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August 28, 2017

Pride and Joy

AMR-Rural/ Metro service questions continue

By Mike Steely
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The early renewal proposal for ambulance service in Knox County saw lots of discussion and questions during the Knox County Commission's work session last week, and the issue may come to a head today during the regular meeting.

The Knox County Health Department is asking to renew a five-year agreement with the ambulance service although the current agreement doesn't expire until September of next year.

The discussion last week pitted some commission members against each other and saw various representatives of AMR-Rural/Metro responding to questions about billing, service, response time and company ownership brought up, initially, by Commissioner Charles Busler. Commissioners Evelyn Gill, Carson Dailey and Michelle Carringer also had some pointed comments about the matter.

Commissioner Busler said that he wants to know more about KKR, the possible new owners of the parent company AMR, how 911 calls are distributed, and why an EMS Cost Review Board hasn't been named to oversee the agreement. AMR-Rural/Metro provides ambulance service in Knox County and the parent company also provides fire response.

Busler made a motion to re-bid the contract instead of approving the renewal. Commissioner Brad Anders responded with a "point of order" and moved to approve the proposed agreement. Commissioner John Schoonmaker charged that Busler's questions "got shut down" and then Anders said he would pull his motion so discussion could continue.

Busler then called for a 60 or 90-day delay on a decision and repeated that an overseeing board, including one commissioner, has never been named.

Knoxville Health Department Director Dr. Martha Buchanan told the work session that the review board was not an active body and wouldn't be convened unless a fee hike by AMR-Rural/Metro is requested.

Chris Blach of AMR-Rural/Metro joined Dr. Buchanan at the podium and reminded the board that no fee hike has been requested.

Busler then asked why a fire truck is sent to a caller who is only asking for transportation

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Sawyer Dyer awaits the start of his homecoming parade with his family and Knox County Sheriff's deputies.

Faith, family and community converge to celebrate a miracle

By Richie Beeler

Johnny Sawyer Dyer just wanted to go home. But even the imagination of a seven-year-old could not have envisioned what was waiting for him when he got there. Last Tuesday night when Sawyer and his family returned to the Gibbs community after a three-month hospital stay, they were greeted by hundreds of supporters clad in orange – and even a couple of superheroes – to welcome him home, in full remission

from leukemia.

Smiling faces lined both sides of Tazewell Pike all the way from Fairview Road to Harrison's Crossroads – a distance of nearly half a mile. Sawyer, his sister Maddie, and parents Ron and Misty rode in a convertible, as grandparents and other family and friends followed in a pickup truck driven by Tony Crawford, worship pastor at Fairview Baptist Church where the Dyers are members. It was Crawford's wife

Becky who came up with the idea and plan for the homecoming celebration.

"The inspiration for the parade came from Sawyer himself," she said. "His faith and that of his family has not only touched the hearts of our church family at Fairview, but also of Gibbs Elementary School, other churches in the community, and has even reached as far as social media has taken it."

Crawford said Sawyer's story

has gone well beyond the borders of the Gibbs community, and is even touching people throughout the U.S. But in the end, she said, it was home that meant the most to Sawyer and his family.

"The reason we chose to invite the Gibbs community to Tazewell Pike to welcome him home is because they've been a part of his journey from the beginning. Whether they've bought t-shirts, gave blood, shaved their head,

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Variance granted for incorrectly placed home

By Mike Steely
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The lady seemed totally unfamiliar with the process of the Knox County Board of Zoning and Appeals but when she faced the nine members Wednesday she directly addressed them and fought for her request.

Mary Katherine Johnson is a school teacher and her husband works construction. She came before the BZA to request a variance on the setback of her mobile home from 40 to 32.37 feet. The home sits atop

a hill on a flat piece of property at 3227 Roberts Road, just north of Millertown Road and east of Rutledge Pike.

The Johnsons had their mobile home placed on the property by Clayton Mobile Homes and she said that the company was supposed to be at the BZA hearing but was not.

"Our home was set up by Clayton and they didn't get it correct," she said.

Chairman Marcus Chady replied that the BZA had a "couple dozen" incidents

before them about Clayton and the incorrect placement of homes. He asked her if the lot and topography would permit correct placement to give a 40-foot setback. She answered "No" and explained that there is a high slope of ground behind the mobile home and drainage there.

Vice Chairman Kevin Murphy told Mrs. Johnson that she had a right to postpone a decision until a Clayton representative would appear.

BZA member Bill Sewell

noted that there is a 100-foot rise behind the home added, "I don't know how many more times we can forgive Clayton Homes."

"Your home is probably sitting in the only place it could have been set," he added.

Mrs. Johnson said the family has hired an attorney and said, "We'll make sure this will not happen again to other people."

Chady said the placement of the home and the fact that the

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