

Separate Ethics Complaints Filed Against Brad Anders and Lee Tramel

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Knox County Law Department has confirmed that two ethics complaints have been filed. One complaint involved Knox County Mayor candidate Brad Anders and the other is against Knox County

Sheriff candidate Lee Tramel.

Both candidates are being backed by current Sheriff J. J. Jones, who has attacked their opponents in campaign ads and internet posts.

Powell resident Bruce Williams is charging that

Anders accepted gifts and plays on the Rural/Metro Ambulance golf team often and then voted to extend that company's contract a year before it was due to be renewed.

Tramel is charged by retired Police Investigator Don Wiser with violation of

federal and state law for campaigning while on duty, in uniform, using a county-owned car to campaign and using his position with the sheriff's department to further his campaign.

Sheriff Jones has obviously put Tramel out front publicly as

the spokesman for the department on various issues in order to help his campaign.

The complaints will be thoroughly investigated by the law department and eventually be passed along to the ethics committee.

When asked, Knox

County Law Director Bud Armstrong said, "The law department will complete its investigation into both complaints and submit its findings to the Knox County Ethics Committee as soon as possible."



Commissioner Bob Thomas meets the press following the dismissal of an ethics complaint against him and Commissioner Charles Busler. Thomas is a candidate for Knox County Mayor and has said all along that this issue was nothing more than a political attack by his opponents in the current election.

Ethics committee dismisses complaints against Busler and Thomas

By Mike Steely
steelym@knoxfocus.com

When is it not wise to make an ethics complaint?

Answer: When you can't prove it. That's what happened when the Knox County Ethics Committee voted 7-1 to dismiss charges against Commissioners Bob Thomas and Charles Busler Friday.

The complaint was made by failed former county commission candidate and current Circuit Court Clerk candidate Richard "Bo" Bennett, which he based on a Knoxville News-Sentinel

story about a golf tournament that Thomas and Busler took part in. He was unable to prove the allegations and only ethics member Barbara Chandler voted to uphold the complaint.

Both men were accused by Bennett of accepting a gift card and playing on the Priority Ambulance Golf Team in August. Bennett also accused both of them for voting against the early renewal of the Rural/Metro AMR ambulance contract with the county. Thomas and Busler denied being influenced to vote against the

renewal.

The result of the hearing means that Bennett may be liable for the all expenses incurred by the county and that Thomas and Busler may now ask the county to repay their attorney fees as well.

Following the dismissal of charges, Busler and his wife prayed together and left the meeting without making a statement.

Thomas, a candidate for county mayor, met with the media following the dismissal and said that charges

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School Budget Pandemonium

By Focus Staff

There was pandemonium at a recent meeting of the Knox County Board of Education. Last week, the board met in both work and regular sessions to discuss the budget proposed by Superintendent Bob Thomas. Thomas and the board are facing a \$3.5 million shortfall. Having little choice but to recommend cuts, Thomas proposed cutting back spending on magnet schools and Project GRAD. That recommendation brought out a crowd from Knoxville's inner city and no fewer than

eighty-seven people signed up to speak at the board public forum last Monday night. The board patiently listened to everyone for 7 1/2 hours, remaining in session until 12:30 a.m.

The school system, like every other department and agency of government, must send over a budget for the inspection of Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett and the County Commission. Much of the shortfall has to do with two things: habitual overspending by the school system and increased costs for employee insurance and

funding teachers' pensions.

Board member Gloria Deathridge, who routinely supported overspending the school system's budget during the reign of former superintendent Jim McIntyre, was the first to cry the Board could not be held responsible for the shortfall. After all, who could have foreseen the cost of insurance premiums rising and increased pension payments for teachers? Deathridge quickly took the position as the board could not have possibly anticipated such fateful events so the county commission should

be asked by the board to just provide more money. Deathridge seemed not to realize the board having to cross the street from the Andrew Johnson Building to the City County Building was a tacit admission the board cannot manage its own budget.

Unfortunately, the county commissioners are acutely aware of the continual overspending by the school system during McIntyre's administration. Estimates range to as much as \$60 million in overspending during McIntyre's administration. One thing is certain:

during the last two years of McIntyre's rule as superintendent, the school system overspent by \$30 million, almost ten times the amount now needed by the schools to balance their budget. Some observers still remember that one year the school system received an additional windfall of \$14 million in funding, which McIntyre and the former board spent in a single night.

A free-spending superintendent and penny-pinching mayor were certain to butt heads and McIntyre's penchant for using one-time

money in his budget as a continuing expense began to rattle both the mayor and the county commission. McIntyre finally resorted to pushing adoption of the largest property tax increase in Knox County's history, aided daily by the Knoxville News-Sentinel and a \$50,000 advertising campaign orchestrated by the Chamber of Commerce. Big-business types like now-gubernatorial candidate Randy Boyd came to urge commissioners to "do the right thing" by increasing property taxes.

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Dee Canizales
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Cell: 865-686-8335
Fax: 865-637-9119

dcanizales@tenantschoice.com

701 N Central St
Knoxville TN 37917



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