

Ed and Bob sign off with last 'Night Out'

Knox County At-Large Commissioners Ed Brantley and Bob Thomas held their final Commissioners' Night Out at Wright's Cafeteria Thursday. When elected, Ed and Bob promised to be available to all citizens. This was their 43rd consecutive monthly Ed & Bob Night Out in Knox County.

Ed and Bob always felt that going out to the citizens eases the strain on those who, because of work, commitments, financial situation or the distance to the City-County Building, cannot attend regular commission meetings.

Ed and Bob will be honored for their work and service at the commission's regular meeting tonight.



Knoxville Focus Publisher Steve Husley, center, visits with At-Large Commissioners Ed Brantley, left, and Bob Thomas, right, at Ed and Bob's last Commissioners' Night Out Thursday evening at Wright's Cafeteria.

Hollywood Road zoning, sports insurance and new greenway before city council

By Mike Steely
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Looks like a busy meeting is in store for the Knoxville City Council Tuesday afternoon. The 6 p.m. regular session may see discussion from everything from finalizing the new noise ordinance to zoning changes to awarding the contract for the new Urban Wilderness Gateway Project.

Neighbors along Hollywood Road in Pond Gap are expected to appear and plead with the council not to pass, on a final reading, approval for an apartment complex designed for 24 units per acre. The local homeowners, joined by the Bearden Council and others, objected to the first reading and then protested along the busy connector road recently.

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KCSD pension dispute going to court

By Mike Steely
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Should pensions for former and future Knox County Sheriff's Department employees carry on the vacation days that have been added to pension calculations? Or should the pensions only include 75% of their regular monthly salaries for the last two years served?

That's the question that will be before Chancery Court on Friday, September 7. Because the Knox County Law Department cannot legally sue a division of Knox County, the law director hired an outside firm to sue the Pension Board for including those unused vacation days in calculations. The difference could be thousands of dollars in increased pension, some more than 85% of their salaries.

Some retiring employees are drawing the increased amount and others preparing to retire want to keep the increase. The county, in effect, is suing its own Pension board.

Attorney Herb Moncier spoke at public forum during the County Commission's

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Above, Protesters gather at Hall's Elementary School Friday afternoon to protest Governor Bill Haslam's "Listening Tour" regarding a myriad of problems with the state TNReady testing program for students. Below, Governor Bill Haslam, center, and Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner Candice McQueen, left, listen to facilitator Wayne Miller during the listening tour session at Hall's Elementary School.

Teachers protest Haslam's 'Listening Tour'

By Focus Staff



"We are all here for the same reason. It isn't working — what can we do to make it better? And if we don't make it better, there is going to be a teacher crisis. The new interns are already seeing it," the collective voices of unhappy teachers told The Focus as Governor Bill Haslam kicked off his six-stop listening tour last Friday at Hall's Elementary School.

Educator and former executive director

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Sale of Andrew Johnson Building on hold

By Mike Steely
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An agreement to sell the Andrew Johnson Building has been postponed another 30 days by the Knox County Commission. The matter has faced questions from the commission about the appraised amount being much lower than the offer and why the "per square foot" estimate may be too low compared to other downtown

properties. The purchase offer, for \$6 million, is about half of the appraised value.

Commission Chairman Randy Smith told The Focus he understands the delay is because the proposed buyer, BHA Associates LLC, wants to review the latest modified agreement. Terms of the sale first appeared on the agenda in July, however the second postponement won't be considered

until the first meeting of the new commission in September.

During the work session Commissioner Charles Busler called on Superintendent Bob Thomas for an update on the search for a new location. The Andrew Johnson Building houses the administration offices of the school system and any agreement to sell the historic building depends on finding and preparing a

new location to move those offices.

Thomas said the county is leading the way to find a location and he is in a conversation about the possible move. He asked Finance Director Chris Caldwell to comment.

Caldwell told the commissioners that 10 to 15 locations have been considered and the list has been narrowed down to "less than five" that would

work but added he doesn't "feel comfortable about discussing" the options.

Asked about using the old Rule High School property Caldwell said it could cost up to \$40 million to renovate the old facility or possibly \$15 million if a new building is added there. He said private and county-owned properties are being considered and that liquidating some other county-owned sites could

help offset any cost.

Busler said the search could result in selling the Andrew Johnson Building for \$6 million and then replacing it with some place that is "a bit more expensive."

Caldwell said a move could be to a facility of at least 90,000 square feet with about 400 parking spaces if it only relocates the administration offices.

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