



West Hills Neighbors



July/August 2026 Edition

West Hills Community Association **Neighbors Helping Neighbors**

Vote! Now's the Time to Do Your Part

When you read this, the WHCA Conversation with the County Mayor Candidates will have happened.

WHCA hosted this event so our neighbors have a rare opportunity to meet, question, and hear the two candidates' positions on issues of interest that impact our neighborhood and others across the county.

WHCA believes in both informed citizens and the value of voting. We implore every eligible, registered voter to do their critical duty to vote for the candidate of their choice—and not complain after the election.

A popular refrain heard today is “the system is broken.” Hmm. Let's explore that for a second.

Candidates campaign. They print yard signs. Local media outlets are happy to run their ads. People call in to radio stations. Post messages on social media. Complain about unbridled development. Lament losing the quality of life we all enjoyed a few short years ago before Knoxville was “discovered.” Question how the taxes we all pay are being squandered on vanity projects.

And then almost 85% don't vote.

The August 30, 2023, edition of Compass Knoxville reported, “**Despite the mayor's race and other contested races on the ballot, Election**

Day turnout was low — fewer than 8,000 people went to the polls on Tuesday. Overall turnout was an unofficial 16,645, which is about 16.2 percent of Knoxville's 102,956 registered voters.”

Let that sink in. 16.2% of eligible voters in Knoxville voted. 83.8% didn't vote!

What's broken? (*Hint: Apathetic, eligible voters who complain and don't vote.*)

We just celebrated 250 years of self-governance. At this moment, you and I hold all the cards for our community's future for the next four years.

Doubt that? Look at how much money and effort campaigns are spending to get our vote. I challenge you to tell me the name of a street that doesn't have at least one yard sign or listen to any radio station or watch TV without a political ad.

Do the candidates write the checks that pay for the ads? No. Other than the small gifts from individuals, who are the donors that swell local campaign treasuries too pay the six-figure bill for all those ads? And, more importantly, what is the expected return on investment?

So how do you fix our “broken” political system? The only way you can. **VOTE.**

Lee Hume, WHCA President 2025-2026



National Night Out

**TUES, AUG 4
6-7:30 PM**

WEST HILLS PARK

Enter at Sheffield Drive
across from West Hills
Elementary School

**Food Trucks
Games for kids**

National Night Out Aug. 4 set for cool fun, fire spray

Come out — and cool off — with your neighbors!

West Hills will celebrate National Night Out Tuesday, Aug. 4, from 6-7:30 p.m. The highlight of the

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night, sponsored by West Hills Community Association, will be when our firefighter friends turn the large grassy area on Sheffield Drive near West Hills Elementary School into a splash zone, spraying water so kids can play.

Food/ice cream trucks will be set up, along with children's activities, in the parking lot near the pickleball courts. Extra parking will be at the school.

Healthy West Hills will lead a bike ride at 7:30.

The annual National

Night Out is a nationwide effort to build community and promote partnerships for safer neighborhoods.

Find more info on the West Hills Community Association Facebook page.

SRO for "Conversation with County Mayor Candidates"

A WHCA-sponsored "Conversation with the Candidates" for the highly contested county mayor's race drew more than 220 people.



Standing room only at the Conversation

The highly engaged, vocal crowd filled the Church of the Nazarene sanctuary to standing-room only for a chance to hear from both candidates, Knox County School Board member Betsy Henderson and Knoxville-Oak Ridge Central Labor Council President Beau Hawk.

(Watch a video of the forum at <https://tinyurl.com/cmconversation>.)

At the evening's start, each candidate gave a brief introduction and then answered a kickoff question asked by moderator Lee Hume: "In your opinion, what is the single most important and critical issue facing Knox



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County in the next four years?”

Both candidates said managing growth is the biggest issue, particularly in parts of the county where the infrastructure is not there to support it. Henderson, who answered first, talked about the importance of having relationships with state and federal delegates to make sure “we’re getting our piece of the pie here in Knox County.” Hawk noted the importance of getting input from various community stakeholders and looking at plans like the county’s Advance Knox unified development ordinance. He also mentioned developing housing with lower price points and having a 10-year capital improvement plan to assess and prioritize needed road and bridge repairs county wide.

