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Celebrate with the city at Festival on the Fourth

The City of Knoxville hosts the community-wide Festival on the Fourth celebration at World's Fair Park on Thursday, July 4, 4-10 p.m. Everyone is invited to enjoy free activities, live music and the City's largest fireworks display.

This year's festival also marks the debut of the park's improved Performance Lawn. The \$2.5 million project updated water and electric service, improved drainage, and added new sod, pervious paver hardscaping and an enlarged entry area and gates. "We're excited to host this family-friendly holiday event," says City Special Events Director Judith Foltz. "The new lawn is a wonderful addition for both the Festival on the Fourth as well as future events in World's Fair Park."

Festival on the Fourth features a variety of entertainment, activities and food vendors on the Performance Lawn, Festival Lawn and inside the Tennessee Amphitheater. Live family entertainment on the Home Federal Bank Family Fun Stage at the Tennessee Amphitheater includes: 4-5 p.m.: K-Pop Dancers 5-5:45 p.m.: The Amazing Magic Show with Tim Presley

Activities in the Regal Kids Zone on the Festival Lawn include mini-golf, a water balloon game, Legos by Bricks 4 Kids, a climbing wall and a Euro-bungee trampoline. Families can also enjoy face painting and a photo booth.

On the park's Festival Lawn Stage, Bary Jolly performs Jimmy Buffett's songs from 4:15-5:30 p.m., followed by classic rock covers by the Bicho Brothers from 6-7:30 p.m. Music on the Performance Lawn Stage begins at 5 p.m. with a performance by the Stony Point Bluegrass Band. At 8 p.m., the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra's 35th annual Free Pilot Flying J

Continued on page 2



Eddie Mannis chats with Calvin Skinner during the Tuesday evening League of Women Voter's Mayoral Candidate forum. All six candidates for Knoxville Mayor spoke and answered questions submitted by those present. Mayoral candidates pictured from left to right are: Michael Andrews, Fletcher Burkhardt, Indya Kincannon, Mannis, Skinner and Marshall Stair.

Community policing and the candidates for mayor

By Mike Steely
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One of the topics addressed during the League of Women Voters Mayoral Candidate Forum Tuesday night was community policing. Knoxville is currently planning to relocate the police and fire departments to the former St. Mary's hospital just off Broadway. Not all of the six candidates agree with that and each addressed the idea of spreading the police department out through the city rather than one central location.

Eddie Mannis was the first to answer the question and said he believes that a precinct model is "a better way to go." He said putting the police back in the community builds relationships and said, "That is a better model of policing and helps build a relationship."

Indya Kincannon said she supports the community policing model and said that police officers should be paid better. "When I talk to officers about recruiting more officers no one ever says we need a better building."

"Police working in an area have the opportunity to get to know the people in that area," said Michael Andrews. "You get better community input."

Fletcher Burkhardt said he thinks the precinct idea "is great" but said it increases the cost. He also said the police and fire department employees need "proper pay" and to get rid of antiquated rule books. He said that he saw an officer who had to wear long sleeves in hot weather because of a tattoo on his wrist.

Calvin Taylor Skinner said that police officers should reflect the community in which they serve and

called for more diversity and better mental health training. He said community policing is "helpful."

"We're doing that now with community meetings and building relationships with business owners," said Marshall Stair. He added, "I'm not for the precinct model because the city of Knoxville is not that big. At this time when we're understaffed I don't think that makes sense."

The forum, held at the Knoxville News-Sentinel office, drew a large crowd of supporters and citizens. Questions also included indigent care, affordable housing, hacking threats of city records, Pilots and Triffs for business tax breaks, attracting minority businesses, and gun violence.

Each candidate gave a brief introduction and a closing statement. In

Continued on page 3

Urgent Care Center agreement passes in split vote

By Mike Steely
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As Governor Bill Lee did not budget funding for centers like the Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center the director of Helen Ross McElabb, Jerry Vagner, has been approaching Knoxville and Knox County governments with a request for increased local funding for a reduced care program.

The Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center opened with great fanfare last year with the state covering most of the cost of the building and first year's operation. The

center reported treating more than 500 mentally ill or addicted people apprehended by local law enforcement for minor offenses. Those were given the option of 72 hours of treatment with follow ups or being taken to jail.

Vagner stood before the Knox County Commissioners last week and successfully pleaded for funding. The approval came in a split vote, 6-4, and only after some grilling of the director by some of the commissioners.

The resolution, as approved, provides \$840,000 from the county

The city has already agreed to provide \$575,000. The loss of state funds, said Vagner, means cutting back the 72-hour stay to 24 hours with expanded follow up after discharge. He said the center will increase the number of case workers to follow those discharged patients.

Vagner received several critical questions from Commissioners Randy Smith, Justin Biggs, John Schoonmaker and Evelyn Gill. In the final count they voted "No" on the funding. Supporting the funding were Brad Anders, Richie Beeleer, Carson Dailey,

Larsen Jay, Michele Carringer and Hugh Hyattom.

Asked about following up patients Vagner said the Center works with KARL, VMC, Cherokee Health and Peninsula Hospital. He called the other agencies "a matrix of providers." He also said that the 72-hour stay policy will not end immediately and will probably take about six months. Asked about the initial estimate of treating 1,500 people over the first year and only treating about 500 Vagner said they would have treated the 1,500 had the patients been brought to them.

"You haven't met, the agenda under the first contract," commented Gill.

Barbara Cook, a citizen long opposed to the center, urged the commission to reject the funding and called the current program "a failure."

"Helen Ross McElabb has never been held accountable for the grants they receive," she said, charging that the center "got a building outfit."

Commissioner Smith said the commission has never received a report about the operation of the center and Vagner said he made an annual report to

the mayor. He also said the center will submit quarterly reports in the coming fiscal year. Smith also asked how long the follow up care will be for each patient and Vagner said "three to six months."

Commissioner Larsen Jay asked if the success of the center can be measured over three to five years of operation and Vagner agreed.

The commission also passed on consent \$101,127 in carry-over funding from the current state allotment with a county match of \$25,282 for the Urgent Care Unit.

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