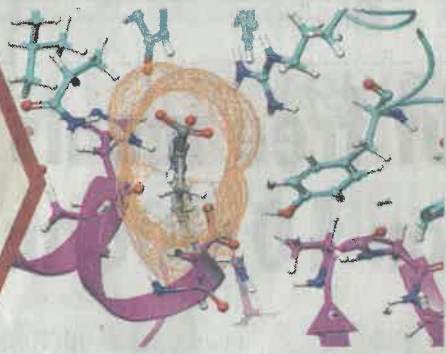


Several more Y-12 employees test positive for virus

MORE NEWS ON PAGE 4A



No Easter for America this year?

FAITH & FAMILY ON PAGE 7A



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Virus: Cutting number of inmates held at jail

BY BEN POUNDS
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CLINTON, Tenn. – Anderson County has placed non-violent misdemeanor offenders on pre-trial supervision rather than putting them in jail before their trials.

That was one measure Tyler Mayes, director of finance and administration at the Anderson County Sheriff's Office, said the Anderson County's jail is taking due to the coron-

avirus pandemic.

"The District Attorney, Public Defender, and our judges have done a great job working together to help prevent the infection and/or spread of the virus – part of that is agreeing to release low risk misdemeanor offenders," he stated in an email response to the newspaper.

"As of right now, we do not have any confirmed COVID-19 cases, nor do we have anyone

who has been tested and awaiting results. Our jail staff continues to do a tremendous job keeping our facility clean while closely monitoring the health of all inmates and employees. No inmate is quarantined at the jail at this time.

"Overall, we are blessed to be in the situation we are in amidst all of the uncertainty of the virus; however, we continue to do whatever is necessary to help flatten the

curve. The only issue we are running into at this point is the lack of inventory for the vendors who sell disinfectant, gloves, masks, etc. We are working with local business leaders on a remedy for this in addition to staying in communication with vendors who carry these items."

Knox County

As reported in The Oak Ridger Wednesday, Knox

County's judges have ordered the sheriff's office to book and release all arrestees charged with misdemeanors and non-violent felonies in an effort to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The moves come after the Tennessee Supreme Court last week ordered local judges to submit plans on how to reduce jail and prison populations.

SEE INMATES, PAGE 2A

IDB speaks on motorsports proposal

CITY IDB
GUEST COLUMN

The Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board (IDB) would like to present the public with some clarity and a timeline of events in respect of the proposed Motorsports Park Project.



Wilson

The IDB Chairman, David Wilson, was presented a proposal to purchase approximately 327 acres of land in Horizon Center Industrial Park from developer H.E. Bittle III with Hardin Valley Land Partners on Feb. 6, 2020, for the purposes of building a motorsports park. Having limited information at that time, Mr. Wilson requested to have City Council review the proposed project and give an opinion on whether it would be appropriate for the IDB to move forward with investigating the opportunity. On Feb. 10, 2020, City Council approved a resolution expressing its support and its interest in the further development of Horizon Center lots five, six and seven, containing approximately 327 acres for development.

SEE MOTORSPORTS, PAGE 5A



Myles Hebrard/Special to The Oak Ridger

Getting meals out to children

Oak Ridge Schools are closed for the coronavirus, but these workers are among those getting meals prepared for children. ABOVE, Tammie Pyke, from left, and Melissa Bibbee at Oak Ridge High. AT RIGHT, Terry Pingle and Daisy Jane Mora at Glenwood. Please see story on Page 2A.



Gov orders stay at home ORDER for residents

BY BEN POUNDS
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Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has signed Executive Order 23 requiring — not suggesting — that Tennesseans stay home unless they are carrying out essential activities.



Lee

"Some in our state may not be staying in place as much as we hope," Lee said in a news conference, which local news stations streamed to Facebook. "It's dangerous it's unacceptable and it's a threat to lives in our community."

The executive order went into effect immediately.

An official news release cited data showing an increase in citizen movement across the state.

"Over the last few weeks, we have seen decreases in movement around the state as Tennesseans socially distance and stay at home," said Lee in the news release. "However, in recent days we have seen data indicating that movement may be increasing and we must get these

SEE ORDER, PAGE 2A



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MOTORSPORTS:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Once City Council conveyed interest in learning more about the proposed motorsports park project, Mr. Wilson convened an IDB Special Projects Committee meeting on Feb. 13 and then a Special Called Board meeting Feb. 19, whereby the board voted to allow the IDB chairman to work with the developer on the terms of any agreement to purchase land in Horizon Center.

The IDB chairman has had ongoing conversations with the developer since Feb. 19. The proposed purchase agreement is only an initial offer agreement; however, it is a legal document. The agreement would outline conditions that must be met for the developer to complete the purchase, and it also must include language that limits the liability of the city and protects its citizens.

During this process, the IDB chairman cannot discuss this information with either the IDB Board or the public, since he is dealing with a private entity with sensitive, proprietary information.

Once a final agreement to purchase the property has been settled upon, the IDB Chairman will then present it to the full Board for a vote on whether to accept it or not. Even if the Board votes to accept a purchase agreement from the developer, there will be covenants within the agreement that must be met in order for the property to be transferred. It could take six months to one year or more before it is known whether the project could move forward.

Over the past month, the IDB has received dozens of emails, phone calls, and other correspondence both in support of and in opposition to a motorsports park even though the project details have not yet been presented. Each of these emails has been shared with all IDB members. The IDB understands that many residents are concerned with track noise, traffic issues, as well as environmental concerns.

The IDB will always consider the emails it has received, and we are busy conducting our own due diligence and continuing to research other similar projects throughout the United States. There has also been much speculation and concern as to the

extent of our conversations with the Developer. Currently, there are no commitments or guarantees to anyone as to the purchase of property in Horizon Center.

At its March 2 regular IDB meeting, the board discussed the possibility of having a special called meeting once a purchase agreement was ready for Board consideration. It was decided to hold a special called meeting to allow the developer to present his plan for the park, allow the board to ask questions, and give the public an opportunity to comment. This Special meeting was ultimately scheduled for March 17 at the Chamber of Commerce, and notices were posted publicly, emails distributed as per city policy, and emails were also sent to other interested parties beginning March 11.

Recognizing this to be a topic of great interest to the public, the IDB also asked The Oak Ridger to run the notice at least twice on March 13 and March 16. The IDB did not, however, anticipate how COVID-19 would quickly affect everyone's daily operations. The IDB had to conform twice with CDC (Center for Disease Control) recommendations for holding large public gatherings.

The IDB first moved the meeting to the Oak Ridge High School Auditorium to provide adequate space between attendees along with providing any other precautionary measures to ensure a safe meeting environment. However, on Monday morning the IDB had to cancel the meeting after new CDC announcements to limit public meetings.

The IDB is comprised of nine members elected by City Council; however, the IDB operates under the state statute known as the Industrial Development Corporation Act of Tennessee. The powers set forth in this statute allow the IDB to work with the city on tax abatements such as Payment in Lieu of Tax (PILoT) Agreements for individual businesses, Tax Increment Financing Agreements (TIFs) such as the Main Street Project, as well as issue Industrial Revenue Bonds. The IDB also has the power to acquire, own, lease, and sell properties for the purpose of promoting industry and developing trade by attracting

manufacturing, industrial, and commercial enterprises to Oak Ridge in order to increase local employment and tax revenues.

Ownership of Horizon Center Industrial Park was transferred to the IDB from an affiliation of the Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET) in March 2010. The IDB is a self-supporting public entity that does not receive any funding from the city and does not operate on taxpayer dollars. Since taking ownership in 2010, the IDB has spent upwards of \$900,000 on the support and maintenance of Horizon Center.

The IDB looks forward to scheduling another meeting in the near future as public policy allows. In the meantime, the IDB chairman will continue to work with the Developer on an agreement to purchase and continue to evaluate the impact of a motorsports park at Horizon Center. It is the responsibility of the IDB to evaluate the economic benefits of the proposed motorsports park and how it will impact all of the citizens of Oak Ridge. If the project does move to fruition, initial estimates reveal that Oak Ridge city would immediately receive annual property taxes of approximately \$50,000 and approximately \$500,000 annually when the project is fully online.

These tax revenues could be used toward schools, roads, and other needed city improvements.

In conclusion, I hope that some of the above information was helpful in understanding where we are currently on the motorsports park project. I also understand that Oak Ridgers would like to have more information. I will make you a promise. The IDB will not vote on this project until you have had an opportunity to hear and see the proposal presented by the Developer. However, any IDB meeting will depend on the COVID-19 restrictions and developments in the coming days. We ask that you allow us time to continue reviewing this project for the benefit of all Oak Ridgers. Currently, our most important concern is the health and well-being our community.

Thank you, and be safe.

Submitted by David E. Wilson, chairman of the Industrial Development Board of the city of Oak Ridge.

Flatwater Tales storytelling festival and writing workshops canceled

In response to public health and safety concerns as the Coronavirus (COVID-19) escalates, the 3rd annual Flatwater Tales Storytelling Festival, scheduled for June 6 at the Historic Grove Theater in Oak Ridge, has been canceled. The writing workshops scheduled for June 4 and 5 at the University of Tennessee Arboretum have also been canceled, a news release stated.

"This is a challenging time for everyone, and this was a difficult decision. However, we know that our top priority as a nation right now is to keep as many people as possible healthy," the release stated. Sponsored by the three



Lepp and local friends.

Oak Ridge Rotary Clubs, the organizing committee promises there will be a Flatwater Tales Storytelling Festival in 2021.

Featured storytellers at this year's Festival were three acclaimed performers: Andy Offutt Irwin, Bil

Lepp and Kim Weitkamp, known to audiences nationwide for their wit, wisdom and abilities to make audiences laugh, cry and reminisce. Now, when many of us are sheltering at home, listening to our tellers and many other artists on YouTube during this time when in-person events are not possible should lift your spirits.

Until next year, people can "like" the Flatwater Tales Storytelling Festival on Facebook and like the featured performers on their own Facebook pages.

"We thank the public and the performers for their overwhelming support," the news release stated.

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Free frozen meals for senior adults

City of Oak Ridge spokeswoman Lauren Gray stated the city is working to help seniors get meals.

"The Senior Center is also working with the ETHRA (East Tennessee Human Resources Agency) Senior Nutrition Program to help provide meals to those who were using the

Congregate program but couldn't once the center closed. ETHRA is now able to provide five frozen meals per person for a week," she stated. "New participants can be accepted but they do have to be at least 60 years old and will have to fill out a simple two-page application form. The Sen-

ior Center will need to know by noon on Friday, April 3, for the next pickup on Monday, April 6. There is not a cost.

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