“I think tackling growth and making sure that we’re making it benefit everybody in Knox County is the biggest priority,” Hawk said.

Hume then opened the floor for audience questions. Predictably, the state’s voucher program to help parents pay for private school tuition — which Henderson supports and Hawk does not — was a hot topic, as was the possibility of raising taxes to cover county expenses, which Henderson has explicitly said she

will not do.

“Government should live within its means and then just get out of the way so businesses and families can truly thrive,” she said. “I did make that pledge that I will not raise property taxes. I will not put that burden on the backs of taxpayers.

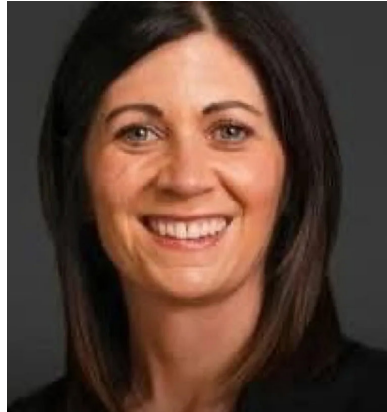
Hawk said he wouldn’t completely rule out an eventual tax increase but said he doesn’t think it’s a good idea “right out of the gate” and that he would convene a bipartisan committee to explore other options for raising revenue.

“Working people are struggling right now,” Hawk said.

Multiple questions concerned the county’s impending balloon debt payment. Henderson said current County Mayor Glenn Jacobs has saved money so that “we are fully prepared for when that debt does peak.”

“Will it be maybe a tight few years? Possibly,” she said. “But that’s when you focus on core priorities again. If everything’s a priority, nothing’s a priority.”

Hawk discussed the need to be proactive about finding revenue to build up the infrastructure, including possibly exploring public-private partnerships, vs. “endlessly



Knox County mayoral candidates Betsy Henderson and Beau Hawk

borrowing” and “kicking the can down the road” for future generations to deal with. He stressed the need for transparency and making county finances more accessible to the public.

“We’ve got to make sure we do have an adequate level of accountability with how we’re spending tax dollars,” he said.

Other questions dealt with converting subscription-based emergency services to a county wide emergency department (Henderson said current providers need to be held accountable; Hawk said it should be included in planning for the future), the future of the joint city-county Office of Housing Stability (Hawk said he would continue to support its programs aimed at combatting homelessness; Henderson said homelessness is “bleeding into the county” from the city and that she’d want to make sure the programs are resulting

in “the best outcomes”); and how to enable private development that also benefits the public.

Audience emotions ran high at times, largely concerning Henderson’s support of school vouchers and a trip Hawk took six years ago as a Teamsters delegate to Venezuela, where he attended a march with workers there that appeared to support left-wing authoritarian president Nicholas Maduro. In the end, however, both candidates and audience agreed to extend the forum by 30 minutes for more questions. Hume closed with a reminder to take the information and go to the polls.

“This was a tremendous turnout,” Hume said. “It shows that people care about this community, about who leads the county government for the next four years. The next step in that process is that we need to get out there and do our part of this whole system: to vote.”

City, county seek input for comprehensive plans to guide growth

The City of Knoxville and Knox County are each in the midst of making comprehensive plans to guide future growth and development — and your input is important.

“What’s Next, Knoxville” is the City’s effort to create a policy document to set out the future vision and priorities for development in the city. It will guide decisions on future land use, transportation and investment

priorities for the next 25 years.

Earlier this year, the City had a series of meetings to collect public input. No more of those are currently scheduled, but you can give input in person during open house at the What’s Next Knoxville headquarters, 30 Market Square SW, on various dates and times. See <https://whatsnext-knoxville.com/events> for a schedule. You can also submit comments and get updated information on the process at <https://whatsnextknoxville.com/get-involved>.

Through the effort

Advance Knox effort, the county is crafting its first Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which will update Knox County ordinances to support the goals in the Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan and Growth Policy Plan, both of which were adopted by the county in 2024. (You can find links to read these plans at <https://advanceknox.org/>.)

