



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Jacobs responds to Commission's no vote on pension settlement

Knoxville, Tenn. — Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs and the Knox County Retirement and Pension Board recently signed and filed with the court a settlement proposal to end the ongoing pension lawsuits. During its meeting last night, and with no public discussion on the matter, the Knox County Commission voted down adding a resolution approving the settlement to the Oct. 22 meeting agenda.

Mayor Jacobs gave the following remarks during a recorded message ([Google Drive link](#)):

"I'd like to give you my thoughts on what occurred at the County Commission meeting last night. First a little background. Over the past year, Knox County has been suing itself. This is the result of a disagreement between the pension board and the Knox County law director over the county's Uniformed Officers Pension Plan, the UOPP. Unfortunately, some of our retired Sherriff's Deputies have also been caught up in this.

There is a settlement on the table that I think is fair to everyone. It gets the County out of the lawsuit and gives the retirees the benefits that they earned. And, it won't cost the taxpayers a dime more because everything has been budgeted. What will cost the taxpayers a lot more is the lawyer fees if this suit continues.

I signed this settlement because I think it is in the best interests of everyone to put this matter to rest. According to the County Charter, as Mayor, I have the authority to enter into contracts on the County's behalf. Commissioner Brad Anders sponsored a resolution in support of the settlement. I'd like to thank Commissioner Anders for his support and for doing what I believe is the right thing for the taxpayers and for the retirees who are now being forced to spend their own money to fight for benefits they were promised and earned.

Unfortunately, when the resolution came up for a vote to be added to the Commission's agenda, it was voted down. Six of the ten commissioners present voted to add it. However, because of Commission rules, it takes a 2/3 vote to add an item to the agenda, so the motion did not carry. In addition to Commissioner Anders, I want to thank Commissioners Smith, Carringer, Nystrom, Jay, and Biggs for their efforts in promoting transparency and open discussion about this very important issue.

This is the first time that anyone who I talked to could remember an item not even being added to the agenda. In other words, despite the fact that the county is involved in a lawsuit that could

cost us millions and deprive retirees from the Sheriff's Department, people who put their lives on the line for our community, of benefits they were promised, four county commissioners decided that it wasn't even appropriate to discuss the issue in a public forum.

As important as this is, there is an even bigger issue. Like the US Constitution, the Knox County charter is built on a delicate system of checks and balances. As Mayor, I have certain responsibilities and authorities. So does County Commission and other elected officials and bodies.

This whole mess started when the County Law Director unilaterally decided to sue the County Retirement and Pension Board. According to the Knox County website, "The Law Director has only one client, the government of Knox County, acting through its duly authorized officials." So the question is this: is it within the Law Director's purview to initiate a lawsuit on his or her own authority, especially when suing the Knox County government itself, or in this case a board created by the Knox County Charter. Now throw in the fact that the Mayor is telling the Law Director to cease. It would have been nice to hear from Commission, but thanks to some political shenanigans, that won't happen now until after the case goes to trial.

In any case, I have made my thoughts on this issue known. And while Commission chose not to bring this matter to the floor for a public discussion, a number of commissioners have also weighed in. Hopefully, this matter will be put to rest soon and without undue expense to the taxpayers of Knox County."

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