



The Knoxville Focus

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February 3, 2020

Schoonmaker elected to serve on TCSA Board of Directors



Fifth District Commissioner John Schoonmaker has been elected to the Board of the Tennessee County Services Association. He heads the Knox County Commission's Legislative and Finance Committees.

By Mike Steely
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Knox County Commissioner John Schoonmaker is an accomplished man. As a marketing and business professional with more than 40 years of experience, Schoonmaker has also been very active in local government. He was appointed to fill Dr. Richard Briggs' term as 5th District County Commissioner when Briggs was elected to the state Senate in 2015.

"I was extremely honored to get the opportunity to represent the 5th District," Schoonmaker said.

Before his time on commission, Schoonmaker was appointed to

the Board of Zoning and Appeals and served three years each as chairman and vice chairman. "I have 24 years of experience navigating the ins and outs of Knox County Government," Schoonmaker told The Focus, adding, "I served 12 years as president of the not-for-profit organization, the Council of West Knox County Homeowners, whose mission is to positively influence the development of West Knox County."

Schoonmaker was elected in 2016 to serve his first full term as the 5th District County Commissioner. He currently chairs the Knox County Commission's Finance Committee as well as the Legislative Affairs Committee. As Legislative Chairman, he

regularly keeps fellow commissioners informed on what happens in state government. He also serves on the Audit and County Investment Committees and works closely with the Town of Farragut on joint issues such as the purchase and renovation of the new West Knox County Senior Center.

Utilizing his business acumen and governmental experience, Schoonmaker crafted the language and garnered support to file a bill with the Tennessee Legislature that will collectively save Knox County, the Town of Farragut, and the City of Knoxville over \$1 million each year.

Always interested in government relations, Schoonmaker

was recently chosen as the first Knox County Commissioner in 20 years to serve on the Board of Directors of the Tennessee County Services Association. As a board member of TCSA, Schoonmaker not only represents Knox County but 510 other county commissioners within 33 counties in East Tennessee. The TCSA is an umbrella group of three associations: the Association of County Mayors, the Tennessee County Commissioners Association and the Tennessee County Highway Officials Association. TCSA works to secure and preserve state funds and provide information to county officials on legislation impacting counties.

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In Remembrance



PHOTO BY JOHN GUSTIN AS PRINTED IN DECEMBER 2, 2003 FOCUS.

Knox County Circuit Court Judge Harold Wimberly received the Bill Williams Service Award for outstanding achievement in the area of adoption services late 2013. Wimberly received the award for his commitment, dedication, and service to assisting the department in finding adoptive families for children in full guardianship of the state. The Honorable Harold Wimberly (left) is pictured with Bill Williams (right).

Judge Harold Wimberly

By Ray Hill

One of the worst things about getting older is losing people. A week ago last Friday, Harold Wimberly, Jr., passed away. I had known and been friends with Harold for decades. It doesn't seem that long ago that Steve Hunley, publisher of The Knoxville Focus, and I met at the Roundup restaurant in South Knoxville to have lunch with Harold. I brought along a blackberry cobbler made from scratch by my friend Margie Ogan and nobody anywhere makes better cobbler than Margie. The food was simple, the cobbler delicious and the conversation warm. It is a memory I will keep for the rest of my life.

Harold Wimberly enjoyed a remarkable judicial career and few remember that his father had been quite involved in local politics. His father, Harold Wimberly, Sr., a prosperous lawyer, served as Chairman of the

Knox County Democratic Party at one time and was a member of the Tennessee Democratic State Executive Committee. Mr. Wimberly was a strong supporter of Senator Kenneth D. McKellar. My interest in Senator McKellar and Harold Wimberly, Sr. created a bond between Judge Wimberly and me that we both enjoyed. Not long before he passed away, Judge Wimberly emailed me a photograph of Gay Street in 1915. There was a banner hanging across the street and Harold wondered if I had any idea what the banner said. I replied I thought it said "Elect K. D. McKellar United States Senator." Harold had the photograph blown up and sure enough it that isn't exactly what the banner read.

Having served on the bench for forty years, it wasn't unusual for Harold to have his name before the public. One of the first mentions of

Harold Wimberly, Jr. was in the April 11, 1956 edition of the Knoxville News-Sentinel. The article features a picture of a somber-looking thirteen year-old student from Tyson Junior High (named for the late U.S. senator Lawrence D. Tyson) who had won the spelling bee. That thirteen year-old was Harold Wimberly, Jr. Harold became the spelling champion in 21 rounds and "spelled down 10 other boys and 19 girls." It was Harold's first spelling bee and anybody who knew Harold wouldn't have been surprised. Harold Wimberly, Jr. had a first-rate intellect and was a thoughtful man. Quite often one had to pay close attention lest one missed some especially dry bon mot tossed off by Judge Wimberly.

Harold Wimberly next graced the pages of the Knoxville News-Sentinel as a member of the University of

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City to budget body cameras for police patrols

By Mike Steely
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Beginning with the new fiscal year this July the City of Knoxville hopes to equip city police patrol officers with body cameras. Mayor Indya Kincannon said Tuesday she is committed to the project and will seek \$1.7 million in the new budget for the first year and about \$600,000 for each year afterwards.

Kincannon told the city council meeting that the funds will go for equipment and management of the system and that bids are now being accepted for the cameras. She said the body cameras will add accountability for both officers and the public.

"It is not going to solve all our problems but I think it is a step in the right direction," the mayor said.

Police Chief Eve Thomas presented the council with a report on the test period for the cameras and two video examples.

In the report Thomas said the department, prior to the testing, focused on policy and procedure, how cameras will work, and how to best train officers on their use. Technical service personnel, who will be responsible for storage, retrieval and disseminating the data, were also discussed.

She reported the body worn cameras offer the potential benefit of better transparency and the ability to provide another view of officer-citizen contacts. The cameras may make for more efficient resolution of citizen complaints and lawsuits. Evidence could be used in criminal arrests and prosecution and even offer training opportunities for real life situations.

The first year's cost would cover the hire of an additional Audio Video Technician with a salary of about \$48,000, and equipment including 400 body cameras, data storage, mounts, cables and batteries, routers, antenna and data plans for 350 patrol cars. The \$1.7 million will also go to a digital management application. And software for door triggers and computer aided dispatch integration.

The city is looking for five-year contracts for the cameras and equipment.

State law requires that camera video images be confidential when involving minors, and the interiors of some facilities and private homes in the absence of a criminal offense.

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