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## COVID-19 Weekly Focus

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2019 Knox County Total Population <sup>1</sup>	Total Confirmed COVID-19 Cases <sup>2</sup>	% COVID-19 Cases/ Total Population	Total COVID-19 Deaths <sup>2</sup>	% COVID-19 Deaths/ Total Population
470,313	42,294	9%	624	.13%

SOURCES 1. U.S. Census Bureau 2. Knox County Health Department data from 4/16/2021.

## Large turnout at Fountain City B&P's new meeting venue

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

"We had a great meeting and great turnout!" said Jeff Bagwell, president of the Fountain City Business and Professional Association.

Bagwell told The Focus that the association's first big meeting following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic drew a large crowd to the Beaver Brook Country Club.

He said that Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs spoke for about

20 minutes and took questions. Cindy Reeves from Southeast Bank was the spotlight speaker and door prizes were donated by Rural/Metro Fire and Southeast Bank.

"We had 60 plus in attendance and several new members were added and all the new members will receive a pin and a window sticker for their business," Bagwell said.

Next month's speaker is Darryl Warren with AMR Knox County. May is EMS month and he'll bring the therapy dog Dolly there for

a show and tell and discuss the advances in emergency medicine and the benefits to patients.

Lunch is \$14 at the monthly meeting and membership is only \$45 a year. Opportunities exist for businesses and community organizations to present themselves and network at the meetings.

Bagwell said anyone wanting to join or get information can call him at (865)765-6493 or email him at Jeffrey.bagwell@gmr.net.



The Fountain City Business and Professional Association had a very successful and well-attended meeting Wednesday at their new meeting place, the Beaver Brook Country Club. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Bagwell)

## Halls tracks down title!



PHOTO BY STEVE WILLIAMS

A lot of smiles from the athletes and coaches of the Halls High track and field team after winning the inaugural Battle of Emory Road Track Meet April 6. Please see the coverage of the meet in Sports and Recreation, Section B.

## Mask mandate, school shooting at forefront of KCS board meeting

By Ken Lay

Members of the Knox County Board of Education held their regular session meeting with heavy hearts at the City-County Building last week.

The meeting was held Wednesday, just two days after a fatal shooting at Austin-East Magnet High School and KCS Superintendent Bob Thomas urged board members and others to keep the families of recent murder victims and those involved in Monday's shooting in their thoughts and prayers. He also vowed to do what he can to make the students, parents, employees and families in the Austin-East Community feel safe upon the school's reopening on Wednesday.

"We're all here with heavy hearts due to events Monday at Austin-East Monday," Thomas said. "We have got to do better. The Roadrunner Family is hurting and we're hurting with them."

"My heart goes out to the students, families and employees of Austin-East. No student or school employee should ever have to worry about their day being interrupted by such awful violence."

After a shooting at the school on Monday, April 12, Austin-East was closed for the remainder of last week. The school will remain closed today. Students will have a virtual day Tuesday before the campus reopens on Wednesday.

Thomas said that he and his team had met with Austin-East principal Nathan Langolis and noted that extra security measures and heightened police presence will be in place when the school reopens.

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## Tax break for AJ Building hinges on third-party review



The AJ Building as seen from former Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett's office window. Photo by Jennifer Owen.

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
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The deal to sell the Andrew Johnson Building to BNA Associates has been under a third-party review of the buyer's PILOT tax-deferral request. The tax break was requested to run for 15 years based on an appraised value of the current building for which BNA offered \$6 million on an former appraisal of about \$13 million.

That review, conducted by MuniCap Inc., is back in the hands of Knox County administration and is on the Knox County Commission's agenda for tonight's work session and next week's regular meeting. MuniCap is a public finance consulting firm based in

Columbia, Maryland, that specializes in the public finance aspects of redevelopment.

"These reports have a number of assumptions that have to be made so we always have a closing meeting with the developer to go over the report," Knox County Finance Director Chris Caldwell told The Focus.

"After the meeting, scheduled for 3:00 (Tuesday), we will finalize the report and I'll share it with commission and you," Caldwell said. He released a letter to commission members Thursday night.

"Mark Mamantov and I met with Phillip Welker of BNA today to go over the latest draft," Caldwell reported.

"Let me summarize what

you will see in the report, assuming no other changes occur. MuniCap recommends a 12-year PILOT with an annual payment of \$110,000 for the City and County combined. This report takes time to finalize because of the number of assumptions that go into the calculations. Historically, this study starts with the City; then, we get it once it's completed.

"The pandemic has made this process more complicated because assumptions aren't as clear-cut. We are examining rents, average daily rates, ROI, and other BNA criteria and comparing them to other comparable buildings.

"We anticipate that Phillip

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### Historic Wedding Venue

Built in 1886, Shannondale Presbyterian Church offers a traditional wedding setting with stained glass windows and a center aisle. Contact Wedding Coordinator, Sarah Weber at 865-456-6923.

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# Moving All-Star Game Was a Big Mistake

From a distance



By John J. Duncan Jr.  
duncanj@knoxfocus.com

One day at Litton's Restaurant, Mike Edwards, a former UT basketball star, told me that when his grandchildren teased him about his white hair he told them it was not white, it was "Arctic Blonde."

Well, I suppose my hair is arctic blonde too. This caused Pete Rose, the

famous baseball star, to tease me about it at an Athens Chamber of Commerce dinner several years ago.

Pete was the main speaker, and I sat next to him at the head of the table. I told him I had been batboy for the Knoxville Smokies when he played for the Macon Peaches. I was probably 12 or 13 at the time.

When he got up to speak the first thing he said was nice. He said "Congressman Duncan, I wish you were a senator." However, he then added: "But you were nine years old when I played at Macon. What the hell happened to you? I thought I was sitting next

to Col. Sanders up here." The audience of 500 or so roared with laughter.

I grew up in minor league baseball and was a batboy for five and a half seasons. That was probably because no one else would have done it as cheaply as I did. I did it for free the first season and a half and for \$1.50 a game for the next four.

I was the public address announcer my freshman year at UT, again for free. It was understandable that I have been a baseball fan for almost all my life.

But Major League Baseball is about to lose me and many, many others.

I started becoming disgusted several years ago

when unappreciative, prima-donna athletes started getting salaries of \$25 million and up.

Republicans in the U.S. House used to have two African-American parliamentarians working for us who were big sports fans.

One day a few years ago, one gentleman asked me what I thought about the Washington Nationals signing pitcher Max Scherzer to an eight year, \$240 million dollar contract.

I told them, "Well, it may surprise you, but I find it almost impossible to root for anyone making \$30 million a year."

Now, the MLB Commissioner, Rob Manfred, has fallen for the very

false, left-wing propaganda of CNN and MSNBC and moved the 2021 All-Star Game from Atlanta to Denver.

He has done this in response to the Georgia Legislature passing a bill to try to make it more difficult to cheat in elections.

He probably has received praise from those who work for him and in very wealthy social circles, since most very wealthy today are very liberal and politically correct.

But I listen to many sports programs, and based on what I have heard and read, he has disgusted many ordinary baseball fans. And baseball is slowly going down in popularity

as its fan base is aging. It cannot afford to keep losing fans.

Mr. Manfred over-reacted. He made a rush to judgement without reading the law and without talking its supporters and listening to the other side.

Even with the new law, Georgia has more liberal voting rules than most blue states.

No Republican leaders are trying to suppress African-American voters. African-American leaders know that is a false charge, but they do it to try to make their voters angry and make sure that they turn out for the elections.

## Criticisms of the Georgia voting law would make Joseph Goebbels proud

If Joseph Goebbels were alive he certainly would wholeheartedly approve of the number that the left has done on the Georgia voting law. Goebbels was Adolf Hitler's Minister of Public Enlightenment (propaganda) who is reputed to have said that "a lie told once remains a lie but a lie told a thousand times becomes the truth." Goebbels could get away with promulgating lies because of the lack of access to information and no one would dare fact check him. There is no such excuse today where information is relatively costless and easily accessible. Yet many are too lazy to find out the truth. Such is the case with the Georgia law. Much of what has been said is a lie. Most of those who have criticized the Georgia law as "Jim Crow 2.0" have not read the law and for them it is irrelevant to do so. The law, characterized as



By Dr. Harold A. Black

attempting to suppress the minority vote, actually makes it easier to vote but harder to cheat. That's what many defenders of the law point out: that it is less restrictive than the laws in Joe Biden's Delaware and Chuck Schumer's New York. Personally, I expect politicians to lie and for the "woke" media to parrot anything they say so long as it is anti-conservative. The more restrictive voting laws in Delaware and New York are not subject to the same criticism as Georgia's since those are two states reliably in the Democratic column. However, a state that generally is conservative that seeks to change its voting laws is immediately labeled as "racist." The spate of criticism is actually to give cover for the Democrat-ized bill, HR1 the so-called "For the People Act", that seeks to federalize voting laws, usurping the power of the states to manage

their own elections. I am not a constitutional scholar but I believe that such a law would be found unconstitutional. Nevertheless, perhaps by eliminating the filibuster and packing the Supreme Court, the left thinks it will prevail.

What is interesting is the wide range of critics of the Georgia law and the continuation of the lies about it despite widespread knowledge that the critics are being untruthful. One of Georgia's new senators distributed a mailing criticizing parts of the law that were not in the final draft. Even the Washington Post "fact checker" awarded Joe Biden four Pinocchios for false claims regarding the law. Major League baseball (my favorite sport) pulled its All Star game from Atlanta (actually Cobb County) and moved it to Denver. So I guess moving the game with its estimated \$100 million revenues from a majority black area to one of the whitest metropolitan areas in the country is supposed to show support

for black Georgians? Will Smith announced that he was not going to make a film in Georgia but instead was going to New Orleans instead. Again the excuse was the Georgia voting law.

What is particularly worrisome is that major corporations feel the need to kowtow to the woke mob. Coca-Cola and Delta, two Atlanta based corporations, among others condemned the law calling it "a step backwards." However, it has been reported that these firms were aware of the legislation prior to passage and in some cases were supportive of it. Yet, they changed their tune when faced with the loud pressures from the woke mob. As someone pointed out, the corporations seem more afraid of the loud minority than the silent majority. This is a continuing trend where major corporations are aligning themselves with those who seem intent on weakening the foundations of our democracy and our freedoms. It is a movement toward fascism (recall that

Goebbels Nazi Germany was socialist) where large firms are favored by the government to the detriment of small businesses.

Some have suggested that conservatives boycott those firms that are spouting wokeness (wokeness only thrives in an environment that is intellectually bankrupt). I have another suggestion, namely that the conservatives repudiate all measures that they have traditionally endorsed that aid large corporations. I would support an increase in the corporate income tax but only if it exempts small businesses. I would favor removal of all forms of corporate welfare, subsidies and quotas. I would fully embrace working class Americans, support right to work laws, and become the champion of small business. Big tech, big media, big pharma and many of our best-known firms are no friends of our values and there is no need to pretend otherwise.

