out."

Kantor asked, "Was she in love with you, Eddie?"

"Not me especially," Eddie said, "She just loved people."

On Saturday, January 13, Frankie called Peggy Egerton from the Jacksonville airport and said, "... Darndest luck, I've got to work, so no double date tonight. Some girls were sick, and there was a foul-up."

She flew to Newark, New Jersey that day, planning to fly the Norfolk, Virginia shuttle and return to Jacksonville on Monday. But that was not to be. Instead, on Sunday, January 14, she was on National's Flight 83, a DC4, from Newark to Norfolk with an intermediate stop in Philadelphia. Rain and snow swirled around the slushy runway as they approached the Philadelphia airport. Although it was mid-afternoon the pilot was ordered to make an instrument landing.

The 25 passengers and three person crew landed on the 6000-foot runway but overran it and plunged through a fence with most of the fuselage thrust across a 10-foot ditch. The left wing was severed and high-octane gasoline tanks ruptured and the fuel ignited (4).<sup>4</sup>

Frankie Housley wrestled open the cabin door and looked down at the ground eight feet below. Women and children were screaming behind her. Down there was safety and Frankie could have been the first to jump. Instead she went back to her passengers, as she had been trained to do in the five months she had been a stewardess. Working swiftly she released the seatbelts that balked at the efforts of frantic passengers.

In all Frankie made 11 trips from the door into the cabin, guiding frightened passengers to the door and urging them to jump. Some were reluctant and she shoved them. Maybe they would be slightly injured, but they would survive.

An 18-year-old sailor told newsmen a few hours later, "The stewardess was the calmest person on the plane." "She was calm and tried to quiet those passengers who were yelling," said a young soldier. The pilot and the co-pilot were out, unscratched and unburned, as were most of the passengers. But Mary Frances did not return from her 11th trip back into the hot and smoking plane. After the fire subsided and the wreckage had cooled, they found her body with a 4-month old baby cradled in her arms.

Some time later the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission presented her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Housley, Sr., a bronze medal recognizing Mary Frances' heroic acts. Who can say what molds a heroine? Perhaps the answer is on that marble plaque on the wall in Central High School, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Mary Frances and her parents are buried in Lynnhurst Cemetery, Knoxville, Tennessee (5).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MacKinlay Kantor, "A Girl Named Frankie," *The Reader's Digest*, May, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Knoxville City Directory, 1940-1944.

<sup>3</sup> op.cit., Kantor.

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<sup>4</sup> “Ex-Fountain City Girl Rescues 10, Then Dies in Flaming Plane,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 15, 1951; Carson Brewer, “This is Your Community,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 14, 1971; op.cit. Kantor.

<sup>5</sup> Lynnhurst Cemetery.