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COVID-19 Weekly Focus

2019 Knox County
Total Population¹
470,313

Total Confirmed
COVID-19 Cases²
13,978

% COVID-19 Cases/
Total Population
3.0%

Total COVID-19
Deaths²
115

% COVID-19 Deaths/
Total Population
.0002%

SOURCES: 1. U.S. Census Bureau; 2. Knox County Health Department data from 11/6/20

Eddie Mannis 'ready to go to work' in state house



PHOTO BY KEN LAY

Republican Eddie Mannis makes his victory speech after winning the District 18 Seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives Tuesday night at the Crowne Plaza.

By Ken Lay

Eddie Mannis has had very little time off recently and his hard work paid off Tuesday night. Mannis is headed to Nashville to represent District 18 in the Tennessee House of Representatives.

Mannis defeated Democrat Virginia Couch and his victory culminates a stint of more than a year on the campaign trail.

Mannis, a Knoxville business man, entered the house race after a failed attempt to become city mayor. Three months after losing that race to Democrat Indya Kincannon, he set his sights on the state house.

"I've always wanted to help my community," Mannis said during

his acceptance speech Tuesday night at the Republican watch party at the Crowne Plaza in Downtown Knoxville. "This is the second campaign that I've been involved in over the last year-and-a-half and I can tell you that it's been hard. I've been working 60 hours a week at my day job and we had about a three-month break (between) campaigns."

"The unfortunate thing about politics and political races is that you have a first-place finisher and a second-place finisher and I've now finished in both first and second place. This feels a lot better. I congratulate Virginia Couch on running a great race."

Political campaigns are never easy

but during the August primary, it was obvious that Mannis didn't have the full support of his political party.

When Mannis defeated Gina Oster over the summer, Knox County Republican Party Chairman Randy Pace labeled Mannis "a Democrat." Fast forward a few months and Pace and Mannis embraced on the stage before Mannis addressed the crowd full of cheering well-wishers. He won the seat previously occupied by Martin Daniel.

"I'm just glad that the voters spoke and we'll do anything we can," Mannis said. "It's been challenging at times. It's been discouraging at times and it's been exciting at times."

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PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Two rezoning notification signs mark the front of the former East Towne Mall. The abandoned mall property is being bought with plans for an e-commerce distribution center and the idea passed first reading at the Knoxville City Council meeting Tuesday evening.

E-commerce facility at East Towne approved on first vote

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
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The proposal to turn former East Towne Mall into an e-commerce distribution center received unanimous approval from the Knoxville City Council Tuesday evening. Councilwoman Lauren Rider and Vice Chair Gwen McFarlane moved for approval after hearing from the developer, the Knoxville Chamber and others.

Community activists Kevin Murphy and Ronnie Collins were praised for their efforts to include neighborhoods in discussions about the project.

Doug Lawyer of the Chamber said the Hillwood Enterprises LP development, dubbed "Project Malibu," will be a \$30 to \$40 million investment, and employ 370 high-paid employees and 370 contract employees. The design has been revamped in



Abandoned for years and a neighborhood eyesore, the former motel property along Asheville Highway will come down and be replaced with affordable apartments if plans pass a second reading next week at the Knoxville City Council meeting.

cooperation with nearby residents to become one and not two buildings, rework parking for tractor trailers, include Knoxville bus service, and rework the main entrance.

Ben Mullins, representing Hillwood, said the community is being

consulted and the new single-building design is less intrusive on the apartment complex above the abandoned mall. He said the plans for the 219,000-square foot structure would include a buffer, and will

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Veterans Day Parade cancelled but other events planned

By Mike Steely
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Wednesday is Veterans Day but, this year in Knoxville, there will be no parade. The social distancing required during the COVID-19 pandemic could not be followed and the local sponsors of the hugely popular parade have cancelled the event.

Annually thousands of people gather along Gay Street as various veteran groups, individuals, and supporters march down the street. The streets will be empty this year. Knoxville's Veterans Day Parade is usually one of the largest such

events in the nation.

The American Legion Post 2, which organizes the annual event, notes that the parade has only been cancelled two other times during World War II. One local television station, WBR Channel 10, is planning to air last year's parade.

The ringing of church bells, eleven times at 11 a.m., is being requested.

American Legion Post 2 invites all local veterans to join with their motorcycles or other vehicles for a Veterans Day Ride/Drive through East Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery.

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Some students struggle in Virtual Learning Program

By Ken Lay

Knox County Schools recently announced that it would continue to offer both virtual and in-person learning for the spring semester, which begins Jan. 5.

But the first nine-week quarterly grading period recently ended and KCS Superintendent Bob Thomas looked at the grades assigned to virtual students and 23.5 percent of the grades assigned were Fs.

"We looked at the grades assigned at the 4.5-week mark and 9.4 percent of the grades assigned were Fs," Thomas said during his report at the school board's work session meeting Wednesday night at the Andrew Johnson Building. "At the end of the nine-week grading period, 21.5 percent of the grades

assigned were Fs, so that number actually widened."

"But the teachers in our virtual program are doing a great job. Virtual learning favors those students who have a strong support system at home and those who are disciplined and motivated."

Thomas said that he looked at the grades and made his observations, but they results were not scientifically analyzed.

"I looked at the grades but this was in no way scientific," he said.

Students and parents had the option to change their learning model but that window was closed at the Nov. 6 deadline. But as of Wednesday, Thomas said that 3,700 students had chosen to switch from the virtual learning model to the in-person model.

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