You may contact Dr. Black by emailing [blackh@knoxfocus.com](mailto:blackh@knoxfocus.com).

## Tax break

Cont. from page 1

Welker from BNA will disagree with some of the assumptions made by Municap. I told him he was well within his rights to come and make his case to County Commission. We agree with him that this process isn't scientific, and there's only one correct answer.

"The amount and/or the number of years of the PILOT can change with just a few adjustments to the many assumptions. We think this debate can help provide some clarity to the third-party review process. This PILOT would also require approval from City Council.

"We will be at the Commission workshop and regular meeting to answer questions and provide feedback. I would recommend sending the resolution with no recommendation on Monday, but allow discussion during both sessions. We discussed the possibility of deferring this to the May meeting, but we thought this body would prefer to go ahead and hear it, and we agree," Caldwell's message concluded.

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Published by Fountain Printing and Publishing, Inc.

Deadline for ad design is Monday at 5 p.m.  
Deadline for Classified ads is Thursday at noon.  
Deadline for submissions is Thursday by noon.

Articles, announcements, photo attachments and cutlines may be submitted by e-mail to [staff@knoxfocus.com](mailto:staff@knoxfocus.com).

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# Publisher's Positions



**By Steve Hunley, Publisher**  
publisher@knoxfocus.com

Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, perhaps the most outspoken anti-Semite in Congress and erstwhile member of the Democrat "Squad", has issued a new jeremiad calling for "no more" policing. Tlaib declared policing in the United States is "inherently and intentionally racist." This coming from a rabid anti-Semite. Pot, meet kettle. Tlaib called the shooting of Daunte Wright no accident and announced, "I am done with those who condone government funded murder." When asked if Old Joe Biden "disavows" Congresswoman Tlaib's position, all press spokesperson Jen Psaki could muster was a meek and mild disclaimer Biden doesn't share the congresswoman's position. As far as disavowals go, it was like the shadow of a crow that starved to death at night. "No more policing, incarceration, and militarization," Tlaib bellowed. "It can't be

reformed." Now the self-proclaimed prophets of understanding who claim they alone understand the nuances of city politics all opine the City of Knoxville is Democratic. Well, the challengers to City Council incumbents would be wise to ask just what kind of Democrats are the incumbent Council members. Keep in mind, as a member of the United States Senate Joe Biden was second to none in his support for the police. Unfortunately, I don't believe that Joe Biden is still alive inside the shell of what remains of our Chief Executive. Still, none of the Council incumbents shouldn't have any trouble whatever enunciating just what kind of Democrat they are. Congressman Jim Clyburn, who is, incidentally, Black, has issued a statement telling Rashida we have to have police. The Biden disavowal is no disavowal at all. If the "mainstream" Democrats are afraid to differ from the socialists and Marxists who have taken over their party, what is the difference? There are two declared socialists sitting on the Knoxville City Council at the moment; Amelia Parker and Seems Singh. Singh's district voted about evenly between Old Joe Biden and President Trump, yet they have a socialist as a councilwoman? If folks start paying attention to what is going on inside the

city, some of these folks wouldn't be in office any longer. The question is: do these "moderates" vote any different than the extremists like Amelia Parker and David Hayes? If not, does it really matter which of them is elected? The latest events at Austin-East underscore the need for better policing. Mayor Indya Kincannon had approached superintendent of Knox County Schools Bob Thomas several months ago about withdrawing the Knoxville Police Department officers who work security in the school system. Kincannon quietly asked if Thomas had any objection to the idea. Thomas did indeed have an objection, citing his promise to do all he could to make schools as safe as possible. The more folks who find out Indya was trying to take those officers out of the school, the less likely they are to be impressed. Have the members of the city council objected to that, or for that matter, anything else Indya has or has not done? Of course not. We need to know how a student smuggled a gun into the high school and school officials are going to have some explaining to do. Indya and the city council members have allocated \$1 million to address "gun violence" in Knoxville. \$75,000 of that has gone to Andre Canty of Cities United. Canty tweeted,

"Re Austin-East today: Hug your kids, use self-care, limit social media, know you don't have to have the right answers." Canty's statement sums up how a great many folks feel.

◆◆◆

Some of the council incumbents are beginning to kick off their campaigns and Lauren Rider has complained about mailers sent to some residents about her record. Of course Lauren is taking credit for every single job that has occurred, including those from Amazon, when she was responsible for cutting that project back. Before the election is over, doubtless Rider will claim credit for having invented the COVID-19 vaccine and acknowledge she and Al Gore created the Internet together.

There is plenty to criticize in the records of the council incumbents and the council and mayor have been treated rather gently by most local news media outlets, especially as compared to county officials. A great deal of attention has been paid to the "great masking debate" surrounding the Knox County Board of Health and Dr. Martha Buchanan, especially by the Knoxville News-Sentinel. Yet it was also the News-Sentinel who published a gallery of startling photographs of UT students enjoying the city's vibrant nightlife during the worst of the COVID crisis

when Knox County was one of the Corona virus hot spots in the country. Yet the Kincannon administration and the members of the Knoxville City Council largely escaped scrutiny by the News-Sentinel and local TV stations, who seem to not realize what is or isn't a story without the guidance of the News-Sentinel. For all the squalling and hand-wringing and crying by the folks insisting everyone be masked like a mummy - - - most of whom oddly seemed to live inside the City of Knoxville - - - who pointed fingers trembling with indignation and horror at County Commissioner Kyle Ward - - - they hypocritically failed to pay the slightest attention to what was or was not occurring inside the City. They ignored that the good Dr. Buchanan uttered not a word of recrimination about the City government's failure to do a blessed thing about enforcing social distancing or wearing masks. Gyms were closed while the city allows students to roam their favorite night spots unmolested. Nor did the august members of the Knox County Board of Health, some of whom thought the board ought to try and expand its authority beyond the borders of Knox County. Once again, where exactly was the hottest COVID-19 spot in Knox County when the county was one of the reddest coronavirus

hot spots in the country? Why, the University of Tennessee, of course! Right smack dab in the center of the City of Knoxville, yet neither Dr. Buchanan, nor the Board of Health uttered so much as a peep to warn or urge city officials to enforce social distancing and wearing masks as students gathered at night spots without doing either. Oh, the City eventually made some half-hearted efforts to chastise some smaller businesses, but the fact is the nightlife largely continued, the liquor flowed while restaurants languished under the smaller capacity. One restaurant owner hasn't taken that lying down and Jim Klonaris is off to a good start in his campaign for the Knoxville City Council. Klonaris has raised a hefty \$45,000 so far and promises to give Lauren Rider a run for her money. She'll have to invent a few more things to take credit for before the campaign is over. The great masking debate seems to have played itself out as the Knox County Board of Education has voted unanimously, 9 - 0, to sunset the masking policy in August of this year if things remain the same. The board can always revisit the policy should things change. More and more people are receiving their vaccinations.

**Knox County Sheriff's Office 2021 Car and Motorcycle Show to benefit D.A.R.E.**

On May 1, 2021, the Knox County Sheriff's Office is hosting a car show at the Knoxville Expo Center, 5441 Clinton Highway, to raise money for the county Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Program. D.A.R.E. is a highly effective evidence-based substance abuse program that teaches 5th grade students the consequences of drug use and how to make healthy choices, resolve conflicts and take charge of their life. It is KCSO's goal to reach approximately 3,000 Knox County 5th graders each year about the consequences of drug use. The event will be held from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. and include event t-shirts, goody bags, door prizes, live bluegrass and food trucks (Big O's BBQ and Forks on the Road). Grumpy's Plastic Model Car Club will also have a model car show. Several vendors will be there with a variety of merchandise and vendor space is still available. Medic Mobile will also be on hand for their blood drive. All proceeds to benefit the Knox County Sheriff's Office D.A.R.E. Program. For more info on how you can be a vendor or sponsor, or preregister, contact Officer Thomas Sawyer at (865)215-5633 or thomas.sawyer@knoxsheriff.org or go to www.knoxsheriff.org

## Letter to the Publisher

# Our letter to county commission regarding 287(g)

Our families have called Knoxville home for generations. When we married in 1988, we never thought of raising our children anywhere else. We have enjoyed getting to know many of our neighbors who moved to Knoxville to raise their families for the same reasons we have chosen to stay. Over the past 30+ years, our community has experienced much growth and change, some of which has been great, and sadly, some has been not so great. On December 29, 2018 at 6:30 p.m., our 22-year-old son Pierce lost his life doing what many of us do every single day, making a trip to Walmart. A 44-year-old man, with no driver's license, insurance or vehicle registration, caused Pierce's death. This man, who we later learned was an illegal immigrant, crossed over a double yellow line into oncoming traffic on Chapman Highway, when swerving to his right would have been a safer choice, and hit our son head-on in a violent collision. Though several people at the scene rendered aide to Pierce and his fiancé, Jade, the man who caused the violent collision did not. In fact, days later we were told by those witnesses at the scene that not only did he not offer to render aide, he also never left his vehicle. In fact, we were told he continually tried to start his vehicle, likely hoping to leave the scene. Fortunately, he was not able to leave and law enforcement arrived soon thereafter. Though the adult male who caused this horrific accident suffered no injuries, he has caused permanent damage, physically and emotionally, to a lot of people. People who are law-abiding citizens of Knox County. Pierce was killed. His fiancé Jade has suffered physical and mental damages from

which she will never recover. Our family lost a son, a brother, a grandson. Knox County has lost a citizen who would have gone above and beyond to make this County a much better place in which to live. The illegal immigrant who caused this horrific accident was arrested and booked in the Knox County Jail where he eventually made bond. Because Knox County had 287(g) in place, a search in the NCIC database was conducted. His name was listed in this database for overstaying his VISA for over 14 years. He was detained by ICE to face deportation for his failure to report regarding his expired VISA. He was not sought out by a door-to-door campaign (like some people will mislead you to believe happens). He was arrested for causing a violent collision that resulted in a vehicular homicide, and he was then detained by ICE because he was living in the United States illegally. Neither of these are reasons that are malicious or racist. Had 287(g) not been in effect in Knox County, he would have been released. He would have been back behind the wheel driving without a license or insurance putting others at risk. After this man was removed from the United States by the Federal government, the Knox County Grand Jury found the criminally negligent homicide charges against him should be upheld for Pierce's death. Should he return to the United States, he is wanted in Knox County to answer for his actions and accept responsibility. He will be expected to do what every citizen and legal immigrant is expected to do - abide by our laws and if you don't, then you answer for them. This man could already be back in the United States. We will

