

Duties of Knox County Mayor debated by Charter Review Committee

By Mike Steely
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Knox County voters may see a charter amendment on the November ballot. The Knox County Charter Review Committee voted 21-3 last week to have any purchase of less than \$100,000 placed on the commission's "spread of records" each month.

The committee members all wore masks as ordered by Mayor Indya Kincannon and the Knox County Board of Health at the Monday meeting at

the City-County Building. Spread of Record is a category in the county commission agenda that isn't usually questioned but can be. The amount allocated by the county mayor for lesser costing expenditures is currently not listed or detailed. That change passed first reading on a motion by James Corcoran. Opponents of the change, Sam McKenzie, Daniel Davis and Mike Arms felt it is an attempt to "micromanage the mayor."

Continued on page 2



Knox Charter Review Committee member Lisa Starbuck moved unsuccessfully to cut back on the number of future charter committee appointments made by the Knox County mayor. The idea failed, leaving the membership of the committee, which meets every eight years, with nine of the 27 members appointed by a future mayor. Photo by Mike Steely via CTV.

County Court Clerk's request for funds on commission agenda

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The COVID-19 pandemic closed courts across Tennessee and that meant little revenue would be generated with filings. The shut down in March saw lawsuits filed with the County Court Clerk's Office fall off by about 70 percent.

That put County Court Clerk Charles Susano and his 15 employees in a financial bind. His office was mostly untouched by county layoffs. Operating the office on greatly reduced funds lead Susano to ask the county for a loan. His annual payroll for himself and his employees is about \$1.6 million, mostly generated by filing fees. He said all his employees are essential in running the office.

After meeting with Mayor Glenn Jacobs and Financial Director Chris Caldwell they decided to request a loan of \$1.5 million, which Susano said he would use as needed

"We're not short \$1.5 million but don't want to go back and ask for more if more is needed," he said, adding, "We're pretty thrifty." Susano said the amount was requested because no one knows how long COVID-19 will continue. He also said the loan will be paid back.

On the Knox County Commission Agenda the resolution authorizes "an Interfund Loan through the use of a Tax Anticipation Note." Caldwell explained the wording is required by the state.

"Susano said he might run out of funds by September if filings don't pick up," Caldwell said.

Caldwell said the loan agreement is "kind of complicated" and basically is a line of credit.

"From the county's standpoint we've got to fix it," he said.

While the county may see other upcoming shortfalls because of the pandemic, Susano's request will be the second unexpected request for funds. Sheriff Tom Spangler's request for a \$1,500 bonus for each his 800 uniformed employees was approved by the commission recently.

Normally the Court Clerk's Office pays out about \$2 million in litigation taxes into the county.

Community Task Force shares findings with school board

By Ken Lay

The Community Task Force on Reopening presented their findings to the Knox County Board of Education Wednesday.

Task force leader Dr. Jerry Askew spoke to the board after it met twice in five days between June 24 and June 29.

Safety is a primary concern according to Askew, President of the Alliance for Better Nonprofits.

"There are no risk-free options here. My hope is that they will look at data and science and they'll make the best decision to balance risk in any way that they can," Askew said. "The entire thing is an exercise in balancing risks."

"Everyone wants their kids back in school; well the caveat is whether we can do so safely."

Askew and the task force, which was comprised of nine community members, one from each district, and the members were each picked by a school board member.

"We're not here to make any recommendations about re-opening. That falls on the superintendent," Askew said.

The task force was charged with studying and reacting to a Knox County Schools survey that had 30,000 respondents and Askew presented its findings at the KCS Board of Education Wednesday at the Andrew Johnson Building.

Superintendent Bob Thomas will render his decision on when and how to reopen the schools at the board's regular session on Wednesday, July 15. The meeting will be held at the

Continue on page 4



Republican candidate for U.S. Senate Bill Hagerty visits with supporters at a campaign stop at Maynardville's Pete's Place Tuesday.

Bill Hagerty stumps in Union County

By Ken Lay

MAYNARDVILLE – Republican United States Senate candidate Bill Hagerty took his campaign to Union County early last week where he greeted his supporters at a lunchtime stop at Maynardville's Pete's Place Restaurant Tuesday.

Hagerty shook a few hands and had a few brief conversations before addressing supporters at a midmorning gathering.

Hagerty laid out his platform and his unabashed conservative views on the economy, freedom of speech and support for the country's armed forces and law enforcement.

He said he feels that the country is under assault

from China, the radical sect of Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Party. He also trumpeted several times that he is the only candidate fully endorsed by Donald Trump.

"I'm very concerned about the state of our country," said Hagerty who is a member of the president's White House Economic Recovery Task Force. "My family, my wife and four kids, we all uprooted and the reason that I'm running for the senate is to make sure that my kids and your kids and grandkids have the same opportunity that we had."

"When I grew up, we didn't have much. My mother was a teacher and my father worked in

construction. My father didn't go to college but he worked hard to make sure that I had the chance to go."

Hagerty also voiced his support for the military and law enforcement.

"I will always support our military and law enforcement," he said. "You have Marxists in Black Lives Matter and they're trying to fundamentally change the country and they attack our officers. They're tearing down our statues and they're burning our flag."

He also blamed the left for the movement to defund police departments.

"There's even a proposal in Virginia that is considering making an attack

on a police officer a misdemeanor," Hagerty said. "The Democrats want to defund police forces. They want to support anarchy. But I will stand behind our military and I will stand behind law enforcement because the only thing protecting us from looters and anarchy is our officers. My wife's brother is a police officer and he puts on that uniform every day and he doesn't know if he's going to come home. The Democrat Party is unrecognizable from what it was 30 years ago."

Hagerty is a businessman and he's served as ambassador to Japan. He said that China has been aggressive in working against the United States

Continue on page 6

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