

HBA Public Affairs Report By Heath Clarkston

UPCOMING JEFFERSON CITY COUNCIL ELECTION – APRIL 4TH

This month the City’s municipal election will select five of the ten city council seats and Jefferson City will see the election of a new, Ron Fitzwater, who is running un-opposed. Four of the five council races are contested, while 4th Ward Councilman Derrick Spicer is running un-opposed. The contested council races are as follows:

Ward 1: David Kemna (incumbent) v. Jeff Ahlers

Ward 2: Aaron Mealy v. Edith Vogel

Ward 3: Scott Spencer (incumbent) v. Treaka Young

Ward 5: Alicia Edwards v. Mark Schwartz

MISSOURI LEGISLATIVE SESSION REACHES MIDWAY POINT

The Missouri General Assembly has reached their midway point in session as they are set to adjourn on Friday, May 12th at 6:00 pm. As the bill filing deadline has passed, for 2023 the House and Senate filed a total of 2,252 pieces of legislation.

While both chambers will continue to focus on legislative priorities in the remaining seven weeks, both chambers will turn attention to finalize the state operating budget for fiscal year 2024. The House will be finalizing their budget next week and then pass it over to the Senate. Once complete, the House and Senate will discuss issues that remain in dispute and then send the budget to the Governor by May 5. Issues of interest in the Governor’s proposed \$56B budget include funding for I-70 upgrades, education funding and addressing the budget reserve. The total budget includes \$56 billion in spending.

STATEWIDE MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS LICENSING

Legislation is moving this year in the Missouri General Assembly relating to statewide mechanical contractor licensing. Bills have been filed in both chambers as Senate Bill 80, House Bill 368, and House Bill 1083. This legislation allows mechanical contractors to apply for an optional statewide license rather than having multiple licenses per political subdivision. The intent with the legislation is to ease the regulatory burden for those seeking to make a living in Missouri by removing the city by city licensing requirements and allowing a contractor to have one license that allows them to work in all political jurisdictions throughout the state. The bill is supported by the Gateway Airconditioning Contractors, Associated Builders and Contractors Heart of America Chapter, and numerous individual heating and cooling contractors. Supporters have stated at public hearings the problem is not isolated to St. Louis County, individual licensing is burdensome to smaller businesses and is used to eliminate competition, and there is no evidence requiring individual licenses increases public safety. The bills are opposed by the Mechanical Contractors Association of Eastern Missouri, City of Springfield, St. Louis County, Mechanical Contractors Association of Kansas City, Missouri Association of Plumbers Council, and Plumbers and Pipefitters Local – Springfield. Opponents stated this legislation allows for the loss of local control regarding safety measures, will decrease the education requirements and reduce skilled workers in Missouri, and decreases public safety standards. Senate Bill 80 is

currently on the Senate floor calendar and eligible for debate. The House Bills are currently still in committee.

LIMITS ON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS

House Bill 514 (Mayhew, R-Crocker) prohibits a fire protection district from adopting any ordinances, orders, rules, or regulations related to the subdivision of land for residential purposes or to the construction or installation of improvements or infrastructure or utility facilities related to serving residential construction. HB 514 was voted “do pass” by the House Government Efficiency and Downsizing Committee by a vote of 13-0 on March 22. HB 514 requires fire protection districts to only issue permits related directly to fire protection.

RECORDING FEES INCREASED

Senate Bill 284 (Arthur, D-Kansas City) modifies eligibility of families for money from the Missouri Housing Trust Fund used to financially assist families for housing and rental support. The Senate Health and Welfare Committee heard SB 284 on March 21. The bill also increases from \$3 to \$9 a fee charged by the county recorder of deeds for recording deeds, mortgages, conveyances, and deeds of trust. These fees are deposited in the Missouri Housing Trust Fund. No public testimony was offered on SB 375. The committee took no action on the bill.

CHANGES TO ASSESSORS' PROCESSES, TAX ASSESSMENT

House Bill 134 (Hudson, R-Cape Fair) modifies provisions relating to the state tax commission, assessors, and tax assessment procedures. The House Local Government Committee heard HB 134 on March 21. Rep. Hudson said the legislation is to “clean-up” and update processes in county assessors’ offices. In its main provisions the bill: (1) Requires the compensation paid to an assessor to be paid out of the assessment fund; (2) Allows the assessor to provide an electronic notification of an assessment and tax liability information at the owner's request; (3) Allows the use of satellite imagery and geographic information system (GIS) to replace the plat books if all required information is included in the system; (4) Allows specified reports to be posted on the State Tax Commission's webpage; (5) Allows the assessor to purchase computer programs to replace printed supplies such as assessment books and assessment rolls using specified technology; and (6) Removes the charge of a misdemeanor for the county clerk not forwarding the abstract to the State Tax Commission. The report is still due to the Tax Commission by July 20. The bill repeals 11 sections of statutes. Included in the repealed sections is the statute creating the Office of State Ombudsman for Property Assessment and Taxation. Testimony in favor of the bill was provided by the State Tax Commission. No testimony in opposition. The committee took no action on HB 134.