likely never know..... unless he is arrested for another crime or causing another death. The lies and misconceptions about 287(g) are absurd. Anyone who does their due diligence to read and know what is in 287(g) knows this. Law enforcement is not out knocking on doors searching for people who are here illegally. In fact, they are not even out searching for the man who took Pierce's life. Yes, there are charges against this man but he's only going to be caught if he breaks the law or, God forbid, takes another life. Prior to 287(g) being in place, ICE holds were allowed to bond out and often times fled. Without 287(g) that is likely what would have happened in our case. That is not opinion, that is fact! Our country clearly does not have the manpower to take on such a monumental task as actively targeting illegal immigrants! As with anyone (legal or illegal), when they don't show up for their hearing, a warrant is issued, and law enforcement then must go in the community to apprehend them. It's the law! It happens every single day to citizens and legal immigrants of the United States. However, these perfectly legal apprehensions are the very instances used to promote the lies about law enforcement. Law enforcement is tasked with locating an individual for a crime they have been charged with no matter what their legal status is. The lie and misconception is that 287(g) is all about legal status! Clearly, there are issues at our southern border in regard to immigration and illegal entry, but 287(g) doesn't affect anyone unless they are arrested and charged with a crime. Our family knew nothing of illegal immigrant crime until we

were affected by it. We knew nothing of the traffic accidents involving fatalities caused by those in our country illegally. We would learn in the most painful way. While there are many victims of auto accidents, not all families have to spend every single day trying to fight for fairness on behalf of those who have died at the hands of others. We know plenty of people who have had to go to court and fight to have the person convicted. However, our family has not been given that chance. Instead, we have had to fight every single day for victims' rights at the hands of illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants who commit a crime and then walk away. Our son was not given the chance to walk away. We ask you to please be mindful of the many families like ours who have suffered due to decades of allowing our borders to become a gateway to crime, death and corruption. Drugs, gangs, human trafficking, murder, rape, DUI and driving offenses are plaguing our country and threatening the very dream of those who wish to legally immigrate. Why would we not want all those choosing to live in our community to be safe? Why would we not support a program like 287(g) and work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to keep families safe, including the many immigrant families we call our neighbors? There is absolutely no sound reason to NOT support 287(g) We implore you to support 287(g)! Our city should never be a sanctuary for those who do not abide by our laws! We pray you never have to learn of this firsthand.

Sincerely,  
D.J. & Wendy Corcoran

## Alternate committee on health still floundering

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
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After a few virtual meetings, Knox County's Committee on Health and Economic Well-Being is still floundering in a sea of confusion over their purpose. Their monthly meeting Wednesday evening began with Deputy Law Director Myers Morton advising that they adopt bylaws and proceed.

Appointed by Mayor Glenn Jacobs and approved by the Knox County Commission, the committee is supposed to help advise small businesses that suffered during the strict pandemic regulations imposed by the Knox County Board of Health. The committee was supposed to serve as an alternate voice to the board but, with the county commission downgrading the board to an advisory status, some members of the Health and Economic Well-Being Committee are asking if they are needed any longer.

The committee has yet to make any recommendations. When they asked last week that a teacher be named to the committee the commission apparently refused to consider it.

Knox County Health Department Director Dr. Martha Buchanan spoke at the committee's meeting, bringing them up to date on the pandemic figures and the other duties of the health department. She said something that apparently struck

home with some of the members.

"You have to understand public health if you are going to advise," she said.

Committee Chairman Dr. Joshua Williams told Dr. Buchanan that she is "an essential partner in our community." Other members praised Buchanan's work during the pandemic and asked several questions.

"I am happy to be a resource for you," she told the group, adding, "Covid is here to stay."

Dr. Williams noted the committee is "an outgrowth of the political third rail" and said the group suffers from an identity crisis with no real direction. Yet he noted the talent on the group and said the committee is "eager to help."

Dr. Kathy Brown said she "strictly supports" mask wearing and urged Dr. Buchanan to "stay the course."

With Sevier County joining other surrounding counties in dropping restrictions, the committee discussed reviewing the results in cases during their May meeting. The group also debated the mask mandate, herd immunity, mental health and when the local restrictions would end.

Attorney Morton said that should the governor's emergency order end on April 28, the committee will need to meet in public rather than virtually. He also said he will look into several potential bylaws and present them at the next meeting.

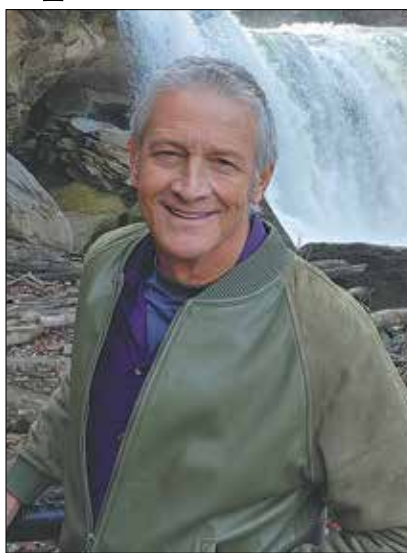
## Dr. Neptune improves health, says creator

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

"Dr. Neptune is a byproduct of me wanting to get turmeric into my diet and system," said Ed Cook, a West Knoxville man who developed a health powder called "Dr. Neptune Fountain of Youth" and is now promoting it.

"I'm a baby boomer who has been a health and fitness enthusiast for over 40 years. I am partners in this business with my son, and I happen to be a U.S. Army veteran. Dr. Neptune is unique because it contains three supreme ingredients which are the herb turmeric, elite multi-collagen and fruit-flavored amino acids. When you mix this power with water it provides a very tasty hydration drink," Cook explained.

Cook told The Focus that many scientific studies and testimonials conclude that consuming this combination regularly will result in an enhanced immune system, reduce



West Knoxville resident Ed Cook is a health enthusiast who has developed "Dr. Neptune," a dietary supplement he says has several healthy effects on a person who consumes it.

most inflammation, has a pro-biotic effect, and promotes better skin, hair and nails. He added that Dr. Neptune

also helps with muscle growth and energy.

"We're planning more products such as a Beet Root mix. By producing Dr. Neptune I can contribute to the health and well-being of society," he said.

"So far everyone has loved the product. I'm proud of this business as it's honest and actually improves people's health. I don't want this to get too big because I want to maintain quality control," Cook said.

Cook said anyone can order Dr. Neptune from the website, www.drneptune.com, or by calling (315)857-3209.

"We are working to get in local stores. It is produced in an FDA-approved facility using good manufacturing practices," he said, adding that Dr. Neptune is generally for people over 30 years old who are active and make a personal effort to take control of their own health.

## Sports Authority, Merchant Drive zoning, safety building on council agenda

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Looks like a busy night for the Knoxville City Council when it meets Tuesday evening with a lot of unresolved business on the agenda. The meeting will apparently be virtual again and available for viewing on community television and online.

The council will discuss appointing members of the new Sports Authority, which would oversee the development and construction and issue bonds for the baseball complex being proposed near Old City. Businessman and UT President Randy Boyd has proposed

a multi-million dollar retail and apartment complex next to the stadium that the city and county would build and then lease to his semi-pro team, the Smokies.

The seven appointees that Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon and Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs have jointly recommended are: Richard H. Bass, Joan C. Cronan, Jeff Hagood, Tim Hill, Alvin J. Nance, Nikitia Thompson and Rosalyn Tillman.

The Knox County Commission will vote on the recommendations on April 26.

Norwood residents are expected to call in and fight a retail and apartment

complex planned by Hilton Capital Group for 2400 and 2600 Merchant Drive and at 5291 Oakhill Drive. The local homeowners are concerned about traffic along the busy connector street, especially with the elementary school there, flooding, and the hillside protection for the property. The developer's plans passed the planning commission in a 14-1 vote and the properties, now zoned Neighborhood Commercial and Agricultural, would be zoned RN-5, General Residential Neighborhood.

The rezoning comes to the council on first reading and will require a second vote.

Other rezoning requests before the council include properties at 4821 North Broadway and 202 Cedar Lane.

The council is also being asked to authorize the mayor to execute an agreement with Messer Construction Company to complete construction of the new Public Safety Complex. Demolition of part of the former Tennova/St. Mary's

Hospital, one block from North Broadway, is well underway. The police and fire departments will relocate there along with businesses and other government organizations that are requesting space.

Mayor Indya Kincannon is also asking that \$13,000 from Community Empowerment funds be donated to assist the founding of the East Tennessee Valley Crime Stoppers Association.

Councilmember Seema Singh is asking the council for \$4 million in the next budget to reduce and prevent crime and to fund "interventional programming."

Parks and Recreation is asking the council to approve the mayor to enter a license agreement with the state for continued use of the Downtown PetSafe Dog Park.

Jackie Lane and Beth Waters may be reappointed to the Community Television of Knoxville board and Councilwoman Singh may be reappointed to that board.

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## NOTABLES FROM KNOXVILLE



### HARVEY BROOME

Harvey Benjamin Broome was an attorney, writer and notable conservationist. A Knoxville Native Broome formed The Wilderness Society and played a large role in establishing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club is named for him.

Born in Knoxville he often visited his grandparent's farm in Fountain City. He developed a love for the outdoors and at age 15 went on his first camping trip in the Smoky Mountains to Silers Bald. Broome graduated from Knoxville High School and attended the University of Tennessee and then earned a law degree from Harvard University. He joined an Oak Ridge law firm and clerked for Federal District Judge Xen Hicks and Robert L. Taylor.

Broome married his wife, Anna, in 1937 and she shared his love of the outdoors. They lived in a house that the couple relocated from his grandfather's farm to Knoxville. They also owned a cabin in the Smokies. He died in 1968 while building a birdhouse out of hollow log.

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# The Fight To Enlarge the Rules Committee

## Pages from the Past



By Ray Hill  
rayhill865@gmail.com

Few readers likely recall how very close the 1960 presidential election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon truly was. Kennedy won by a margin of 0.17 percent of the vote, some 112,827 votes. As Kennedy prepared to take over from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the U. S. House of Representatives had been contending with increasing resistance to considering reform legislation inside the powerful House Rules Committee. The Speaker of the House was still Sam Rayburn, the longest serving Speaker in history. Rayburn frequently evaded classification by most historians, identified at times as a populist, liberal or even moderate Democrat. Rayburn was coming to the end of his forty-six years of continuous service in the House of Representatives. Born in Tennessee in 1882, Rayburn had first been elected to Congress in 1912 after serving as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. Rayburn became Speaker following the death of William B. Bankhead of Alabama in September of 1940 and remained in office until 1947 when Joe Martin, a Massachusetts Republican, became Speaker for two years. Rayburn was once again elected Speaker in 1949 and remained in office until 1953 when the Republicans once again controlled the House and Martin was reinstated. The two men traded gavels for the final time in 1955 and Rayburn remained as Speaker of the House until his death in 1961.

