

Low-key Haslam gets low-key landslide

By Betty Bean



Bill Haslam

The only thing that was in doubt when Mayor Bill Haslam's victory celebration got started last Tuesday night was when the candidate was going to show up. He was busy with a city council meeting and didn't show for the festivities at the Knoxville Convention Center until nearly 10 p.m. The time matched his opponent's vote percentage — Haslam won more than 87 percent of the 15 percent of city voters who both were to cast a vote. His opponent, the little-known Isa Infante, got

just over 10 percent of the vote. The crowd at the election night party was small, as well, and was dominated by candidates for County Commission, something that didn't escape the notice of City Council member Joe Bailey, the only incumbent who will face an opponent in the November general election. He rolled up a margin of 65-34 over his opponent, Ray Abbas, but the city has a tradition of primary underdogs running stronger races in the fall and Abbas, president of Love Kitchen, has a strong core of support in north and east Knoxville.

"It's kind of disgusting that all this turmoil in the city is all anybody's thinking about," said Bailey, who holds Seat A, one of three at-large council seats (meaning that the two top vote-getters

must run city-wide in both the September and the November elections).

Abbas wasn't present for the Haslam celebration, but, as Bailey noted, numerous County Commission candidates were — particularly those who are running for the two 4th District seats held by appointees Richard Cate and Lee Tramel. Former City Council member Ed Shouse, a Republican who is generally believed to be Tramel's major opponent, was there, along with Republicans Ruthie Kuhlman and William Daniels and Democrat Finbarr Saunders. Daniels said that the presence of the well-known Shouse has channeled other Republicans into the race against Cate.

Republican Foster Arnett, the former Knoxville Police Department

spokesperson who is a candidate in the Republican primary for county clerk, attended.

Also present were most members of City Council, who arrived after their meeting: state Sen. Tim Burchett, former City Council member Larry Cox and former county commissioner Diane Jordan.

The youngest politico in attendance was Sonny Frost, who was there with his dad, City Council member Rob Frost.

Haslam's second term expires in 2011, and since he is term-limited, speculation about his next political move has already begun. This is not something that is encouraged by the low-key, humble Haslam, who gave his supporters and family most of the credit for his win.



Republican Ruthie Stone Kuhlman and Democrat Finbarr Saunders could be lining up against each other in next year's county elections, since they are both running for the County Commission seat now occupied by appointee Richard Cate. Photo by Betty Bean

School board to meet

Knox County school board will meet at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 3, at the City County Building. The board will conduct a work session at 5 p.m. Monday, Oct. 1, at the Andrew Johnson Building board room. Agenda items include approval for:

- Bearden High to rent facility for prom for \$12,144 provided by Prom Ticket Sales Account

- Sequoyah Elementary to build a GA-GA pit on playground for \$1,100 (estimate) provided by Kid's Place @ Sequoyah Inc. There will be no cost to Knox County Schools

- Contract between Barber McMurtry Architects and Knox County Schools for Design of Farragut High School Football Stadium Upgrades not to exceed \$72,200 plus reimbursable expenses (pending Law Department approval).

County Democrats set unity dinner

The Democratic Party of Knox County is holding a Unity Day Dinner and campaign kickoff Thursday, Oct. 18, at Beaver Brook Country Club. Cost is \$25 per ticket. All Democratic candidates are urged to attend. Info: Nancy Stinnette, 688-2160.

Investigation study

Knox County Commission will meet at 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 4, in the small assembly room, City County Building, to consider the process for an investigation of Mayor Mike Ragsdale's office.

Commission earlier voted to use subpoenas to compel witnesses to testify.

County 'double dares' city on stormwater

As youngsters, most of us at one time or another were "double dared" by a friend to perform some foolish act. Such stunts typically fall into the same category as the grownup redneck's version, which begins with, "Hold my beer."

There was no beer in evidence at last Monday's county commission meeting, but a majority of that body summoned the courage to dare the city of Knoxville. Morris Kizer, the city's senior law director, had previously given notice that the county's proposed stormwater ordinance would violate its agreement with the city.

County law director John Owings referred to Kizer's Sept. 10 letter as "a promise" that the city will "pursue their available remedies," which include filing suit against the county.

Undaunted, Greg Lambert threw down the gauntlet when he moved to approve the stormwater ordinance passed on first reading at the August commission meeting. Richard Cate seconded Lambert's motion, and the fun began.

Phil Ballard introduced an amendment to the ordinance that



Larry Van Guilder

would raise the minimum fine for violations from \$50 to \$250. He also proposed that the ordinance be a "living document," to be revisited in nine months for tweaking as necessary. That amendment would subsequently pass.

Tony Norman then took the floor with questions for Lambert.

"I consider this version — as has been depicted in the media — a 'watered down' version. Did you write the amendments?" he asked.

"No, I asked an attorney to write them," Lambert responded. "Do you understand the amendments?" Norman asked.

Lambert said he did, and Norman asked him to explain why concrete pipes were not necessary in three instances: in right of ways, under road surfaces and for

retention areas.

Lambert said the agreement with the city was made in 2002, and the county's 2007 ordinance is tougher than the city's was at that time.

"I'm thoroughly convinced that high-tech materials are superior (to concrete)," Lambert said.

After a unanimous vote to approve Ballard's amendment, Mark Harmon took up the case for a stronger ordinance. Harmon said there were "still basic flaws" with the ordinance, and concrete made sense in three applications.

"It's the taxpayers who will pay for our gamble if things fall apart."

Harmon slipped in a not-so-subtle reference to attorney/lobbyist John Valliant, who is believed to have drafted Lambert's amendment: "Despite commissioner Lambert's valiant effort to be an attorney," the ordinance should be stronger.

"In the name of flexibility we have introduced an opportunity for our county to be sued. Haven't we had enough of that — government by lawsuit?" he asked.

Following "pro-concrete" tes-

timony from former city engineer Sam Farnell, and "pro-choice" arguments from engineer Robert Campbell, Craig Leuthold moved for an amendment to require concrete pipe in three specific areas. Thomas "Tank" Strickland backed the amendment, noting that "the city is very serious — we will be back in court." The motion went down 11-8.

The Commission then passed the amended ordinance 12-7. Now it's the city's turn to respond to the county's double dare.

'Not the boss'

Last week we quoted Circuit Court Clerk Cathy Quist who called the wife of Brian Barnard "an executive for Cigna." Barnard, of course, is Knox County's benefits manager who served on the committee which selected Cigna to service the county's self-insured health plan. (Although Barnard abstained from the actual vote.)

He wrote to say that his wife, Judy, is "in fact, a salaried middle manager with Cigna, a 'business project senior specialist.' She is neither an executive nor an officer," he said.

OK. Contact Larry Van Guilder at lvgknox@mindspring.com, or call 293-2179.

GOSSIP AND LIES

Courtney Piper's campaign kickoff at the UNITE headquarters on Broadway was crammed with well-known Democratic Party regulars.

Former County Clerk Mike Padgett and big time money tree shaker Sid Gilreath were there, along with Jim Jennings and

now-clerk Billy Tindell.

Even Piper's ex-husband, Grant Rosenberg, showed up to see the former UT swimming team star dive into the Democratic primary race for the 2nd District County Commission seat now occupied by appointee Chuck Bolus.

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