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City celebrates Cumberland renovation completion

By Ken Lay

The City of Knoxville had plenty to celebrate Thursday afternoon as area elected officials gathered to mark the end of a project that took over two years to complete.

The city had a ribbon-cutting on a hot and humid afternoon to celebrate the virtual completion of the renovation of Cumberland Avenue, a venture that took more than 28 months to finish.

The celebration was held at the Howard Baker Center.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam conceived the idea to renovate the area commonly known as The Strip when he was Knoxville's City Mayor. He was on hand for the celebration Thursday and he commended Mayor Madeline Rogero for continuing the work that he officially began in 2007.

"I would like to thank and commend Mayor Rogero for continuing what we began and for seeing this thing through," Haslam said. "During my 14 years of public service as a mayor and governor, I've learned one thing."

"That's that hard stuff is hard and that you don't meet much resistance



PHOTO BY KEN LAY

The City of Knoxville celebrates the completion of the Cumberland Avenue Construction Project with a ribbon cutting. Dignitaries at the ceremony included: Councilman Daniel Brown; Director of Redevelopment Anne Wallace Deputy to the Mayor Bill Lyons; Governor Bill Haslam; Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero; Councilman Nick Pavlis; and Vice Mayor Duane Grieve.

until you start to change things. People don't complain if you leave things the way they are. But that all changes when you start to change things. It would've been easy for Mayor Rogero to abandon this project but she didn't."

Rogero went ahead with the project and the Cumberland Avenue Streetscape

Project began in April of 2015 and its purpose was to make the street safer and more pedestrian friendly. It was also intended to establish a more efficient connection to the downtown area.

"I first came here to be a professor at [the University of Tennessee] 40 years ago, and that was my first

experience with Cumberland Avenue," said Bill Lyons, Deputy to the Mayor and Chief Policy Officer. "Cumberland's not been working for a long time."

"It wasn't working as a connection to downtown, not working for businesses and not working as a front door for UT. We wanted to make this an area to come

to and not an area to go through. Redding Cumberland would set the stage for the next half-century or more. It will set the stage for UT's campus beautification, starting with this, its front door."

Cumberland Avenue has been narrowed to three lanes and now features left-turn lanes at the

intersections. The area has wider sidewalks and a new utility infrastructure.

Anne Wallace, the city's Director of Redevelopment, oversaw the \$25 million project which was completed on time.

"We will plant some trees once the weather cools down," said Wallace, who was emotional during her remarks to the crowd, which included University of Tennessee dignitaries as well as present and past city council members, county commissioners, area business owners and four former mayors. "When I was hired, I was told that they wanted someone who would wake up every morning and think about Cumberland Avenue."

"What I didn't know was just how many times that I would wake up in the middle of the night and think about it. I want to thank my husband and my family for sticking with me through this. This is truly a great day."

Rogero called the project "a total and complete team effort" and she noted that it couldn't have happened without the area's property and business owners.

Pay raise for future council members passes

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Only Councilman Marshall Stair opposed raising the pay of council members in 2019 from \$19,000 to \$24,000 per year.

"I'm just very satisfied," he said of the current pay, adding, "It's a fair salary for a part-time position." He was the only one to comment on the pay raise which was sponsored by council members Nick Pavlis, Brenda Palmer, Mark Camper and Vice Mayor Duane Grieve.

No current council member would be seeing when the pay bump goes into effect. Five members are term limited this year and the other four have terms that expire in two years.

The council took time to honor the late Jean Price Teague who served on the council for three decades. The Second District councilwoman was a

strong advocate for neighborhoods, served on the West Hills Neighborhood Association and was a member of Community Forum. Grieve, who serves the same district, said it was an honor to work with her.

Bike sharing is coming to Knoxville and the council voted to authorize Mayor Madeline Rogero to execute a "Master License Agreement" with Zagster Inc. to own, operate, maintain and make bicycles on city property.

Erin Gill, director of the Office of Sustainability, told the council the shared bike program would allow local people and visitors to "explore the city in an active way." She said that Zagster will own the bikes and have access to city right-of-ways. The city and Legacy Parks will be working with



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Wanda Day, Collections Officer with Knoxville's Finance Department, was honored during a meeting of the Beer Board Tuesday. City Recorder Will Johnson presented Ms. Day with a plaque for her years of service. Council member Brenda Palmer noted that Day, who is retiring, makes all the beer applicants feel comfortable.

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Movies on Market Square voting is now open

Knox County Public Library's Movies on Market Square is gearing up for its 14th season of family-friendly outdoor movies in the heart of downtown Knoxville. On six consecutive Friday nights from September 8-October 13, the public is invited to bring the whole family, including their favorite, well behaved, four-pawed, tail-wagging companion, to see a free movie presented by Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union.

The public will decide the lineup through an online vote at www.knoxlib.org/movies, or at polling stations at all Knox County Public Library locations and at Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union's downtown branch located at 301 Wall Avenue. Contenders include movies in the following categories: A Return to the 1980s, Disney Faves, Dystopia, Halloween, and Superheroes.

Voting runs through August 24 at www.knoxlib.org/movies.

The winning lineup will be announced on August 31.

Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union has returned as the presenting sponsor of the popular series. Knox County Public Library also is grateful for additional support from its sponsors: Lucid Media, Downtown Knoxville, Pilot Flying J, the City of Knoxville, KJB, Springboard Audiovisual, GO Knoxville! WEIR, and B97.5.

The Library produces Movies on Market Square to highlight its vast movie and music collection. With over 13,000 titles of feature films, documentaries, TV shows, and how-to films, the movie collection is one of the most popular circulating collections at the Library. Downloadable resources of ebooks, audiobooks and streaming music have grown in popularity and continue to be a focus of collection development for Knox County Public Library.

For more information, please call (865) 215-8767 or visit www.knoxlib.org.

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