Without a doubt, the somewhat obscure Rules Committee was the most powerful in the House with original as well as secondary jurisdiction over legislation proposed by members. In essence, the Rules Committee determined what legislation reached the floor of the House; it controlled the agenda of the House. The Rules Committee became the final resting ground for many a bill when the committee simply refused to give a particular bill a hearing. In fact, the House Rules Committee was indeed designed to keep frivolous legislation from reaching the floor. Were the Rules Committee not to do so, there would be so much legislation for congressmen to consider, it would choke the committee system to death and bring the flow of legislation and business to a halt.

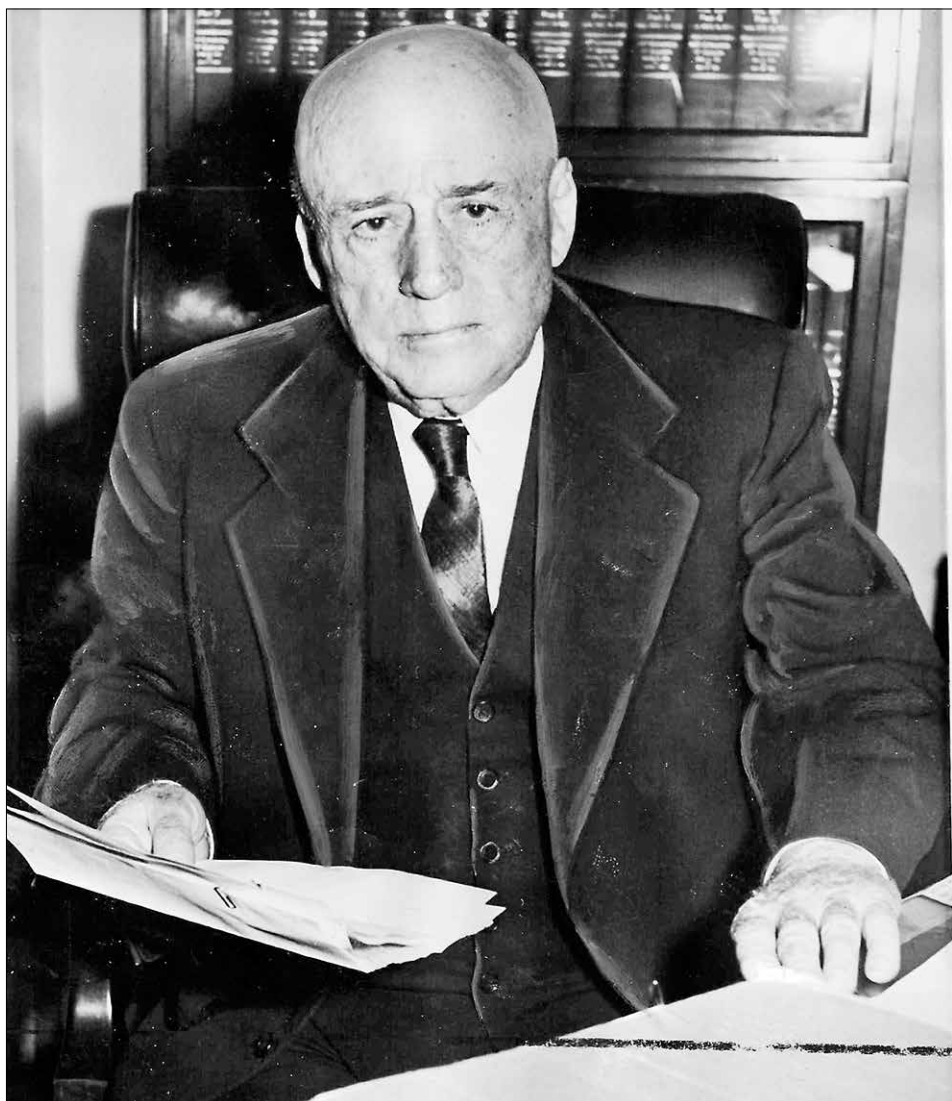
Rayburn and Joe Martin, despite their political differences, were usually able to work out compromises on legislation in many instances. Martin's own congressional district was thought to be trending Democratic, but his personal popularity and excellent constituent service had kept him

in office. In 1959, following a rout of GOP candidates, Joe Martin was replaced as Minority Leader by his deputy, Charles Halleck of Indiana. Halleck was somewhat more combative and conservative than Martin had been and the Indianan immediately set out to establish an alliance with Howard W. Smith, Chairman of the House Rules Committee.

Howard W. Smith was a profoundly conservative Democrat, a breed that no longer exists inside the House of Representatives. Amongst Smith's bag of tricks to disrupt the flow of legislation were simply refusing to call the committee together, the power to set the agenda of the House Rules Committee, and summon witnesses. In 1959, the membership of the House Rules Committee was set at twelve with eight Democrats and four Republicans. In spite of the number of the Democrats on the committee, the Republicans helped to actually control the Rules Committee as Howard Smith and William Colmer of Mississippi were conservatives and joined the GOP members in blocking many bills supported by the Democratic majority. The conservative coalition in the House proved to be so strong even Rayburn could not thwart it through his own personal influence. Speaker Rayburn suffered a number of setbacks as the Eisenhower administration drew to a close and the 1960 presidential campaign raged between Kennedy and Nixon. The conservatives did all they could to embarrass John F. Kennedy, which in turn, embarrassed Speaker Sam Rayburn. Of course while the presidential campaign was under way, so too were the congressional campaigns, a subject of much interest to Sam Rayburn. Congressmen Smith and Colmer helped the Republicans on the House Rules Committee to kill bills affecting the minimum wage, education, and public housing. Following Kennedy's narrow election to the presidency, Sam Rayburn decided he had no other choice but to act to curb the power of Judge Smith and the House Rules Committee.

The Speaker flew to Palm Beach, Florida to visit with the President-Elect at the Kennedy compound to discuss the problem of the House Rules Committee. Kennedy, having served for six years as a congressman, realized Rayburn's importance in the House and pledged his cooperation and support. Kennedy promised not to interfere in internal House matters.

Sam Rayburn gave consideration to several alternatives available to him, one of which was pressed by Rayburn's protégé and the incoming vice president, Lyndon Johnson.



FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn of Texas in 1961. AP Wirephoto

The wily Johnson urged Rayburn to remove William Colmer from the Rules Committee, a move that would cripple the conservative coalition. LBJ believed it was a party matter and should be handled internally. Johnson thought removing Colmer from the Rules Committee and replacing the conservative Mississippian with a moderate or liberal Democrat would resolve the problem and give Democrats a working majority on the committee. Certainly Speaker Rayburn had good cause to remove William Colmer as the Mississippi congressman had openly opposed the candidacy of the Catholic Kennedy during the recent presidential campaign. Party apostasy was anathema to most Democrats in the House. Rayburn was fearful that approach might very well backfire as Southern Democrats at the time composed the backbone of much of the Democratic majority in Congress. Alienating the Southerners might very well cause a realignment of the political parties. Lyndon Johnson later accomplished that in 1964.

Rayburn preferred compromise and conciliation as opposed to a brawl, but the Speaker was not at all afraid of a fight. Speaker Rayburn chose to try and enlarge the Rules Committee's full membership to fifteen, which was permissible according to the rules of the House. That would allow Rayburn to appoint three more moderate or liberal Democrats to the committee and give Democrats an eight to seven advantage over the conservative coalition. That particular approach was not as offensive to Southern Democrats and there were a goodly number of moderates among the Southern contingent in Congress who would approve the strategy.

Rayburn sat in the Speaker's chair on the dais of the House of Representatives and made no effort to challenge the rules as adopted by the full membership of the House. The shrewd Rayburn allowed the rumor to spread he was considering removing William Colmer from the

Rules Committee and saw to it the gossip was spread to the newspaper reporters who gleefully printed it. The fanning of the flames of the Colmer removal by the news media helped to keep members of the conservative coalition off balance and confused. Rayburn carefully assessed support inside the House to enlarge the committee and sought strategic assistance from President Kennedy and the White House. True to his word, JFK and high ranking staff members placed personal calls to congressmen who were doubtful to lobby for support. A rickety alliance of a handful of special interest groups mounted a campaign to support the Speaker's efforts including the AFL-CIO, the League of Women Voters, and the National Education Association. Yet the foundation supporting the move was Rayburn's own influence inside the House. The Speaker was personally popular among his fellow Democrats and had performed innumerable favors for and extended limitless courtesies to his congressmen. Few members forgot the Speaker wielded great influence in determining a member's committee assignments. There was no more effective lobbyist for expanding the membership of the House Rules Committee than Sam Rayburn himself.

Howard W. Smith had been a congressman for quite some time as well as the "Judge," attempted to reach a compromise with the Speaker. Rayburn considered leaving the membership untouched if Judge Smith would give his word all legislation pushed by the Kennedy administration be given a fair hearing by the Rules Committee. Judge Smith and the Speaker could reach no agreement between them. On January 11, 1961 Speaker Sam Rayburn publicly announced he would try and expand the membership of the House Rules Committee. Some of the more liberal members of the Democratic caucus called for Congressman Bill Colmer to be removed from the Rules Committee and some even demanded Howard Smith be removed

as well. The politically astute Sam Rayburn chose not to confront the Southerners so directly.

The Speaker seemed to have suffered a setback when the Republicans in the House of Representatives voted to oppose Rayburn. That gave Judge Smith the confidence to believe the coalition between conservative Democrats and House Republicans would deal Sam Rayburn one of his rare defeats on the floor. That same confidence, as well as a small measure of caution, caused Judge Smith to allow the matter out of the Rules Committee for a vote. The element of caution was the Speaker could still easily remove William Colmer as a member of the committee and nobody understood that any better than Howard Smith.

As the full vote approached Judge Smith remained confident while Sam Rayburn was fearful. Speaker Rayburn realized all too well just what defeat would mean to his personal and political prestige, as well as the potentially dire consequences to the success of the Kennedy administration. Defeat would mean Judge Howard Smith and the conservative coalition in the Rules Committee would be the single most powerful entity in the U. S. House of Representatives. No one in the House knew where the votes were better than Sam Rayburn and the Speaker sought out moderate Republicans for help and support. Some of Rayburn's colleagues from his home state of Texas nervously reported an increase in their mail from constituents who were skeptical or outright opposed to enlarging the Rules Committee. Rayburn acknowledged he had received similar letters and dismissed them as having been written by people who had voted for Richard Nixon rather than John F. Kennedy and were nothing less than "poor losers" who wanted the Kennedy administration to fail. His fellow Texans split in their support of the Speaker, with fifteen backing Rayburn and seven opposed the enlargement

of the Rules Committee.

