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\$1,500 bonus for deputies in approved Knox budget

Senior Writer steelym@knoxfocus.com

Knox County Sheriff Tom Spangler's persistence won out Wednesday with a victorious split vote granting a bonus to his deputies. The county commission also passed the amended budget that included the

special session

The sheriff's department discovered it was ending the fiscal year with a \$3 million surplus and was requesting that \$1.5 million of that go to 820 deputies. Spangler appealed to the commission's midmonth work session for approval to give his

In an earlier meeting, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs presented a reduced county budget and proposed a \$750 bonus to frontline officers to be paid in December. The mayor said that an additional one-time bonus might be

revenue then

"I'm not backing down." Spangler said to Jacobs and noted the county is losing experienced deputies to other East Tennessee law enforcement agencies because of the disparities in pay and retirement.

Spangler, backed by a

spoke out again at last week's open meeting and, eventually, seven of the commissioners agreed. The bonus, about \$1,500 per deputy below the rank of captain, will be paid out in early December.

Finance Director Chris Caldwell sided with the

vote, said the \$1.5 million could come from a combination of anticipated state funding and the unspent "rainy day funds" set aside by the county. He adjusted the proposed \$849 million budget up to cover the allocation.

Continue on page 6

Changes at PARC demanded by some citizens

Senior Writer

On the heels of revised Knoxville Police Use of Force procedures, some local citizens feel those reforms are not enough and let a meeting of PARC know so in a loud and verbal confrontation Thursday evening.

Meeting publically for the first time this year due to COVID-19 the Police Advisory and Review Committee voted to approve Mayor Indya Kincannon's selection of LaKenya Middlebrook as executive director. There had been 18 applications for the position and Middlebrook told The Focus she thought "long and hard" before accepting the posi-

PARC Chair Rosa Mar welcomed Middlebrook and a new member, Ken St Germain, to the group and told the new director she's facing many changing situations ahead for the body and the police department.

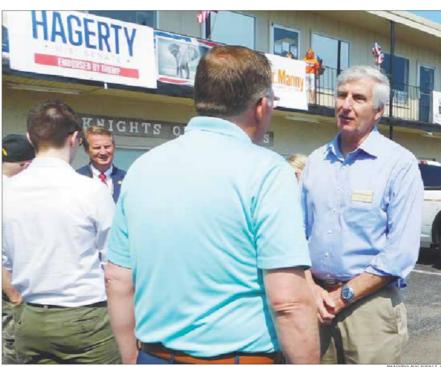
Police Chief Eve Thomas detailed the changes in the Use of Force policy that were made following a meeting she had with Mayor Kincannon. Policy changes and updates include banning choke holds, de-escalation training, warning before shooting exhausting all options before use of force, banning shooting at moving vehicles, and comprehenve reporting by officers

PARC member Jerrod Croom addressed several concerns saying that a police officer "is no higher or lower than me." He asked if a report is required when an officer draws a gun on someone. The police chief said that incident requires to be noted on a report.

Knoxville citizens spoke and demanded more changes in the police department and the PARC membership and duties

Maura Connelly said PARC should have independent powers. the complaint form needs changing, and PARC should become

Continue on page 4



Congressman Tim Burchett and Knox County Commissioner John Schoonmaker meet with attendees at the GOP headquarters at 5710 Kingston Pike.

Knox County GOP celebrates re-opening of headquarters

By Ken Lay

It was not only the first day of summer but it was a day for the Knox County Republican Party to celebrate the grand reopen-

It was a warm and slightly humid day but that didn't dampen spirits as the local GOP celebrated the re-opening of its headquarters, which closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Music played and food was

to a food truck provided by John Gabriel

Several elected officials and candidates who are running in ing of its he adquarters in West the upcoming August election were on hand to meet voters and campaign volunteers.

The building that houses headquarters was open as party officials including Knox County Republican Party Chairman Randy Pace and Knox County Republican Women President Manuela Ptacek

and other Knox County Republicans sold merchandise including hats, t-shirts, bumper stickers and ink pens.

Ptacek organized the meet and greet, which was held on Saturday, June 20. And she did it in a quick fashion.

"I was on a vacation and someone said that we want you to organize this and you have a week and a half," Ptacek said.

Continued on page 2

Election office prepares for August

The upcoming August 6 local general election and state and federal primaries may be one of the most trying in recent history not only for voters but especially for the Knox County Election officials and poll workers.

The new Administrator of Elections, Chris Davis, told the Knox County Election Commission recently about the challenges of this year. Hiring poll workers and training new and existing staff on the new paper ballot system and its equipment would be a challenge on its own without considering the limitations imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the huge increase in requests for absentee ballots. Twentyfour boxes are set back for the expected absentee ballots, estimated now at more than 7,500

The election office has been training poll workers, about 12 at a time, in the Downtown West office. Additional space and one more room are being prepared in the Old Courthouse to handle incoming results and to store the paper ballot boxes Counting the absentee ballots

Continue on page 4

Community task force discusses reopening Knox County Schools

By Ken Lay

The Knox County School system took another step toward possibly reopening its doors in day night.

place from between June 1-19 and was conducted online. The

meeting was held at the Sarah administrators Simpson Professional Development Center

August, as scheduled, Wednes- is one of several such groups open by Aug. 10, which is the involved in the decision on The schools' community task when to open schools, closed semester. force held the first of its two since March by the Coronavischeduled public meetings and rus pandemic, and how things mulled through data from a are going to look once schools countywide survey, which took reopen. There are also other focus groups comprised of teachers, students and school

Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas said The community focus group that his goal is to have schools scheduled start date for the fall

"Our ultimate goal is to open and have students in the building on Aug. 10," Thomas said. "It's going to look different.

"I think we all agree that the best way that learning takes

place is when the teacher is in the classroom with his or her

students." While the superintendent wants the schools to reopen with full classrooms, which may not happen, the task force will consider three options as schools prepare to reopen and those options include traditional reopening, remote distance learning and a hybrid model.

Continue on page 2





