



Knox County Property Assessor John R. Whitehead kicked off his re-election campaign at a reception at Calhoun's on the River Wednesday night. Inset, pictured with Whitehead are Knox County Law Director Bud Armstrong (right) and David Buuck (left), who is looking to succeed term-limited Armstrong.

By Ken Lay

A number of supporters showed up at a fundraising reception for John R. Whitehead late Wednesday afternoon at Calhoun's on the River.

Whitehead, who is seeking a fourth term as Knox County Property Assessor, said that he was pleased with the turnout, which included Knox County Law Director Bud Armstrong, David Buuck, who is looking to replace the term-limited Armstrong, and Knox County Commissioner Richie Beeler, who is also seeking re-election.

"I'm really thrilled with the crowd," said Whitehead, who didn't make a speech, but worked the room greeting those who showed up to show their support as late-afternoon shifted to evening. "It's been a great night."

Whitehead has been with the Knox County Property Assessor's office for nearly five decades, serving as property assessor from

"Because of my age and everything, this is probably my last hoorah," said Whitehead, a military veteran who served in Vietnam.

"When I got out of the military, I went to work with the property assessor's office. I got out of the military in 1971 and I went to work for the property assessor's office in 1972.

"I first ran in 2000 and I ran in 2004. I couldn't run again in 2008 because I was term-limited. Then, I ran again 2016 and I'm running again in 2020."

Even when Whitehead wasn't serving in Knox County, he was no stranger to the office.

"When I wasn't in office, I worked for the citizens," he said. "I helped citizens appeal their property taxes, so I've been on both sides of this."

During his previous terms as property assessor, Whitehead has taken pride in the



them to call me," he said. "I don't think that there's a question about this office that I can't answer.

"And when people ask to speak to me, they get transferred directly to me and if I'm not there or don't answer, I make sure that I always call them back. Everything in our office is public record except personal property assessment listings."

Whitehead also noted that he's happy to have the support of county officials such as

said. He called the agreement a "complicated proposal" and said he is providing as much information as possible.

Those speaking for the proposal included appraisers, realtors, title insurers, and spokespeople from the Knoxville Chamber, the Public Building Authority, the County Finance and Purchasing Departments, and the University of Tennessee. Each presentation was accompanied by a graphic presentation. The county mayor spoke twice after Commission Chairman Hugh Nystrom reminded the other commissioners that there would be no vote during the meeting. Nystrom told The Focus that he hoped most of the discussion and questions would be resolved during the called meeting and not during Tuesday's Work Session.

The takeaway from the meeting is that Jacobs intends to go ahead with the agreement pending commission approval, even if the board of education turns down relocating to the TVA East Tower. The sale of the Andrew Johnson Building currently housing the school administration, has been postponed until February, following a decision that