

Early voting totals higher than expected

By Mike Steely
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Early voting ended Saturday and Knox County residents have turned out in large numbers despite the COVID-19 pandemic. "Overall, turnout has been much higher than anticipated," Chris Davis, Administrator of the Knox County Election Commission told The Focus Friday. He added, "We're

pleased that voters have taken advantage of Early Voting."

As of Friday morning Davis reported that 29,729 people have voted early in person and that 7,183 voted by absentee ballot. The total, with Friday and Saturday turnout not yet counted, brings the total number of early voters to 36,912. The Republican Primary saw 23,402 voters and the Democratic

Primary saw 13,151 people cast ballots. People voting in the Knox County General Election only numbered 359.

Downtown West accounted for the heaviest votes at 7,132, followed by Farragut and New Harvest Market.

As the county prepares for the General Election this Thursday Davis is reminding voters that there are two precinct

changes. Precinct 56, formerly at the Heiskell United Methodist Church in north Knoxville, has been moved to Copper Ridge Elementary School at 2502 East Brushy Valley Road. Fountain City voters at Precinct 34 will not be voting at the Fountain City Library. The voting has been moved to Central High School at 5321 Jacksboro Pike.



The driveway to the Karns Senior Citizens Center is lined with political signs on both sides of the narrow entrance. Turnout for Early Voting across Knox County has been higher than expected despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

'There's a train wreck heading our way'

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The Knox County Board of Health's ruling Wednesday to close all bars for two weeks, which took effect Sunday at midnight, was discussed at length during their meeting but only after the board successfully moved to rebut a proposal by Mayor Glenn Jacobs.

In mandating the closure Mayor Jacobs was the sole "No" vote.

Jacobs offered a motion to postpone the meeting for a week and hold a public meeting in the City-County Building with a public forum. He read the proposal which claimed the Board of Health "is more powerful than the Knox County Commission, the Knoxville City Council, and any other body that governs our community." Jacobs is a member of the board but said the body is "virtually unaccountable for its actions" and "does not currently allow for in-person input during its meetings."

The mayor's proposal came at the beginning of the board's meeting and he noted the group was "unlected" and has no due process for public input. He said that emails to members "is not the same" as public input and are "unacceptable."

Dr. Buchanan responded that the main assembly room in the City-County building does not offer enforced distancing. Although the board voted to consider the Jacobs motion the physicians on the board responded with their disapproval.

Dr. Patrick O'Brien said

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Jo Anne Lavender of the TVA Retirees Association led the announcement of the Solway Veterans Memorial. The project is expected to be completed this fall.

Solway Veterans Memorial announced

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The construction of a new Veterans Memorial was announced Thursday morning at the Solway Baptist Church and the long-sought

project has taken the efforts of many people, organizations and businesses.

The Solway Veterans Memorial will consist of a wall with all six military emblems emblazoned on it. When the new Space Force emblem

is available it will be added. A small walkway with a courtyard and benches and a plaque with contributor names will be placed on the site. Construction may be completed

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The Focus welcomes new columnist

We would like to welcome **Tom Mattingly** to The Knoxville Focus. Tom is a Knoxville-based freelance writer who has written six books about the University of Tennessee's athletic programs. He has also written more than 100 newspaper and magazine stories about the people and events that have shaped the university's history. Please look for Tom's column in the Sports section of the paper every Monday.

Former narcotics chief under investigation granted retirement

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The Knox County Retirement and Pension Board voted unanimously Monday afternoon to approve retirement benefits for a Knox County assistant chief although the former head of the Narcotics Division is under FBI investigation.

Attorney John Owings told the board that he had consulted Knox County Law Director Richard (Bud) Armstrong and, at this time, there is no cause to deny the benefits.

David Henderson served 26 years with the sheriff's department. He was relieved of his duties with the narcotics unit in January of 2019 and reassigned to the Special Services Unit. He served under three sheriffs and Sheriff Tom Spangler noted that the FBI investigation began before he, Spangler, became chief.

As an assistant chief Henderson was making about \$113,000 per year and applied for retirement one day after the FBI investigation became public.

Owings said that a hold on Henderson's retirement benefits is not justified "at this time" and that was echoed by attorney Bill Mason. Owings said the board could stop pension payments in the future and there are other actions available should the FBI investigation result in a verdict.

Owings gave no update to the pension board on the Etters vs Knox County case in Chancery Court although arguments are now scheduled for Thursday at 9:30 a.m. The board authorized Owings to intervene in the case where a group of citizens are suing the Knox County Mayor and Commission over actions taken to stop the law director's suit against the board.

Closed meeting to discuss KCHD lawsuit today

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The Knox County Board of Health and Knox County Health Department will meet with the Knox County Law Department in an executive session today to hear a lawsuit filed by two Knox County plastic surgeons. Mayor Glenn Jacobs notified the Board of Health of the closed meeting with county attorneys during the Wednesday meeting.

The closed-door session begins at 5 p.m. in room 640 of the City-County Building.

The two physicians, Steven Smith and Jason Hall, are suing Dr. Martha

Buchanan, director of the Health Department, and Dr. Jack Gotcher, chairman of the Board of Health. The suit claims that health mandates imposed by the board are "arbitrary and capricious," the mask mandate is unconstitutional, and the rights of the doctors are being infringed upon.

The suit was filed on July 24 by Attorney Daniel Herrera and mentions the board using "false positive" test results as positive.

Mayor Jacobs, a member of the Board of Health, was the only member to vote "No" on a mask mandate.



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