



The Knoxville Focus

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School board approves 2020 budget

By Ken Lay

The Knox County Board of Education approved a \$506.6 million budget for the upcoming academic year at a called meeting Wednesday night at the City-County Building.

The board approved the budget with an 8-1 vote with Mike McMillan being the only dissenting vote.

The new proposed

budget, which must still be approved by Knox County Commission, awards teachers a 3.5% pay raise and step increases for those educators who are eligible.

Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas was commended by the board and by the Knox County Education Association.

"This is my fifth budget

cycle and this is the most fiscally responsible budget since I've been here," board member Patti Bounds said.

Board chairperson Terry Hill agreed.

"This is one of the smoothest years since I've served, that we've had in budgeting," she said.

The new proposed budget makes teacher pay a priority. The board originally

sought a four percent pay raise for teachers. Those raises will total \$16 million.

But based on projected tax revenues, federal and state funding, the board approved a 3.5% increase, which many feel is definitely a step in the right direction. Knox County Education Association President Tanya Coats became emotional during her public

forum comments, which thanked both Thomas and the Board of Education for making teacher pay a priority in the 2020 proposed budget.

"This is the largest amount of increase we've had for our educators, 3.5 [percent]," Coats said. "We've had one percent, two percent or 2.5%."

Cont. on page 3



Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas.

GRAND GOALS presented by Mayor Rogero



A smiling Madeline Rogero gave her budget proposal to a large crowd at the proposed Urban Wilderness Gateway Park Friday. Right, the State of the City address began with a presentation of the flag by the Police Department Honor Guard, the Pledge of Allegiance by Dogwood Elementary and the National Anthem performed by guest artists from the Knoxville Opera.

By Mike Steely
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"We still have a lot to accomplish," Mayor Madeline Rogero told the large audience attending the "State of the City" budget address Friday.

She also said she and her staff are "gearing up for a



smooth transition" with whoever is elected as the city's new mayor. At least three of the four announced candidates were in attendance.

The mayor indicated the city is moving forward in the plan to purchase the former St. Mary's Hospital and, on May 7, she said plans will

be presented on the facility which would house police and fire departments, city courts and the pension office.

She also announced a community summit later this summer to deal with mental health and drug and alcohol addiction.

The mayor also spoke of

the growing number of interconnected greenways and said that a portion or lane of the James White Parkway will be designed a greenway to connect the north and south together.

"These are grand goals for a sustainable future and the quality of life," Rogero said.

PARC details complaints, hears from the public

By Mike Steely
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The quarterly meeting of the Police Advisory and Review Committee drew a sizable crowd Wednesday as it met at the Regal Entertainment Group headquarters on Blount Avenue. Committee member Robbie Arrington, attending his last PARC meeting, was recognized for his service.

The committee, appointed to oversee the city police department and headed by Executive Director Clarence Vaughn, III, shared with the public the cases it reviewed during the first quarter of the year and gave an overview of its duties. The meeting was highlighted by an address from Julie Small, technical services supervisor at the police department.

Small guided the meeting through a video presentation detailing the history of audio and video used by the department's officers. She said that camera equipment was added in 1998 and now the police are on the fourth generation of cameras and recorders.

"It is to protect you and us," she said, adding that about 300 recordings are saved each month and explained how and when the recordings are created. Each recording is saved for three years. She also

Continued on page 2

County Budget Presentation, Public Meetings Planned

Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs will present his Fiscal Year 2020 budget proposal to the Knox County Commission at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 1. The presentation will take place in the Central High School Auditorium. Those unable to attend the presentation will be able to view it live on CTV Channel 12 or on both the mayor's and the Knox County Government Facebook pages later in the day.

In the days following the budget address, Mayor Jacobs will host a series of public meetings to allow constituents to ask questions and learn about the budget.

Thursday, May 2
 12:30 p.m. at South Knoxville Senior Center
 1:30 p.m. at Carter Senior Center
 2:30 p.m. at Corryton Senior Center
 3:30 p.m. at New Harvest Park Center
 4:30 p.m. at Loredale

Friday, May 3
 9:30 a.m. at the Farragut Library
 10:30 a.m. at the Bearden Library
Tuesday, May 7
 2 p.m. at Klamis Senior Center
 3 p.m. at the Powell Library

No new city taxes in mayor's budget

By Mike Steely
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Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero did not propose a tax increase in her State of the City address Friday. She detailed much of the budget she is sending to City Council for approval to the crowd of about 700 attending. The council has until July 1 to approve or alter the budget request. The address by Rogero highlights her final budget request during her last year in office.

Speaking at the proposed Urban Wilderness Gateway Park at the end of James White Parkway, the mayor included that new police officers salary will be increased to \$40,000 and other ranks will get adjusted upward. Firefighter

salary compensation inequities will also be addressed, she said.

Rogero said that property tax collection will probably remain about the same and modest growth is expected in real property and personal property. Revenue from local option sales tax and state shared taxes are expected to be slightly higher and growth is expected from businesses and KUB who pay in lieu of taxes.

The property tax rate of \$2.4638 per hundred dollars of assessed property, the same as the current year, is being proposed.

Expenditures will probably continue to grow as a result of higher operating costs, capital needs and salary increase. The mayor proposes continuing the 2.5%

pay increase for employees and allocating \$29.83 million to the employee pension plan.

Rogero spoke on the topics of Strong, Safe Neighborhoods, Living and Working Green, Energizing Downtown and the Urban Core and Job Creation and Retention. Her proposed budget allocates \$1.767 million in new money for the Police and Fire Departments. She is proposing upping the funds going to the Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center by \$183,950, giving the center a total of \$583,950.

Increased funding for chronic problem properties, blighted property acquisition

Continued on page 6

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