The county will have a Virtual Public Meeting on the UDO at 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 29, on Zoom. You must register in advance at <https://tinyurl.com/UDO-meet->

ing-registration.

You can also submit comments about the plans at <https://advanceknox.org/udo/participate>,

The community, including West Hills, has a voice in these planning processes. Make your voice heard!

Summer Potluck Picnic brings neighbors together

Neighbors cooked up a good time at the Summer Potluck Picnic June 20 at West Hills Park.

Around 175 people attended, including local

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politicians and political candidates, firefighters and police officers, who took the time to talk with West Hills residents.

But the most popular visitors had hooves.

To the delight of neighborhood children — and kids at heart — the Knoxville Police Department's Mounted Patrol Unit made an appearance. Picnic-goers got to interact and have photos made with horses from this police unit, which was established in 2024.

Little Ponderosa also provided a petting zoo with furry friends.

Knoxville youth jazz musicians provided music

and were a huge hit!

The event also featured a red-white-and-blue bicycle parade to celebrate the U.S.'s 250th birthday,

as well as outdoor games. WHCA provided barbecue, hot dogs and Chick-fil-A for the picnic, and neighbors brought sides and desserts in abundance.

"The way it all came together, with the food,



Neighbors enjoyed good food, fellowship, and a beautiful day for the Potluck Picnic

the band and neighbors gathering, was fantastic," said WHCA president Lee Hume. "It was a good mix of people, and a fun time."

Hume added that the timing of the picnic on

Father's Day weekend wasn't ideal, and the WHCA will look at that when planning next year's.

Find more photos from the picnic at westhillsknoxville.org.



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Garden Walkabouts bloom in West Hills

West Hills Dogwood Arts Trail committee partnered with West Hills Baptist Church July 11 for the first of what they

hope will be several Garden Walkabouts.

Neighbors toured the church's elaborate gardens while hearing from ornamental plant curator Brenda Huble.

The committee is in the process of planning future walkabouts.

Do you have a suggestion

for a garden to tour or a desire to be involved? Contact **Michael Moore**, moorechess@gmail.com or 865-360-6706.

WHCA Board news

Anne Crais is replacing Christine Martens as the West Hills Dogwood Arts Trail Co-Chair. Michael Moore is the second Co-Chair. Christine served three consecutive years and will be missed. We appreciate all your work, Christine!

WHCA is preparing for a new board term. If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact president Lee Hume, leehume@retiree.utk.edu, or any board member for more information. Board members help plan and carry out WHCA's activi-

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ties each year, including community events like the picnic, spring festival and National Night Out; events to keep neighbors informed, such as the Conversation with the Candidates forums; and occasions to represent the interests of West Hill neighbors when city and county decisions are being made.

Celebration of Life for A Very Special Neighbor

August 7, 11AM, United Methodist Church, 4407 Sutherland Avenue

On July 8 our friend, neighbor, and colleague Su-



san Huskisson passed away while undergoing treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida.

Susan was a lovely, educated, and charming woman that you would meet and within minutes felt more like a dear friend rather than a recent acquaintance.

Her talents led to many exceptional experiences. In 1966 the 16 year-old

Susan was a finalist in the Miss Teenage America contest. She would go on to earn three degrees including an MBA.

Her career included an internship in the White House, served on the faculty of three European universities, author, and public speaking consultant.

Susan returned to her hometown and West Hills home following the pandemic. She soon volunteered to support her neighborhood. Her good work led to a nomination and acceptance to serve on the WHCA board.

During her time on the board, Susan accepted more and more impactful

responsibilities including chair of the nominations committee and vice president of the association.

As WHCA's VP, Susan was a terrific resource for me as president. Her vast life experiences in wide-ranging environments made her a wonderful sounding board for ideas, a gentle guide for unique situations, and wise counselor offering thoughtful feedback and good advice.

Susan was a gentle, kind, and caring woman. You could be candid on any topic and not worry about losing her friendship. She was the kind of neighbor you would love to have.

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