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Blackburn opens Knoxville campaign office

By Pete Gawda

Marsha Blackburn, who currently represents Tennessee in the U.S. House of Representatives, is running for U.S. Senate. She opened her Knoxville campaign office, located at 1601 Western Avenue, on Saturday, July 28 with a ribbon cutting ceremony and speeches by Tennessee Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally, state Representative Jason Zachary, former Knox County Commissioner Mike Hammond as well as the candidate herself. A large crowd of well-wishers was in attendance including candidates for other offices and other elected officials. State Representative Bill Dunn led the Pledge of Allegiance and Rev. Clarence Sexton of Temple Baptist Church offered a prayer.

"Failure to elect Marsha is not an option," Hammond said. He praised Blackburn for helping eliminate the state income tax in Tennessee and her commitment to family values.

"She's a fighter," said Zachary. "That's what we need in the Senate." He said the faith community will be supporting her because of her right to life.

"We've got to make sure we have a conservative voice in the Senate," Zachary said as he called for "all hands on deck to make sure she is the next Senator from Tennessee."

"I am coming as a force for conservative, positive change," Blackburn avowed. "We will never have a state income tax in Tennessee." She said that since 2002, thanks in part to her efforts, Tennesseans can deduct sales tax from their federal income tax, resulting in substantial savings on tax payments.

"Tennesseans want a conservative in the U.S. Senate who will stand with the president and vote 'yes' for federal court judges," Blackburn said.

"The Democrats say there is a blue wave sweeping the country," Blackburn said. "When it reaches Tennessee it will crash against the red wall."

Referring to past elections victories, she said, "We won because people were with us and our policies were right."

"I need your help so we can win this race," Blackburn concluded, asking her supporters to knock on doors and make telephone calls.

When asked by The Focus why she wanted to run for the Senate, Blackburn said that the



PHOTO BY PETE GAWDA

Marsha Blackburn, flanked by Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally, Charlie Severance and state Representative Jason Zachary, cuts the ribbon to open her Knoxville headquarters last Saturday.

Senate is currently so nonproductive that it is a disservice to taxpayers. She said that member of the House repealed Obamacare but the Senate failed to act. She said the House sent 600 bills to the Senate that the Senate did not act on. She said the people want the Senate to be more productive. Blackburn pledged to reduce the size and scope of the federal government and to cut spending.

Blackburn is a native of Mississippi and a graduate of Mississippi State University. She worked her way through college by selling books for the Southwestern Company, eventually becoming a sales manager for that

company. She moved on to serve as Director of Retail Fashion and Special Events for the Castner Retail company. Later Blackburn founded Marketing Strategies, which focuses on the retail marketplace.

Blackburn began her elected service in 1998 as a Tennessee State Senator. In 2002 she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Tennessee's 7th Congressional District where she currently holds a seat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Blackburn and her husband Chuck live in Williamson County and have two grown children and two grandsons.

Historic overlay mediation orientation set for today

By Mike Steely
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After more than a year of disagreement in the Parkridge neighborhood over expanding the historic overlay there, the city is calling a meeting to begin mediation for both sides.

This Monday, July 30, from 6 until 8 p.m. Debbie Sharp, the Knoxville Neighborhood Coordinator, is asking residents on both sides of the issue to attend a Community Mediation meeting. The meeting, at the O'Connor Senior Center, will inform residents about what the Community Mediation Center does and how the mediation process works.

The actual mediation process will begin at a later date and anyone can sign up for those sessions at the O'Connor meeting.

Email invitations for the Monday mediation orientation were sent to various Parkridge homeowners.

"Since we met on June 27 the Community Mediation Center has come up with a strategy for mediation," Sharp notified homeowners.

Opponents of the historic overlay are concerned about restrictions on repairing non-historic homes, the expense involved and possible gentrification as a result of property values within such a district increasing.

Proponents of the historic designation point to added protections such a designation would bring and have offered to help compensate poorer homeowners on repairs. The matter divided the east Knoxville neighborhood into two camps and resulted in Sharp stepping in by request and overseeing the neighborhood association reorganization.

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IDB board members chosen by commission

By Mike Steely
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It took a few votes but three citizens were chosen by the Knoxville County Commission last week to serve as directors of the Industrial Development Board of the Health, Education and Housing Facility Board.

The IDB board of directors serve for six years and

after several nominations the commission chose to reappoint Paul Fortunato and add Michael George and Tiffany Gardener to the boards.

Six of nine votes were required and the selection took several rounds.

The IDB oversees financing and development of projects to promote industry, trade,

commerce, tourism and recreation, and housing construction. It serves as a non-recourse conduit lender for taxable or tax-free financing for industrial projects. They administer a County, a tax abatement or Payment-in-Lieu-Of-Tax (PILOT) program, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and undertakes the issuance of revenue bonds (Bonds)

on behalf of Knox County.

Todd Napier, CEO of the IDB, told the commissioners that IDB board member nominees are chosen for their backgrounds and skill sets and are contacted to see if they will serve.

In other action the commissioners postponed until their

'UpTOWN North' proposed to brand area neighborhoods

By Mike Steely
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There's a new concept being discussed in North Knoxville, one that is catchy and descriptive, and certain to become very popular.

"UpTOWN North" is a brand being introduced to neighborhoods in the North Knoxville area with boundaries extending from

I-40 at I-275 to the I-640 interchange and Whittle Springs Road on the east. The UpTOWN North branding committee is working to find the need to define the unique character of this diverse and historic area.

The vision of UpTOWN North is to promote North Knoxville as an attractive, diverse, commercial, family-friendly and

safe community that values its history.

George Bove, president of the North Knoxville Business and Professionals Association, told The Focus the idea started with NKBPA member Ara Rickman of Fulton High School. Rickman's idea led to several meetings and Bove named Rickman as chair of the new committee.

"Fulton is the heartbeat of North Knoxville and would be the center of this campaign," Bove said.

"We really need to identify North Knoxville as a distinct area from other neighborhoods such as downtown Knoxville and Fountain City and are talking with neighborhood groups about adopting the 'UpTOWN North'

idea. We would like to see this brand become an umbrella for this on-the-area. We are looking to create a destination," Bove said.

"There were several good ideas for a name but 'UpTOWN North' was the name chosen because it best captured the intent of the committee."

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