A week before the vote, Judge Smith sensed support for Speaker Rayburn was growing and he was shaken. Smith proposed a compromise. The Judge proposed parsing out Kennedy administration legislation; Smith offered to report out five administration bills for consideration by the House. Speaker Rayburn consulted the White House and refused Smith's proposed compromise. President Kennedy naturally gave his full backing to the Speaker and said the New Frontier would comprise perhaps ten or twelve major legislative proposals.

January 31, 1961 saw the House of Representatives consider Resolution 127, the plan to expand the membership of the Rules Committee from twelve members to fifteen. The most dramatic moment was when Sam Rayburn descended from the Speaker's dais to speak to his fellow congressmen on the floor of the House. Rayburn in his typically matter-of-fact and blunt language explained why he wanted Resolution 127 passed. It boiled down to one thing: the Speaker did not believe one committee in the House should have the power and authority to halt all legislation. The vote was remarkably close and as the last five votes were cast, the congressmen and the folks in the House galleries were utterly silent. The final vote was 217 - 212 in favor of enlarging the House Rules Committee. The power of Judge Howard Smith inside the Rules Committee was broken. Still the conservative coalition defeated several Kennedy administration priorities but the Rules Committee only refused one White House bill, a school aid package.

It was the last great victory of Sam Rayburn's long House career. Sam Rayburn died that same year of cancer and Howard W. Smith remained in Congress until he was defeated in the Democratic primary in his Virginia district in 1966 by a liberal Democrat, George Rawlings. Rawlings lost the general election to a conservative Republican William Lloyd Scott.

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# Power of Knox Health Director up to Governor Lee?

By Mike Steely  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

The authority granted to the Knox County Health Departments Director to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is apparently up to Tennessee Governor Bill Lee. His statewide Emergency Order is set to expire April 28. The Knox County Commission's removal of pandemic powers from the Board of Health began last Tuesday but Health Director Dr. Martha Buchanan has announced she plans to continue the mask mandate, social distancing, and restaurant and bar restrictions of 50% capacity and a 1 a.m. curfew.

The local curfew rule is scheduled to expire April 22 and Buchanan is scheduled to meet with the Board of Health in their April 21 meeting.

Buchanan said she will continue to meet with the Board of Health members who will now serve as an "advisory" group to her. In the past she has supported all decisions made by that board and served as a voting member. So does Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs who, for the most part, had been the sole "No" vote on the various board safety regulations.

"While this board is now an advisory body, their guidance still serves an important role. I look forward to hearing their thoughts on the matter and believe it's important we continue to have this dialogue in the

public domain," Buchanan said.

Both Jacobs and Buchanan have turned to the Knox County Law Department for direction on their powers beyond the commission's restrictions on the board and their duties should the governor open the state further.

The hospitalizations have decreased and the case count is down among the older population but has increased among younger adults. Dr. Buchanan said she will continue working with the board and, last week, met with the newly-formed Committee on Health and Economic Well-Being Wednesday. (See separate story.)

Mayor Jacobs seems to believe that if the governor drops the Emergency Order that he, the Knox County mayor, will be in charge. In a local television interview, he revealed that he would have not issued a mask mandate.

Buchanan serves under the authority of the state health director. She holds two positions, one as director and one as public health officer. The county mayor could name a new position and Buchanan might then serve under that person. However Buchanan was appointed Director in 2010 by the Tennessee Health Commissioner, to whom she reports but she also consults with the county mayor.

The interaction between

**Continue on page 8**

If you have ever been having a discussion with a lawyer about their work, you may have had a conversation with them that went something like this:

You: What do you do for a living?

Lawyer: I am a lawyer.

You: What kind of work do you do?

Lawyer: I'm in private practice.



By Jeddiah McKeehan  
attorneyknoxville@gmail.com

You: (Have no idea what that means)

So what does "private practice" means. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines it as, "a professional business (such as that of a lawyer or doctor) that is not controlled or paid for by the government or a larger company (such as a hospital)."

Practically, that means that if a lawyer works for the

District Attorney's Office or the State of Tennessee, or any other branch of the government, then they would be considered to have a "public practice," although that terminology is not used nearly as often as, "private practice."

For a lawyer a normal way this would get worked into a discussion is, "After 15 years at the Attorney General's office I decided to go into private practice."

For those lawyers who are employees of one company, they are not considered to have a private

practice or a public practice. These lawyers are called "in-house counsel." That means they are directly employed by one client and are typically prevented from being able to take on any other clients.

Jeddiah McKeehan is an attorney practicing in Knox County and surrounding counties. He works in many areas, including divorce, custody, criminal, and personal injury. Visit attorney-knoxville.com for more information about this legal issue and other legal issues.

## Growth of Knox County Under First County Executive (Part 10 in series on Dwight Kessel)

By Ralphine Major  
ralphine3@yahoo.com

He was first elected as Knoxville City Councilman in 1963, served as Knox County Clerk from 1966-1980, and became the first Knox County Executive (County Mayor) in 1980. Dwight Kessel's 14 years as Knox County Executive brought significant results to the citizens of Knox County. He inherited a \$105.5 million budget in 1980 with \$312,000 in the general fund balance of Knox County. His last year, 1994, the county's budget was \$334.9 million and the fund balance at the beginning of 1993-94 was \$10.4 million. During Kessel's tenure, the county had also taken on the responsibility of city schools along with the county schools, and by 1993 expenditures on schools went from \$40 million to \$191 million plus a capital budget of \$26 million. The schools fund balance went from \$1.5 million in 1980 to \$18.8 million in 1994.

As county executive, Kessel combined the city library system with the county system, computerized the combined system, increased funding,



August 31, 1994, Front Office Staff, L-R: Ralphine Major, Alice Loy, Patsy Miller, Knox County Executive Dwight Kessel, and Rene Haun. (On a personal note, soon after this picture was taken, I was called to the hospital. Our father had passed away.)

and added new branches. He also reestablished the Knox County Air Pollution Control Board; renovated the health department; designed an indigent care program contracting with all the hospitals; and provided space for the startup of Interfaith Health Clinic. In other areas of growth, Kessel established a bid process for ambulance and fire service, a Knox County Fire and Building Codes office, a Drug Rehabilitation Program, the E-911 call center

and board, and a Geographic Information System. Many new buildings were added under Kessel's administration including schools, senior centers, Dwight Kessel Parking Garage, and an unwed mother-child home at John Tarleton, as well as the county's first golf course surrounding the Penal Farm. Other accomplishments included the paving of 120 miles of roads per year, three times as many miles in the past; opening 1200 acres of new industrial parks; and a more aggressive job of recycling Christmas trees in conjunction with the Knox County Beautification Board. Some extensive renovations included the Old Knox County Courthouse; purchase and renovation of Andrew Johnson Hotel Building for the school's administrative offices, and renovation of the Sears Building on Central Avenue, establishing the first central receiving facility for the county and schools. The West Virginia native was making his mark in Knoxville. Words of Faith: "But the word of the Lord endureth forever." 1 Peter 1:25 (KJV)

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## Mask mandate, school shooting at forefront of KCS board meeting

Cont. from page 1

The school district's face covering policy was again at the forefront as it has been throughout much of the academic year.

In Wednesday night's vote, the board determined that the current face covering policy will be in place for the rest of the 2020-2021 school year and through summer school. It will sunset on Aug. 1, just before school resumes after summer break.

The school district will then follow the recommendations of Thomas and the COVID-19 safety protocols, including the mask mandate, may be re-evaluated each month.

In-person students will still be expected to practice

social distancing when possible and Pre-K and Kindergarten students will not be required to wear masks beginning in the upcoming school year.

The possibility of renewal for the mask mandate may also be evaluated on a monthly bases should numbers spike at any point during the school year.

Next year, the schools will no longer conduct temperature checks but the district will continue contact tracing and practicing social distancing.

Virtual learning: The school district will offer virtual learning again for the upcoming school year.

But it will look different as the State Board of Education voted to limit virtual

learning in a called meeting on Monday, April 12.

The virtual learning model for Knox County Schools is still taking shape but the state has mandated that students and families who choose the virtual option would have to un-enroll from their base school and enroll in a virtual school.

Thomas stated at the April work session that Knox County would have three schools, one for elementary schools, one for middle school students and another for those in high school.

The superintendent also noted that total enrollment would be limited to 1,500 students (500 in each school range).



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# Catching Up With Hugh Nystrom

**By Mike Steely**  
Senior Writer  
steelym@knoxfocus.com

Former Knox County Commission Chairman Hugh Nystrom served one term and chose not to seek re-election. The friendly fellow is very active in the community and his family and has an interesting history.

The Knoxville Focus caught up with him and asked him a few questions.

### What are you doing now professionally?

Currently I am working on the administrative team for the Webb School of Knoxville as the Director of Development.

### How did you get into your profession?

I have been blessed with a career that has included many professional changes over the past 30 years. In 1992, shortly after graduating from UT with a finance degree, I moved to Orlando and went to work at the Walt Disney Company. What I thought would be just a few years led to a 14-year career working in leadership roles in resort management, guest services, and sales and marketing for the Disney parks and hotels and Disney Cruise Line. It took me all over the Southeast.

I left Disney 16 years ago when my wife and I moved back to Knoxville to start our family. Moving back to Knoxville and

becoming a parent led to a 180-degree career change! I went to work in the social work field as a director of development and program operations for Childhelp, a role I held for 11 years. Childhelp serves abused and neglected children. Serving the community in that role was what eventually lead me to run for county commission.

Four years ago, I had an unexpected opportunity to move into the education field working for the Webb School of Knoxville. I am a Webb graduate and my son has been a Webb student since kindergarten, so it was a natural fit. I am blessed to work with a great team, and I get to spend at least some part of every day with my child. It has been amazing.

### What is your favorite past position?

I would be remiss if I did not mention some of the roles I had working for Disney! Working on the sales and marketing team for Disney World and Disney Cruise Line was my dream job. I was in the position for six years, based out of Nashville and covering the Southeast region. However, I was not hired into that position. I started as a front desk host at Disney's Caribbean Beach Resort making \$5.65 an hour and made extra money by parking cars and carrying luggage. It took many years of both hard and smart work before I was promoted into my dream job.

### Who are some of the people you

### worked with over the years and do you have a favorite?

I learned the most about leadership from Keith Bradford, who was one of my bosses at Disney. Keith gave me one of my first promotions at Disney. He eventually became a vice president at Disney World and was instrumental in the re-development of Downtown Disney/Disney Springs. He was a good friend and mentor. He taught me the importance of accountable leadership, finance skills, AND complementing those skills with authentic relationships and care for those who you work with.

Another great friend I worked with at Childhelp was Dennis Sajdak. Dennis was an old school New Yorker who was our vice president of operations. His background was hospital administration. He always reminded me that what gets measured gets worked on... he was also the only person I know who was worse with puns than I am.

