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Early voting starts Wednesday

By Mike Steely
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Seems like it has been a long political year, doesn't it? This Wednesday early voting starts in Knox County with a ballot that includes voting for the president of the United States, several federal and state legislators, a school board seat and two charter amendments.

President Donald Trump is opposed by Democrat Joseph Biden and a lengthy list of independent candidates.

The U.S. Senate race to

replace retiring Republican Lamar Alexander sees Republican Bill Hagerty facing Democrat Marquita Bradshaw, along with a long list of independent candidates.

As a Knox County voter you'll also find the ballot includes Tennessee state legislative races, and, for some, the election to replace Terry Hill on the Knox County Board of Education. Hill resigned her position to take a seat as a Knox County Commissioner. That District 6 seat has three candidates: Robin "Rob" Gray, Betsy Henderson and

Hannah Lizabeth Kirby.

Depending on your district you'll probably only see four or five candidate races and two ballot questions about changing the Knox County Charter.

The congressional race for House District 2 has incumbent Republican Tim Burchett, Democrat Renee Hoyos and Independent Matthew L. Campbell.

The Tennessee state Senate District 6 race has incumbent Becky Duncan Massey (Republican) and Jane George (Democrat) on the ballot.

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Where can you vote early?

With early voting starting Wednesday you may be wondering, "Where can I vote?" Registered Knox County voters can choose any of the early voting locations. An early ballot can be cast Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. and on Saturdays from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. through October 29.

Locations include Downtown West Shopping Center, the Halls Recreation Center, Farragut Town Hall, the Carter Senior Center, The Love Kitchen, the City-County

Building, New Harvest Park, Knoxville Expo Center, Meridian Baptist Church in South Knoxville, the Karna Senior Center or the Howard Baker Center on the University of Tennessee Campus.

Although UT asked the Knox County Election Commission recently to move the voting location to Thompson-Boling Arena, the commission voted 3-2 to keep the Howard Baker Center as the location because of the limited time to change the location.

CENTRAL HONORS HEROINE



Central High School teacher Chris Hammond, standing center with a black shirt between Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon and Fountain City Historian Dr. J.C. Tumblin, welcomed guests Friday to the unveiling of a historic marker for Mary Francis Housley. Tumblin was a classmate of Housley, known as "Frankie." She was a Central High School graduate who became an airline flight attendant and saved the lives of ten people after the plane crashed in 1951. Housley died trying to rescue a 4-month-old baby from the plane. The dedication of the plaque, a three-year effort by Hammond and the high school, drew Housley family members from Florida and Campbell County. The marker is located along Tazewell Pike at the corner of Forestal Drive where Frankie and her family lived. Photo by Mike Steely.

More moves to restrict Board of Health on Commission Agenda

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Following up on a failed effort to handicap the Knox County Board of Health, Commissioner Kyle Ward is back again with two proposals on next Monday's Commission Work Session agenda.

Commissioners Ward and Justin Biggs initially proposed the idea of placing the Board of Health under the authority of Knox County Glenn Jacobs as an advisory group with approval for any actions to be approved by Jacobs. That failed and that resolution was altered to simply tell the public that the commission does not approve of the COVID-19 regulations passed by the board. It passed but is powerless to dictate anything to the board of medical specialists.

Next week Ward is proposing the establishment of "a Knox County Advisory Committee on health and economic well-being." How that differs from the Advisory Committee formed recently that includes business, medical, and elected officials is unknown.

He is also sponsoring an ordinance amending the Knox County Code, Chapter 28, Article II, Division One entitled "County Board of Health." The ordinance would "add certain requirements to the meetings of the Knox County Board of Health in times of a declared emergency."

Mayor Jacobs has been pushing the board to host a weekly public forum. The board has decided to allow citizens to comment during one monthly meeting rather than every week. Their next meeting on October 14 will include public input.

IN OTHER BUSINESS the commission may consider approving

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School board votes to end furloughs and picks up premium increase

By Ken Lay

The Knox County Board of Education voted to restore pay for administrators at its regular session meeting Wednesday night.

The board voted 7-1 to return five days of pay to administrators, who were set to be furloughed due to financial concerns due to the coronavirus pandemic. Mike McMillan cast the lone dissenting vote.

McMillan said that he wasn't opposed to restoring the money in the budget, but wanted to wait until spring to monitor sales tax revenue.

"I'm not opposed to them having it, but I'd like to wait until spring break or April 1," McMillan said.

Assistant superintendent and chief financial officer

Ron McPherson said that the latest tax revenue numbers were from July, but noted that the numbers were far above projections. He also said that the pay needs to be restored as soon as possible.

"The budget we drafted was very conservative," McPherson said. "We weathered the storm from the spring months when COVID first hit. I can't predict the future but we're far beyond our projections and we're far above their actuals."

"We need to restore these days because if we wait too long, we can't get the days back. They won't be there."

The employees who would have been affected included the superintendents, assistant superintendents and principals and supervisors.

Thomas made it clear that this wasn't a pay raise.

"We're giving these people the money back," he said. "These people work extremely hard."

The board also voted unanimously to pay the increase in insurance premiums, scheduled for 2021, for KCS employees and their families.

Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas lauded the board for its approval of the measure.

"While this isn't much, it's a step in the right direction," Thomas said.

He noted that approximately 4,500 have health insurance through Knox County Schools. In addition to the financial measures passed on Wednesday night, Thomas

and the board recognized the accomplishments of teachers and administrators who were honored by state and national entities.

The board recognized Karna Middle School music teacher Kami Lunsford, who was recently named Tennessee Teacher of the Year.

The board also recognized Sarah Moore Greene principal Robin Curry and her faculty and staff Wednesday night as the school was designated as a School of Promise by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

The Knox County magnet academy was one of two schools to be nationally recognized by the NIET with this distinction.

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