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Chickens, microbreweries discussed by county commission

By Mike Steely
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The regular meeting of the Knox County Commission and their zoning meeting lasted from 5 p.m. until well after 9 p.m. last week. The members, with Commissioner Evelyn Gill absent, ran the gamut of 46 agenda items, including discussions on everything from a sales extension and backyard chickens to ping pong and microbreweries.

The agreement to extend a sales

agreement with Marble Alley Development finally received an approval by the Knox County Commission. The request was to postpone a closing on the sale of the remaining five acres of county property next to the complex downtown on State Street.

Commissioners John Schoonmaker and Carson Dailey had voiced opposition to the three year extension the week prior but both said they had met with the developer and now favored the extension.

Backyard Chickens

Commissioner Randy Smith continued his inquiry about whether the county can regulate backyard chickens. In the work session the previous week Deputy Law Director Daniel Sanders had opined that it could not, by state law.

Smith read through state codes and noted that a farm category much include 15 acres. He said that a homeowner on a hill with chickens could cause runoff from the chicken

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UT Agriculture Extension agent and WBIR TV personality Neal Denton spoke about backyard chickens during the commission meeting. Chairman Hugh Nystrom said he hoped Denton was "in a fowl mood" and teased him about wearing a bow tie. Photo by Mike Steely.



PHOTO BY AMY FOX FELLHOELTER

On Nov. 21, members of the public take their first look at three unique designs from the architects of BMA who created the science museum concepts.

Three Concept Plans Proposed at Science Museum Meeting

By Amy Fox Fellhoelter

More than forty people ventured out last Thursday night to the City-County Building to watch a presentation about three unique concept plans envisioning what the proposed Knoxville Science Museum might resemble. On Nov. 21, in the small assembly room of the building, BarberMcMurry Architects Executive Vice President

and COO Kelly Headen walked the attendees through the details of each design option.

Others presenting at the public meeting were city staff Chief Operating Officer David Brace and Deputy to the Mayor Bill Lyons. Those in attendance besides the public were Jim and Michelle Clayton, Susan Brown, and Keith Green of the Clayton Family

Foundation, City Councilmen George Wallace and Andrew Roberto, and other representatives of BarberMcMurry Architects.

"Mr. Clayton, I want to extend the City's thank you for this incredible opportunity, this gift ... it is an incredible treasure for our community, and for letting us support you in this

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Pension Board moves meetings to 3 p.m.

By Mike Steely
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When the Knox County Retirement and Pension Board met last week the class action lawsuit against Knox County was only mentioned once.

Pension Board Director Jennifer Schroeder, in giving her report and setting up meeting dates for 2020, asked Attorney John Owings if the meetings should be longer "with the report going forward in regards to the lawsuit."

"Do you see us having meetings in less than an hour?" she asked. Owings replied "No."

After an executive session of the pension board two months ago, Owings asked for and received permission to represent the pension board to intercede in a county lawsuit. The pension board is not mentioned in the lawsuit but it is a result of actions by that board in granting vacation days in calculating retirement for some Knox County Sheriff Department employees.

The pension board then voted to move their monthly meetings from 2:30 to 3 p.m. The meetings are held in Room 640 in the City-County Building.

Commissioner Hugh Nystrom gave an investment committee report noting that "everything is up" and moved to recommended changes in some investments.

Owings reported there is "nothing further to report at this point" involving litigation or legal matters.

The pension board moved to approve eight retirements, one lumpsum distribution and one UOP retirement of a sheriff's employee.

City passed Growth Plan in split vote

By Mike Steely
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The Knoxville City Council narrowly agreed to go along with major changes in the Knoxville-Farragut-Knox County Growth Plan Policy Tuesday. The 5-4 vote came after Mayor Madeline Rogers agreed, with some hesitation, to give each jurisdiction more say in their future development.

Critics of the agreement wanted a revision of the city's General Plan before adopting a Growth Plan. The county mayor wants

more autonomy in deciding future development, without input from the city or Farragut. He called the three jurisdictions back together this year, the first time in 10 years, to discuss the issue.

Deputy Mayor Bill Lyons pitched the plan to the council, noting the Knox County Commission has already approved the Growth Plan. He said the state-mandated plan leaves the existing land use program in place but respects the political processes of all three jurisdictions.

Planning Director Gerald Green said the current Growth Plan restricts the county in using vacant land for development. The proposal removes the city from any say in future county developments. He called the change a "critical first step."

Jennifer Roche of the Knoxville Area Realtor Association spoke in favor of the agreement saying it gives the county "more flexibility."

Lisa Starbuck and Carlene Malone spoke against the plan with Starbuck saying it removes farm land

from restrictions and noting that uncontrolled growth in the county causes the city to improve city roads that serve mostly county residents.

Malone said the change will delete standards for development and called for a "community-wide discussion."

"Let's try something else first," she said.

The council split on the issue after Mayor Rogers half-heartedly endorsed it but added the new Growth Plan will leave the city in

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PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Knoxville city employees nominated as Employees of the Year were recognized at the city council meeting Tuesday. Russ Richard was named "Employee of the Year" and also honored were nominees Timmy Joe Collins, Derry Romero Depobenbrock, Elaine Frank, Renae Groen, Rebecca Johnson and Rodney Wilson.



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