

Returning retirees addressed at pension board meeting

By Mike Steely
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Knox County Sheriff Tom Spangler sat in on a Zoom meeting of the Knox County Retirement and Pension Board last week to address a matter dealing with retired department employees coming back to work.

There was some misunderstanding that those

former employees may be granted supervisory positions but the sheriff clarified that after 120 days of retirement, former employees may come back to work for the department "on entry-level positions and salaries."

The returning employees' pay would not affect their Uniformed Officers Pension Plan retirement and

they would not be putting in additional funds into their plans.

The UOPP is no longer open for enrollment but some who started with that plan are still enrolled and are planning retirement.

"It's a good thing and a supplement to their retirement," the sheriff said.

The board voted to add the "entry level" wording to

the plan.

The UOPP is the centerpiece of the lawsuit brought by citizens against the county last September after the county mayor and commission authorized payment of vacation days into retirement payments.

The suit is still before the Chancery Court after pension board attorney John Owings and the board's

outside attorney filed a motion to dismiss.

Because of filings and the coronavirus outbreak the matter is now in limbo.

Owings told the board that the Tennessee Supreme Court has extended a court shutdown through May.

"We'll not be hearing something until June, if then," Owings said, adding, "None of us have ever

witnessed anything like this before."

In introducing the pension board's budget for the coming fall year Pension Director Jennifer Schroeder noted that \$25,000 was added to support an outside attorney, upping funds for outside representation to \$52,000. The current year has \$27,000 designated for that.



Kara Lockmiller of Knoxville was voted the winner of the Virtual Dogwood Arts Festival. Photo submitted.

Dogwood Arts announce winners of annual contest

By Ken Lay

The COVID-19 pandemic has played havoc with the 2020 Dogwood Arts Festival, causing many of its signature events to be canceled or postponed. But the festival still went on virtually and the organizers still kept up the tradition.

On Friday the festival officials announced the winners of the annual art contest, which was held online this year.

Kara Lockmiller finished in first place and won \$500. Vicki Love claimed second place and earned \$300. Tina Burnett came in third and won \$200.

Voting was held from March 31 through April 30 and Shannon Herron, Dogwood Arts Festival Media Coordinator, said that 1,245 votes were cast and that represents the most ever.

He also noted that over 6,000 people

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Beeler votes against constituents on zoning matter

By Mike Steely
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Knoxville's 8th District is huge in territory—stretching from Forks of the River all the way to beyond Gibbs and Corryton. Starting just east of downtown Knoxville the district borders on Sevier, Jefferson, Grainger, Union and Anderson Counties.

Commissioner Richie Beeler represents the 8th District, having been appointed to replace Dave Wright, who now serves as the area's state House representative, on the Knox County Commission. He has a beef with the fact there is no district representation on the Knoxville/Knox Planning Commission.

During the recent zoning portion of the Knox County Commission meeting, Beeler, who seldom speaks up on issues, delivered a short address. The commission was being asked to approve a rezoning from Agricultural to Planned Residential in the Gibbs schools area. The planning commission had

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Donations sought for Lions Mobile Vision Lab



The Fountain City Lions Club is looking for help to repair the Mobile Vision Lab.

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One of the many things that Lions Club members do for the community is to provide eyeglasses for those who need them. During the Gatlinburg Fires the club made three trips there to help.

Jim McFarland of the Fountain City Lions Club told The Focus that damage done to the Smoky Mountain Lions Charities Mobile Vision Lab on March 3rd set the charity back. McFarland

said that a tree falling on the lab did some major damage.

Since then the Lions Clubs in the region have been raising money to repair the damage. He said that the non-profit charity had a \$1,000 deductible and has been working to raise \$1,200.

"We're almost there," he said.

The lab is used to manufacture glasses for patients served through the various East Tennessee Lions Clubs.

"We've moved all

the equipment and are mobile. We can set up in churches, schools, etc., anywhere where we have the room," he said.

"Before the damage, we were doing 80 to 90 patients each month and since we started with the mobile lab we've provided more than 6,000 pairs of glasses."

The mobile lab was parked behind the Fountain City Lions Club and, because of the damage, the manufacturing of glasses has been suspended.

McFarland said that because of the restrictions during the coronavirus outbreak and the repairs needed to the lab it may be June or July before eye exams and glasses are available.

Donations can be made by mail to Smoky Mountain Lions Charities, P.O. Box 70276, Knoxville, TN 37938. McFarland said anyone can do a credit card donation by calling him at (865)556-9091.

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