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Oster questioning crossover votes

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

There's a tradition in East Tennessee of members of one party crossing over party lines to vote for a candidate or candidates in the other party. It happens often and many elected officials in tight races realize there's going to be some people jumping party lines.

District 18's Gina Oster is upset that she was defeated by fellow Republican Eddie Mannis in the

recent primary election for a state house seat. Oster lost by 99 votes in the Republican Primary.

Some Knox County Republican Party officials were critical of



Oster

Mannis as a candidate and on election night Knox County GOP Chairman Randy Pace lambasted him at the party's celebration ceremonies.

Now Oster has written a letter to the Tennessee Republican Party Chairman complaining about the crossover of Democrats in the primary and said she plans to contest the election. She wrote that some 275 known Democrats who had never voted

in the Republican Primary cast ballots.

Local certification of the election takes place today and Knox County Election Administrator Chris Davis told The Focus Thursday that, as far as he knows, nothing has changed in that race.

"The election commission is going to (presumably) certify the results of the election. The results are ready to be certified," he said. Adding, "If any further

action is taken/warranted, we will consult with the State Election Commission. As of now, nothing has changed procedurally for us."

Oster's letter to the state party claims that Mannis is not a "bona fide" Republican, saying he voted in the Democratic Presidential Primary, and the state Republican Party should have rules about crossing over. The local

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Final Action on HR Dept. at City Council

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The new position of director of Human Resources will officially be added to the Knoxville City Administration Tuesday when the city council meets. The resolution to amend the city code comes to the body on its second and final reading. The director will be selected this fall and the \$190,300 authorized for the new department also provides for a HR Specialist.

The council will consider approving Sam Maynard to the Public Property Naming Committee on a request from Councilwoman Janet Testerman and approving Jenae Anderson-Eastery to the Police Advisory and Review Committee on a nomination from the mayor.

Several requests for zoning changes are on the agenda including properties at 4612 West Martin Mill Pike, 1301 East Weisgarber and 2724 Western Avenue. The Western Avenue property will be used for a crematorium in the middle of a cemetery there.

The East Tennessee Foundation may be approved to administer, operate and manage the Affordable Housing Fund for \$323,000. The Community Action Committee may receive \$50,000 in homeless funds for the Youth WINS Homelessness Prevention Program. Knoxville's Urban League may receive \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds for workforce development.

The council will also give a final vote to the city's

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Back to School



PHOTO BY KEN LAY

Holston Middle School Language Arts teacher Brittany Burgess welcomes students to sixth-grade orientation, which was held Thursday at HMS.

Holston Middle hosts sixth-grade orientation

By Ken Lay

When Knox County Schools reopens its campuses today, it will mark the first time that students will be in a classroom setting since mid-March.

The coronavirus pandemic forced the schools to shut their doors and suspend all activities. That means that middle school teachers and administrators didn't get the opportunity to meet their incoming sixth graders or give the eighth graders the proper sendoff to high school.

But Holston Middle School and other middle schools and high schools in Knox County hosted orientations for incoming sixth graders and freshmen Thursday morning, and one area principal couldn't hide her excitement as

she greeted students for the first time in more than five months.

"It's great to be back," said Holston Middle School principal Katie Lutton. "Things are going to be different but it's great to be back. I got to do a video welcoming our virtual students back."

Things will definitely be different at Holston and across the county. For starters, students who ride buses will be required to wear masks. Anyone who enters a KCS campus building will also have to wear a face covering. Also, anyone who enters the building must have a temperature check.

Hand sanitizer and water stations will be in classrooms. Use of lockers and water fountains

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Holston Middle School principal Katie Lutton addresses the media about her school's first day. She discussed her excitement and safety protocols as Holston is set to welcome back its students today.

Health Board rebuffs 'unelected' charge

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The Knox County Board of Health met in weekly session on Wednesday and rebuffed critics of its policies, power and authority.

The comments came at the end of their session, covered by Zoom and CTV, with some members talking about the number of emails they get from citizens. Chairman Dr. Jack Gotcher Jr. commented that some people wrote that the board is not elected and has no power to place restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He called on the board's attorney, Daniel Sanders, who said the board is not a process of popular election: members are appointed by the Knox County Commission and must be from the medical profession. Gotcher commented that the board must "keep some distance from the election process."

Dr. Maria Hurt said she's been getting lots of feedback and some people think "we should be booted from the board."

"When politics and science combine there is no more science," she commented.

Knoxville Mayor Glenn Jacobs sat without comment in the discussion but in an earlier vote to extend the 10 p.m. curfew for bars for two weeks Jacobs was the sole "No" vote.

Dr. Martha Buchanan reported on the five benchmarks and three of them, new cases, health capacity and death rates over that week, were "yellow" or at the caution level. The slight improvement of health statistics was attributed to more people wearing masks, keeping distance, washing

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