### Tell us about your family.

I have been married for 16 years to my beautiful and smart wife, Angelia. Angelia is from historic Dandridge in Jefferson County. Angelia is an attorney and the executive director of specialty programs for The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. She works hard yet still has time to run the Knoxville summer swim league (GKAISA) and volunteer with the Knoxville Garden



Former Knox County Commission Chairman is enjoying not serving. He's working, spending time with family, plans to travel and is proud of this 5 pound Brown Trout he caught in the Clinch River just below Norris Dam.

Club and the state and local Bar associations.

Our son, Trace, is 15 years old and a freshman at Webb. He loves to fish.

Trace is a year-round competitive swimmer. He is also a Boy Scout who just started working on his Eagle Scout project.

### Do people recognize you often?

Trips to the grocery store can take an extra hour depending on how many people I see...

### What are your hobbies or interests?

My son and I both love to fish! Over the past four weeks we have fished the French Broad and Clinch Rivers as well as Fort Loudon and Tellico Lakes. The

highlight for me was a 5-lb. brown trout on the Clinch!

I love being part of F3. F3 is a free men's fitness group that has workout locations all over Knox County. F3 stands for Fitness, Fellowship and Faith. Trace and I both go to F3, several times a week, and he and I often lead workouts and devotionals.

I also like to shoot sporting clays. The book I am reading right now is a biography on Chesty Puller.

### What are your future plans?

Travel to Europe as soon as it is open/post-Covid, volunteer more at swim meets, keep fishing, keep working...

# Surprised at our age

I called an old friend not long ago to see how he was doing and if he and his wife had completed their vaccinations against this cursed virus that's plagued us for over a year. He assured me that all is well



By Joe Rector  
joerector@comcast.net

and he would soon receive both shots and be in good shape.

Doug Meister and I have been friends for a long time. In fact, I'm not quite sure what year he arrived in Knoxville to become the associate minister at First Christian Church. This guy with long hair, a beard and a gravelly voice was an unlikely candidate for a friend. He hailed from Ohio. He received his ministerial degree from, of all places, Vanderbilt. In fact, the man is a fan of Ohio and Vanderbilt sports.

Both of us were in our 30s when Doug arrived in Knoxville. The more we talked, the better friends we became. One year, Doug formed a church

softball team and convinced me to play. I told him that I wasn't able to run, partially due to an ankle that had been broken several times and on which I had had two surgeries.

That ball team sealed our friendship. We practiced and enticed others to join us. Our team molded itself into one that won its fair share of games. After every game, we headed to Roger's, the best place to eat fantastic hotdogs and drink a beer. We spent plenty of time just talking about all sorts of things. Sometimes, I'd ask him a religious question and hold on tight as I tried to follow his scholarly answer.

Doug left FCC to take a position as a regional minister, and then he moved to Louisville, Kentucky to be the senior minister. It was there that Doug found Diane, and they married. His bride is a wonderful person, but she has pulled him farther away from ever

being a Big Orange fan. They are dedicated Louisville fans. It's so sad. Doug left Knoxville more than 30 years ago. However, when we talk on the phone or meet in person, our friendship picks up where it left off. We still joke and laugh and philosophize. Our talks last way too long, and others leave us still flapping our tongues.

This October, Doug will turn 70. The following May, it will be my turn. Neither of us can believe where we are age-wise. I close my eyes and am playing first base (not much running for me there), and Doug is at third. Doug hits the ball and zips around the bases. I hit the ball, and he declares I'm the only person who can turn a homerun into a triple. We're young, full of energy, and ready to enjoy life.

Doug and I refuse to believe that we are in the final years of this life. One of us always asks how we got so old so soon. We have much left to do. Only our aching knees and backs keep us from attempting

to complete demanding projects or playing sports. Instead, we spend time sitting around the pool or rocking in chairs on the front porch and recall the good times. We sometimes grumble like old coots, but

most often, we just bathe in the joy or each other's company.

I have only one other person who is that close of a friend to me, and I'll talk about Billy Hayes some time before long. What I

do know is that my life has been blessed with Doug's friendship, and I pray that we have several more years to spend together. We shall see about that. I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

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Established in 1961, the Dogwood Arts Festival is one of the most celebrated cultural events in Knoxville! Following a year of virtual events, the Festival will return IN-PERSON to World's Fair Park April 23rd - 25th!

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## Power of Knox Health Director up to Governor Lee?

Cont. from page 6

the health director and the Knox County mayor, beyond an active Board of Health, is confusing.

Tennessee Code Title 68. Health, Safety and Environmental Protection § 68-2-603 reads, "The county health director shall be appointed by the (state) commissioner of health or by the commissioner's designee, act as the administrative officer of the county health department, take actions and make determinations necessary to properly execute the state department of health's programs, and adequately

enforce the rules and regulations established by the commissioner and the county board of health..."

"If the commissioner appoints a county health director pursuant to this subsection (a), the appointment shall be made by the commissioner in concurrence with the county mayor of the county for which the appointment is made.

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# It's a cruise on Emory for Halls track team

By Steve Williams

One might say Halls High won the first Battle of Emory Road Track Meet on cruise control.

The guys and gals in Red and White took first place in 16 of the 34 events and finished with a combined 192 points last week at Halls.

Karns edged Powell 115 to 113 for second place and Gibbs came in fourth with 57 points.

In addition to earning the new meet's trophy and getting to keep it for a year, the Halls team enjoyed its Senior Night even more with the special victory.

Halls Coach Tony Tampas expected a close meet coming in, but ended up getting some extra points he hadn't figured on. He also had some athletes to fill in for some who were "dinged up."

Tampas, in his 12th season at Halls, said the track world is like a "cat and mouse game" with your opponents until the day of the big meet, "and then you got to show everything and pull out all the stops."

"It turned out to be a good day for us. For the kids to step up and do the right things and try their

**Continue on page 2**



PHOTOS BY STEVE WILLIAMS

In one of the top relay events of the meet, Powell anchorman Eli Steffey takes the baton in lane 3 from Jordyn Potts and Karns' Devin Sanz takes the baton from Micheal Elliott in lane 4. Powell won the 4x200 with a time of 1:36.10. Karns came in second in 1:36.46. Halls, in lane 2, finished third.

# No slowing down for Gibbs senior Walston

By Steve Williams

Dylan Walston's high school career may be winding down, but he's not about to ease up.

The Gibbs senior showed that in the first boys' race of the inaugural Battle of Emory Road track meet last week at Halls High.

Trailing 10 to 20 meters coming down the last straightaway in the 4x800 relay event, the Eagles' anchorman used a strong finishing kick to win the race.

It was a great example of all-out effort.

"I saw him bring them back," said Gibbs Coach Chris Bray. "Their time of 9:24 beat their PR (personal record) by 20 seconds. When you get them all (Gibbs, Halls, Karns and Powell)

**Continue on page 2**



Gibbs High senior Dylan Walston stayed busy in Tuesday's Battle of Emory Road Track Meet at Halls and started by pulling out a win for the Eagles in the 4x800 relay event.

# Big third inning lifts Lady Hawks past Bearden

By Ken Lay

A 10-run third inning helped the Hardin Valley Academy softball team erase an early deficit and claim a District 4-AAA victory.

The Lady Hawks fell behind early before erupting in the top of the third inning and notch a 15-5 victory over Bearden Thursday night at a Kim Hazelwood Field.

Hardin Valley (18-7 overall, 7-2 in the district) darted out to a fast start in 2021, winning 14 of its first 15 games before going into a bit of a slump.

But Thursday night, Lady Hawks coach Whitney Cruze saw her team use a little plate discipline and cure, at least temporarily, some recent offensive woes.

"We needed to take disciplined swings and today, we did that Cruze said. "We've been struggling a little bit lately.

"It's always good to come in a win a district game, and Bearden is feisty. They fight hard."

With the knotted in a 2-2 deadlock, HVA's big third inning started with three consecutive walks as Bearden starting pitcher Lauren Spainhower issued free passes to Gracie Gray, Madi Lane and Denver Hogrefe.

Gray scored the go-ahead run when she came home on a passed ball. Bella Leto, Savanna Beard and Olivia Neely all came up with hits to give the Lady Hawks a 6-2 lead.

HVA sent 13 hitters to the plate in the frame. Hogrefe delivered the big blow in the inning when she clubbed a three-run home run.

She had a big day at the plate as she went 2-for-3 with a homer, four RBI's and a run scored. She also had a complete game in the circle as she hurled five innings. She surrendered five runs

**Continued on page 3**

# Bulldogs extend district soccer winning streak

By Ken Lay

A long district winning streak remained intact for the Bearden High School boys soccer team Tuesday night as the Bulldogs claimed a victory in their District 2-AAA opener.

Bearden scored two early goals and those tallies propelled the Bulldogs to a 3-1 victory over Jefferson County at Turner-Allender Field.

The win was Bearden's ninth consecutive league victory against a league foe, dating back to 2018 and the Bulldogs haven't lost a district match in the regular season or in the postseason since joining District 2-AAA.

The 2019 Class AAA State Champion Bulldogs would likely have a longer win streak had the 2020 campaign not been canceled due to the COVID-19. The conference is comprised of Bearden, West High, Morristown East, Morristown West and the Patriots.

It will change before the 2021-2022 school year begins and Bearden will exit with re-alignment.

"This is our last year in this district and this was a good way to get it started," Bearden coach Ryan Radcliffe said. "We want to win all of our district games because that's always the first step in our goal of reaching the state

(tournament)."

Things may not be quite as easy for the Bulldogs (7-3 overall, 1-0 in District 2-AAA) as Radcliffe said that his squad's league foes are getting better.

"That's a good group over there," Radcliffe said of the Patriots (2-6-2, 0-2). "These teams are all improving and we hope we can avoid (Jefferson County) in the postseason because I think they'll even be better by then."

The Bulldogs got on the scoreboard first when Ethan Ford fired a shot past Jefferson County senior goalkeeper Anthony Bernardi in the fifth minute of the match. Bearden would extend its advantage to 2-0 late in the first half as Julian Strickland tallied in the 31<sup>st</sup> minute.

Radcliffe said that his side's fast start was a key for success against the Patriots Tuesday night.

"I still think we left a lot of chances, a lot of stuff and a lot of goals out there. We still had a lot that we didn't finish," he said. "But finishing early was the difference in the game for us.

"They say that scoring is the last thing to come, but hopefully, we can score before it's too late."

The Bulldogs entered the week on the heels



PHOTO BY KEN LAY.

Bearden's Ethan Ford awaits the ball in the Bulldogs' 3-1 victory over Jefferson County Tuesday night at Turner-Allender Field. Ford had a goal in the contest.

of a two-game losing streak, having lost at Webb School of Knoxville (2-1) and Chattanooga McCallie (2-0) last week as they had trouble putting the ball into the back of opponents' nets.

