

Knox County Commission



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: October 21, 2014

Knox County Commissioners Amy Broyles and Jeff Ownby will host a Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, October 23rd, 6:00-7:30 pm, in the Small Auditorium at West High School, 3326 Sutherland Avenue, 37919.

Broyles and Ownby plan to host a Town Hall Meeting every 4-8 weeks, depending on turnout and other events. Each Town Hall Meeting will have a theme, although anyone may ask a question regarding any topic at any time. Occasionally special guests will be invited to participate.

The theme of this first Town Hall Meeting is "Campaigns and Elections," and all candidates who are running for local and state office in our area are being encouraged to participate. Campaigns have been invited to set up information tables and distribute campaign materials prior to the Town Hall Meeting, and candidates, along with Commissioners Broyles and Ownby, will be available to answer questions during the meeting.

The idea for Town Hall Meetings came from a National Association of Counties conference in Washington, DC. County officials from the state of Florida discussed holding similar meetings, hosted by a Republican and a Democrat serving on the same Board of Commissioners, with great success. Having a meeting hosted by local elected officials from opposing political parties seemed to increase interest and credibility, and encourage public participation. During a time of growing dissatisfaction with the gridlock in Congress, and an inability to address the most pressing issues at the state level, it is important to show that both sides can work together on a public service project and to model civility in politics. Although Commissioners Broyles and Ownby are often on opposing sides on issues that come before Commission, they have a history of working well together, and both would like to see increased voter turnout and greater public engagement in the political process.

"We hope these meetings will result in even greater transparency and accountability, as well as greater interest, engagement, and participation by the public in the legislative and governing processes," states Commissioner Broyles. "We want these Town Hall Meetings to be casual, and the structure to be more flexible, than what we have during the Public Forums of a Commission Meeting. We want to encourage a true dialog, an open, back and forth exchange of ideas, questions, opinions, and information."

"It's also an opportunity to get information out and to get some questions answered," adds Commissioner Ownby. "This is a chance for the public to talk about concerns and issues that don't always get airplay. It also gives the public a chance to bring us issues and let us get out in front of them."

The discussion on Thursday evening will be led and directed by the questions of the public who have come to participate. Commissioner Broyles relates, "At 7:00 pm, we will take a break and evaluate where we are. If we are in the middle of a discussion, or there are still concerns to be addressed, we will continue. At 7:30 pm the meeting will end, regardless of where we are in the discussion. I believe it is important to set a time limit and stick to it, to help everyone remain focused and to assure the public that these meetings won't suck up their entire evening. There will always be opportunities to continue the discussion later."

Broyles' and Ownby's second Town Hall Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 13th, from 6:00-7:30 pm (location to be announced). The topic will be "Education."

For more information, please contact Commissioner Amy Broyles at 865-237-6538 or amy.broyles@knoxcounty.org; or Commissioner Jeff Ownby at 865-441-6162 or jeff.ownby@knoxcounty.org.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX