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Mayor Burchett announces Congress run

By Mike Steely
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Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett has been waiting in the wings of the political theatre for Congressman Irv Duncan Jr. to decide if he will seek re-election. The long-term congressman, who followed his father into that office, announced last week that he will not run again.

Mayor Tim Burchett, who has teased the press and public that he was going to run for either the U.S. Congress or the U.S. Senate, has been ready for some time to announce his candidacy for Congress. He made the announcement Saturday morning at Volunteer Market #3 on Western Avenue.

"It's time somebody put Americans and Tennesseans first. They're sure not doing that in Washington," Burchett told the large crowd made up by elected officials, veterans, and citizens.

"It's time we bring our men and women home from the Middle East," he

said. The candidate went on to talk about energy independence, free market solutions to health care, and said it's time to stop paying our enemies and sometimes friends for their oil.

The county mayor reminded the crowd that he has served without a tax increase and talked about medical and mental health needs of military veterans.

"Too much government is the problem, folks, and more government is not the solution," he said.

"Our founders created the United States House of Representatives in Article 1 of the Constitution. The house was created before the Senate. It was created to represent the people, the farmers, the laborers, the small business owners - people we call blue collar workers. People who in 2017 go to work every day with their names on their shirts," Burchett told the supporters.

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Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett fist bumps a supporter following his announcement Saturday that he's running for U.S. Congress. A couple hundred supporters turn out for the event at Vol Market # 2 on Western Avenue.

Why are sidewalks so important to neighborhoods?

By Mike Steely
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The Metropolitan Planning Commission is urging both the city of Knoxville and Knox County to require sidewalks in any new subdivision development. Some developers are including sidewalks in the plans they present. The emphasis on "walkability" in the city is growing and Mayor Madeline Rogero included nearly \$3 million in her budget in addition to the funds left over from last year for other sidewalks.

Monday Mayor Rogero cut the ribbon on the extension of the \$382,000 sidewalk along Young High Pike connecting that neighborhood with Chapman Highway. She announced five other major sidewalk projects that should begin within the month.

The projects planned for this fiscal year include Gleason Drive between Downtown West Boulevard and Bearden High School, Palmetto Road between Western Avenue and London Drive, Buffat Mill Road between Whittle Springs and Bridlewood Drive, Atlantic Avenue between Pershing Street and North Broadway and Wilson Avenue between South Chestnut Street and South Harrison Street.



Mayor Madeline Rogero (center) is joined by city staff and South Knoxville residents in cutting the ribbon officially opening the extension of the Young High Pike sidewalk, connecting the neighborhood to Chapman Highway.

Other projects, such as the Cedar Lane sidewalk that will connect Pratt Road to Starch Road along the south side of the busy connector street, are planned. Authorized in 2014, the project should be accepting bids this summer for the 2100 foot length. It replaces a foot path that local neighbors use to reach the businesses along Cedar Lane and Merchants Drive.

Gerald Green, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Planning Commission,

confirmed for The Focus that the MPC "may recommend and the commission may require" sidewalks in some new subdivisions in Knox County. Green said the recommendation is based on where the subdivision is being planned, and take into account whether or not it is in an area of "parental responsibility" and pedestrian needs.

Rogero called the Young High Pike sidewalk extension an "important link" for the community and said sidewalks

"enhance livability."

"People can leave the car at home and shop and sidewalks improve retail in the sale of homes," she said.

Jim Hagerman, Director of Engineering, spoke briefly about some of the difficulties in building the sidewalk, such as having to build a new drainage system there and the challenges of the slopes in the neighborhood.

Dawn Distler, director of

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School Board delays action on revising discipline policy

By Pete Gawda

After months of discussion on the topic of revising the board policy on misbehavior and disciplinary actions, the Knox County Board of Education, at their Monday evening work session, decided to delay any action at this time.

As a result of lengthy discussion, the board recognized that it would not be possible for the proposed policy change to go into effect before school starts on August 7. Therefore they decided to delay its implementation until the beginning of the following school year. That would give school officials ample time to consider proposed revisions and present them to the board for approval well in advance of the beginning of the next school year.

At previous meetings, when considering this policy change, the board had looked at defining different levels of misbehavior and disciplinary procedures and disciplinary options for each level of misbehavior.

A faith based community organization, JusticeKnox, has expressed much interest in this issue. During the public comment time, Ron Webster, a spokesman for that group said his organization had no comment at that time but would issue a written comment.

Mike McMillan commented on the policy change he promoted on Code of Behavior and Discipline which has wording forbidding any type of discrimination based on "race, creed, color, national origin, religion or sex." If a school system employee is found guilty of such action, the proposed

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