They, however, bounced back into the win column by scoring nine goals in two matches early this week.

Sharif Aly gave Bearden a 3-0 lead in the

**Continued on page 3**

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When push comes to shove for quarterbacks battling for playing time, as is the case this spring and more than likely going into the fall, there are a number of clichés that seem applicable. “The No. 2 quarterback is always the most popular guy in town.” “If you have two quarterbacks, you don’t have any.” “The No. 2 quarterback is just a play away from being No. 1.”

Here’s a guide to scenarios that emerge whenever there has been debate in the U.T. fan base about which quarterback should take charge and lead the Vols to the Promised Land of winning football.

**“1971: The ‘Blue Max’ Arrives from Deep on the Depth Chart”**  
It was a quarterback controversy that took until the sixth game of the season to resolve. Head coach Bill Battle tried Phil Pierce, Dennis Chadwick, and Chip Howard with not-so-hot results. The Vols were 3-2, but the two losses were to Auburn (10-9) and



Casey Clausen (7) led the way under center when he got his chance in the 2000 season.

Alabama (32-15), with the Vols scoring but two touchdowns. Out of desperation, Battle inserted senior signal-caller Jim Maxwell, nicknamed the “Blue Max,” into the Mississippi State game. The Vols won seven in a row down the stretch run to finish 10-2, including victories over No. 5 Penn State (31-11) and No. 18 Arkansas (14-13) in the Liberty Bowl.

**“1981: A Significant Injury and a Strong Finish”**  
When the Vols lost the first two games of the

season at Georgia (44-0) and at Southern Cal (43-7), there was legitimate concern in the fan base. Freshman Alan Cockrell, at the time the people’s choice, had led a late touchdown drive against USC and started the Colorado State and Auburn games. The Vols won against the Rams by 42-0, and all appeared well.

However, Alan banged up a knee in a 10-7 win over Auburn, leaving Steve Alatorre and Jeff Olszewski to carry the Vols home. The Vols finished 8-4 and

earned the respect of head coach John Majors. Cockrell was the starter in 1982 and 1983, engineering two wins over Alabama.

**“1994: Two Freshman Quarterbacks Lead the Way”**  
In the opener at UCLA and three weeks later at Mississippi State, the Vols lost quarterbacks Jerry Colquitt and Todd Helton, leaving Vol fortunes in the hands of freshman signal-callers Peyton Manning and Brannndon Stewart. Tennessee seemed to be dire straits, looking up at a 1-3

record. The battle between the two rookies energized the armchair quarterbacks. Manning and Stewart each made a contribution to the eventual 8-4 record. Stewart transferred to his home state Texas A&M after the season and led the Aggies to an upset win over Kansas State that aided the Vols in their drive to the 1998 national championship.

Manning, possessor of a legendary work ethic, became one of the most popular Vols in school history.

**“2000: Casey Clausen Leads the Vols Down the Stretch and Beyond”**  
After Tennessee lost three of its first five games, Casey Clausen rallied the team and fan base. After a 20-10 win over Alabama, there were wins at South Carolina (18-10), at Memphis (19-17), against Arkansas (63-20), Kentucky (59-20), and at Vanderbilt (28-26). Casey won twice at Alabama and Florida as well as leading the Vols past Michigan in the 2002 Florida Citrus Bowl. He also led the way in a 28-18 win at Notre Dame in 2001.

Clausen had a stellar career as a Vol, but overall, never seemed to earn the

plaudits of the fan base.

**“2013-16: Josh Dobbs Energizes the Fan Base”**  
When it came to Josh Dobbs’ seasons at Tennessee, the question was always whether, and when, to redshirt him. Head coach Butch Jones, busily building the program brick-by-brick, tried his hardest to do so, twice, but the multi-talented Dobbs possessed that magical quality termed “IT,” one that fans often seem to recognize before coaches do. Dobbs also led the Vols to three consecutive bowl wins. Today, many Vol fans might have trouble remembering who the quarterbacks were that played ahead of him during his early years as a Vol.

Who will be the Tennessee starter in 2021 and is that young man even on campus right now, as media reports have suggested? No one knows for sure, but these exigencies are part of today’s college football atmosphere. It’s a new day, one without precedent. Whatever happens, someone in an orange jersey will be under center when Bowling Green arrives on Sept. 4. Finding out who fits the bill should be exciting, if nerve-wracking.

## Big third inning lifts Lady Hawks past Bearden

**Cont. from page 1**  
(only one was earned), five hits and one walk. She struck out seven. Hardin Valley finished the contest with 15 hits, including five that went for extra bases. In addition to Hogrefe’s round-tripper, Beard had a triple. Gray, Beard and Brooke Taylor each had doubles against the Lady Bulldogs (7-8, 4-6).

Cruze was pleased with her team’s effort on this night and was particularly happy with Hogrefe’s day. “She had a big day,” Cruze said of Hogrefe. “She’s a senior and she’s been in the program since middle school. “She’s a leader for us, both on the mound and at the plate. She’s doing exactly what we need her to do.”

HVA broke on top early as it scored in the top of the first inning. Taylor led off the game with a single. She stole second and came home on Hogrefe’s single.

The Lady Bulldogs answered and took the lead in the bottom of the frame. Nicole Couvertiere drove in a run with

a sacrifice fly and Bradynn Belcher had an RBI single to make it 2-1. The Lady Hawks pulled even in the second when Beard tripled and was awarded home when she was hit by a thrown ball.

Down 12-2 in the third, Bearden got a run in the bottom of the inning when Spainhower reached on an error and later scored.

The Lady Hawks picked up three in the fifth as Gray had a two-run double and Beard chipped in with an RBI double.

Bearden scored two in the bottom of the fifth as Couvertiere had a two-run double.

Bearden coach Angelica McClerkin said that despite the loss, the Lady Bulldogs had some bright moments.

“We did some good things. Hardin Valley is a good team,” she said. “We have the capability to be that good. “We did some good things but we just couldn’t string them together.”

## Bulldogs

**Cont. from page 1**  
46<sup>th</sup> minute against the Patriots before Jefferson County’s Oliver Diaz made the score 3-1 in the 54<sup>th</sup> minute.

The Bulldogs opened the week with a 6-1 victory over Central at home on Monday, April 12, handing the Bobcats (5-1-1) their first loss of the season.

Ford scored twice against Central and Aly had a pair of assists. Lucas Nordin, Levi Brady, Cameron Cook and Dillon Sims also had markers for the Bulldogs while Taylor Aaron tallied for the Bobcats.

# Josh Heupel’s Rough Start

**By Mark Nagi**  
The linebacker position was especially ransacked. Tennessee’s best overall player, Henry To’o To’o has been in the transfer portal for months, and there is little reason to believe he will return to Tennessee. The same goes for Quavaris Crouch and J.J. Peterson. Tennessee’s team leader in sacks from 2020, Deandre Johnson, transferred to Miami.

For some of the players, it might not have had much to do with Heupel at all. Some made the decision to leave even before he was hired. For others, Heupel’s inability to complete his coaching staff in due time made them look elsewhere.

Despite having Kevin Steele under contract, Heupel let him go. Steele was a highly regarded defensive coordinator with decades of experience in that position. The decision to dismiss him meant that Tennessee would pay Steele \$1.8 million for two months of employment. (As always, the buyout life remains undefeated.) Heupel was turned down multiple times before Penn State’s co-defensive coordinator Tim Banks accepted the promotion and hefty

salary bump. That move appears to have done little to convince To’o To’o and others to return to Tennessee.

In terms of future Vols, Heupel swung and missed on 5-star quarterback Ty Simpson, an in-state kid that picked Alabama. Had Simpson picked Tennessee, it would have given Heupel a chance to make some moves in the Class of 2022, a crucial class to his chances for success.

Vols fans got to see the team on April 10th during an open practice session at Neyland Stadium. This was a good move by Heupel. But there hasn’t been very much in the way of good PR lately.

Linebacker Aaron Beasley was suspended after accusations of animal abuse were made public. Four players, including freshman quarterback Kaidon Salter were suspended after misdemeanor or drug possession charges last month. These are not ways to impress a new coaching staff.

Rome wasn’t built in a day, but the foundations had to start sometime. That’s what Heupel and his staff are trying to accomplish right now. Publicly, it doesn’t appear that they are getting much footing, but we’ll find out in the years to come if these hiccups are temporary.



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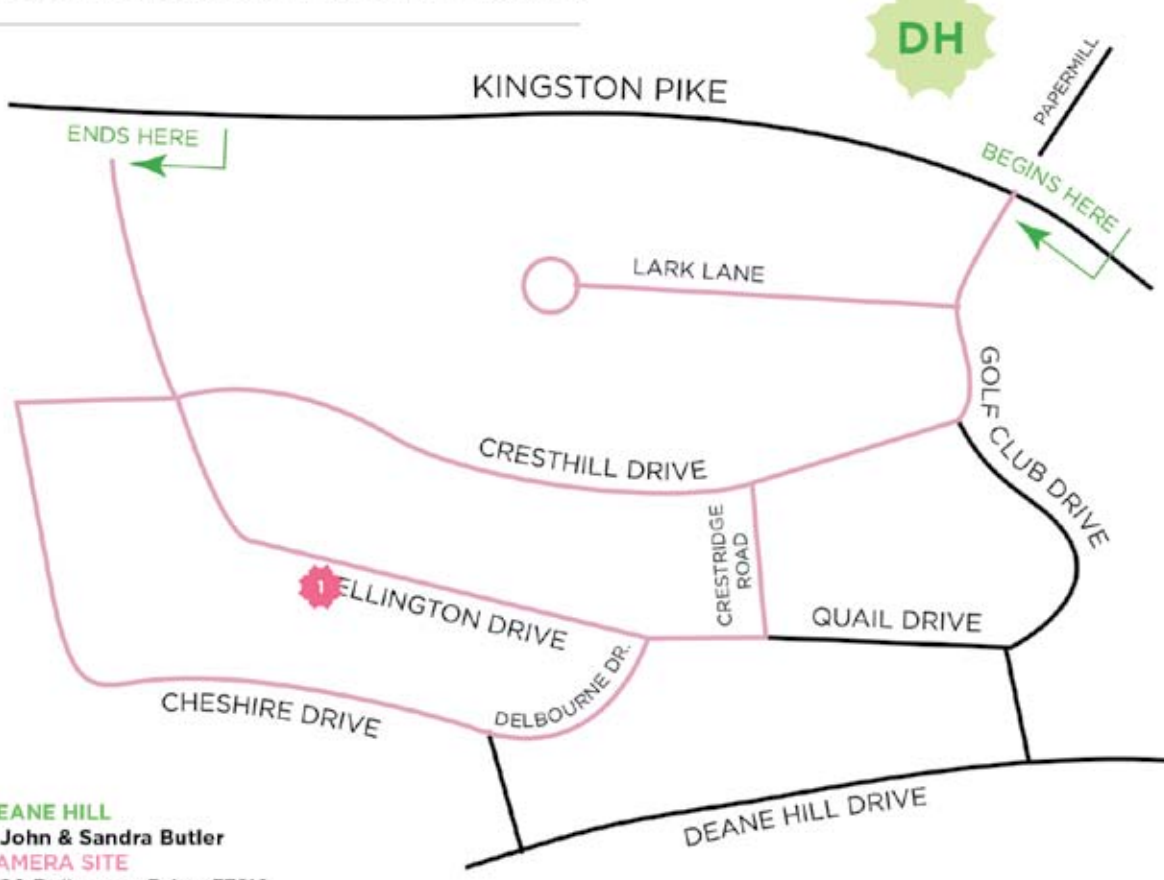
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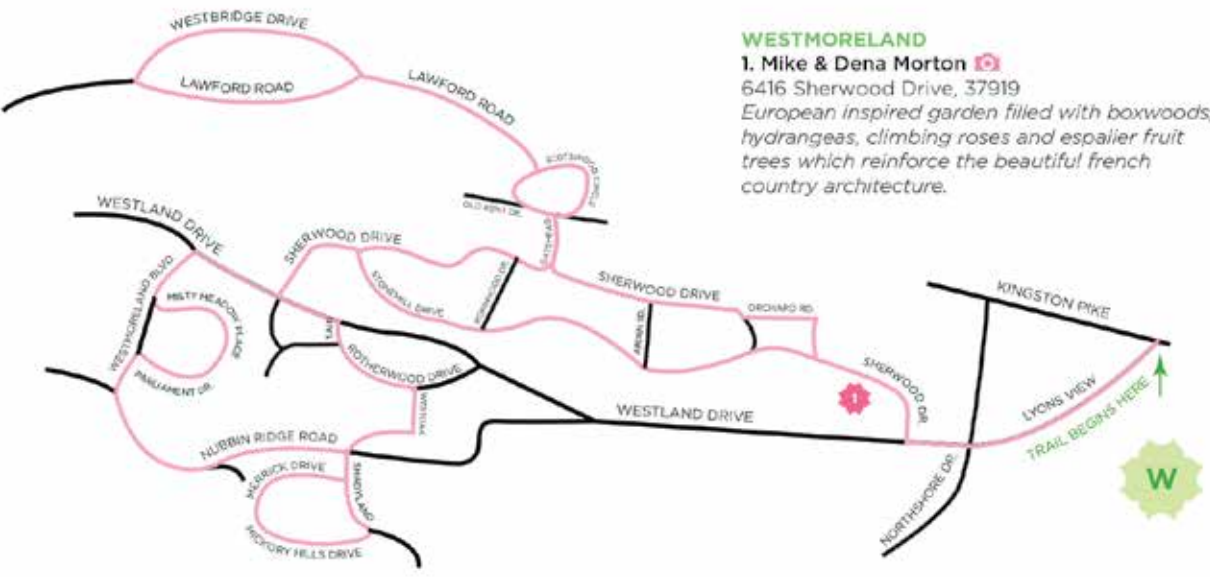
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## North Hills Garden Club to host annual plant sale on May 1

The North Hills Garden Club is hosting its yearly plant sale on Saturday, May 1 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 2511 North Park Boulevard. The event will take place rain or shine.

This plant sale is a popular event for local gardeners who value native plants that thrive in our area. Residents of historic North Hills donate different varieties of hardy perennial plants and shrubs harvested from their own gardens.

In partnership with a local nursery, the garden club also offers herbs, veggies and gorgeous blooming

annuals. While browsing through the plant sale, be sure to enjoy delicious food from VietGrill - Vietnamese Vegan food truck. In addition, there will be a garden shed with bargain prices for gently used items, and arts and crafts booths.

Proceeds from this event support beautification of the neighborhood's boulevards and park. For more information on the North Hills Garden Club visit the club's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/NorthHillsGardenClub](http://www.facebook.com/NorthHillsGardenClub) or website at <http://northhillsgardenclub.wixsite.com/nhgc>.

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# Walk? Chalked!

Dogwood Arts' Chalk (Your) Walk was a virtual, community-wide event to encourage artists of all ages to create one-of-a-kind chalk artworks on neighborhood sidewalks, driveways, and community spaces earlier this month.

North Knoxville resident Wendi Holsonback shared several photos of her family enjoying the spring sunshine and creating art.

"It was SO FABULOUS to get to sign up," she said. "Go get the chalk and then create."



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## The Doctor is in

a weekly column by  
**Dr. Jim Ferguson**

### Transmogrify

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

Finding the right word is like having the perfect tool for the job on your “Honey-do” list. As a writer I’m always looking for the perfect word or the best way to say something or convey my meaning. There are more words in the English language than in any other, perhaps because we are rich with diverse cultures. Having lots of words is like having lots of tools. I once wrote an essay entitled *Mot Juste*, a French term we now have to define the perfect word for describing something or articulating a thought.

A reader challenged me recently with a word in his lament, defined as a “passionate expression of grief or sorrow.” His lament was conveyed with the perfect word *transmogrify*. The word means huge and vile,

and he was referring to the changes in our country with the policies of iPOTUS’ handlers, leftists and progressive-socialist-Democrats who are orchestrating irreparable damage to America.

I’m a member of two small Christian discussion groups. Small groups are important because sociological studies have shown that discussion is stifled in groups of more than eight to ten. The Church began with small groups of believers before it became institutionalized and bureaucratized. In one group we are reading “The Question That Never Goes Away” by the Christian apologist Philip Yancey. The book deals with tragedies like the Sandy Hook murders of children and the theodicy question defined as divine justice.

Perhaps the biggest stumbling block for belief in God is why an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God allows suffering? The classic explanations are there is no God, there is a comic war between good and evil, we are all guilty and get what we deserve, suffering produces perseverance which builds character and leads to hope, and lastly, justice will be done in the next life. Yancey is a beautiful writer and like many

past luminaries recognizes the necessity of suffering if we are to have free will in this imperfect world. And he concludes with hope. I have read a dozen books by Yancey and can recommend this one which is a sequel to “Where Is God When It Hurts?”

In one of my groups, we talked about what we can do about all the troubles in the world. To name just a few, there is a manufactured crisis on our southern border, China is preparing to move on Taiwan, the Russians have nixed a conference with iPOTUS and are moving on Ukraine, instead of the illusion of “white supremacy” we actually are suffering from “woke supremacy,” mayhem is present in Democrat run cities, the pandemic of fear is peddled by the media for ratings and ruinous debt is just around the corner.

You can easily feel overwhelmed by world problems and tragedies described in Yancey’s book. So, I asked the group, “What is working?” This was not a rhetorical question, but one I often ask myself. In this troubled world, what is functioning well? There was reflective silence in the group and then a friend noted increased numbers

of young people returning to church services. I’ve noticed the same in the non-denominational church I’ve been attending. Another noted her own blessings which history teaches are unparalleled in America despite what CNN, MSNBC and the NY Times says. Becky was thankful President Trump organized and pushed Operation Warp Speed which developed Covid vaccines for us. I said I was thankful to live in Knoxville despite our recent tragedies. I’ve travelled the world and all over this country and would not live anywhere but K-Town.

I have always been intrigued that people seem to consider the negative more so than the positive. We tend to take for granted things that are working, at least until they quit working. For example, you take your health for granted until you get the flu. You feel awful with the flu, but so appreciate feeling good again - at least for a while.

I don’t think I ever take spring for granted. I was sick of winter by February. I yearn for Spring, and Springtime is working! Perhaps I occasionally take for granted the 23-degree tilt in the Earth’s axis. This tilt gives us seasons, as long

as the sun steadily fuses hydrogen, producing light and warmth for the “third rock from the sun.” I am a science guy - more than Bill Nye - and a fiction writer as well. I appreciate physics. But as a writer I wonder what it would be like to physically experience the perspective of another or see-through different eyes, even the compound eyes of one of my science fiction novel’s characters.

I love the green of spring with new leaves sporting April’s chartreuse palate rather than the deep green of summer. So, instead of listening to the latest reports of mayhem or writing more words, I’m going outside to appreciate what’s working in God’s creation. And I can’t equal Robert Frost’s observations and poetic reflections on spring.

Nature’s first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf’s a flower;  
But only so an hour.  
Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay.  
Sublime!

You may email Dr. Ferguson at [fergusonj@knoxfocus.com](mailto:fergusonj@knoxfocus.com)

## Pittman Center is a surprise

Outside of the rush and crowds of Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge and Sevierville there’s a small community that is a breath of fresh air. Pittman Center is a surprise and an

### A Day Away



By Mike Steely

commercial development.

Just about an hour or less from Knoxville, Pittman Center is located just off Highway 321 east of Gatlinburg. If you’d like to bypass the large tourist

towns you can take Highway 416 south, just east of Sevierville, or get there off Interstate 40 from Cosby.

The wedding was creek-side behind the beautiful Hills Creek Baptist Church and we also attended a wedding rehearsal for another couple in that unique stone church. Pittman Center has a small population of about 500 souls and, in season, the renters and campers outnumber the town people there. There are cabin, bed and breakfast, and home rentals and lots of nearby things to do. The Emert’s Cove Covered Bridge spans the river and is a favorite of visitors taking photos.

The small town has a city council, mayor and police department. Settlement there began after the Treaty of Dumplin Creek in 1785. Settlers started arriving including Revolutionary War veteran Frederick Emert, the son of German immigrants. Johan Martin Shultz was another early settler and his son married Emert’s daughter. Another early settler was Daniel Wesley Reagan whose grandparents had settled in nearby Gatlinburg. Many current Pittman Center residents are descendants of those early settlers.

One of the earliest schools in Sevier County was established in Pittman Center. A Methodist



Emert’s Cove Covered Bridge in Pittman Center is named for early settler Frederick Emert, an early settler and Revolutionary War veteran.

minister proposed the school and the Methodist Episcopal Church with the help of Rev. Eli Pittman of New York. Fifteen thousand dollars were allocated for the 1920 project and a farm was purchased. It was named Pittman Community Center and at its peak had 15 buildings, a general store, post office and small hospital.

The school was purchased by the county’s

board of education and combined with the high school in Gatlinburg. All that remains of the old school is the former home economics building which became the city hall. The building is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pittman Center was incorporated in 1974 and has a police department consisting of a chief and three patrol officers. Today

the town has the city hall, maintenance building, an elementary school and the Burnett Memorial Chapel. The town’s revenue comes mostly from tourists staying there and a golf resort owned by the city.

This little town is worth a visit, especially if you’re visiting Gatlinburg and want to take the brief drive east. It is one of the more interesting small cities in our region.

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