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Hardin Valley community rallies for new middle school

By Tasha Mahurin
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Citing overcrowded intermediate schools, members of the Hardin Valley community in Knox County are working to bring a new middle school to the area.

According to a study conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, this particular portion of west Knox County accounted for a substantial portion of building growth in 2012—the northwest sector, which

includes Hardin Valley, comprised 22 percent said growth alone.

The group, formally “Hardin Valley Supports a Middle School,” met last week at Hardin Valley Church of Christ to discuss

the issue.

“Karns Middle, Farragut Middle, Cedar Bluff ... They just can’t cushion all of the growth and the residents that are coming into Hardin Valley. So it’s really important; we see our kids in

larger classrooms and it is affecting their learning environment,” said parent Kim Frazier, whose sons are on track to attend Karns Middle School after completing Hardin Valley

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FOCUS Weekly Poll*

In your opinion, should the Superintendent of Schools in Knox County be elected by the people or appointed by the School Board?

ELECTED 75.58%
APPOINTED 24.42%

Survey conducted January 16, 2014.

* Focus Weekly Polls are conducted by an independent, professional polling company.

Audit changes, Old Knoxville High School and Teacher’s Revolt

By Mike Steely
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It looks like it will be a long afternoon for the Knox County Commission Work Session Tuesday as they may discuss everything from audit changes to Commissioner Tony Norman’s discussion regarding the recent “teachers’ revolt” and the superintendent’s contract.

Thirty-five items are on the agenda for the 2 p.m. meeting. The commissioners can add items and postpone or delete items from the meeting’s agenda. The next regular commission meeting is Monday, January 27, when those items approved Tuesday will go forward.

Among the items to be discussed is an amendment to the contract with Follett Software Management to extend that agreement until July, 2015 for \$129,438. They may also vote to accept \$10,000 in a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for the 2014 Children’s Festival of Reading.

They could also consider approval of the building of four single family homes in the River Meadows Subdivision in Mascot. Also they will consider accepting a donation of \$3,382.10 and three barrels of canned food donated by visitors at the Holiday Festival of Lights at Concord Park and donate it to the Love Kitchen.

The Commission is also being asked to approve the Industrial Development Board to accept payments in lieu of ad valorem taxes on the Old Knoxville High School property by the Southeast Housing Foundation which is planning to convert the historic school to senior apartments.

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Last month, Pilot presented a check for \$8,376 to Emerald Youth Foundation. Pictured are l to r, Dan Fleming, Pilot vice president of operations; John Crooks, Emerald Youth communications manager; Rachel Hopper, staff member in Emerald Youth’s JustLead program; and children Noel Vasquez and Faith Brown. Emerald Youth Foundation is a Christian, urban youth ministry that serves more than 1,350 urban young people each year.

Emerald Youth Foundation Launches Public Charter School Effort

Emerald Youth Foundation, an urban youth ministry with a 22-year history serving children, teens and young adults in Knoxville, recently announced it is launching a new 501(c)(3) organization—Emerald Charter Schools—to apply to Knox County Schools to begin the city’s first public charter school.

“We made the decision to apply to start a public charter school after significant research and consideration,” said Steve Diggs, Emerald Youth Foundation executive director. “Emerald Youth’s board of trustees believes now is the right time to move forward with the application process.”

Emerald Youth Foundation believes that establishing a K-8 inner-city public charter school is another good option for Knox County to accelerate the pace of student readiness for secondary education.

If approved, Emerald Charter Schools will begin with a K-8 public charter school in the fall of 2015, starting with two grades and adding two more each year in development phases. A clear benefit of this model is that elementary school children will not have to change campuses when they move up to middle school. Ideally, the first school—its proposed name is Emerald Academy—would be located in the Fulton High School Zone or the North city area (the founding community of Emerald Youth Foundation).

Emerald Youth Foundation has a longstanding track record of partnering with Knox County Schools. In two current examples, Emerald Youth offers ACT prep classes at Austin-East High School and spearheads a program of volunteer teaching assistants for Algebra I classes at Fulton



Among children enjoying the after-school meal at Mount Zion Baptist Church last winter are Denise Barnes, Beverly Barnes, and Takayah Couch-Cox. Mount Zion is part of Emerald Youth Foundation’s JustLead ministry.

High School. Emerald Youth also offers extensive support to urban athletic teams and academic tutoring to children of all ages through its JustLead Network of churches.

“Emerald Youth’s volunteers and staff will continue to serve young people throughout inner-city Knoxville, and we are already increasing our support of traditional public schools,” Diggs said.

Public charter schools are independent public schools that have increased freedom to be innovative, yet are held accountable for improved student achievement. Public charter schools are operated on “charter”—an agreement with the local board of education—by independent entities such as nonprofit organizations and must meet strict accountability standards spelled out in the charter.

Emerald Charter Schools will submit a letter of intent to Knox

County Schools by the end of January, and a completed application by April 1. Knox County Schools’ Charter Review Committee will then have 90 calendar days to review the application and make a recommendation to the Knox County Board of Education for a decision of approval or denial.

The faith-based Emerald Youth Foundation will continue its Christian ministry of helping urban Knoxville youth grow as leaders. However, in its role of launching a public charter school, Emerald Youth Foundation will begin a new, separate, non-sectarian 501(c)(3) organization to manage the public charter school. Emerald Charter Schools would serve as the charter management organization.

The intended mission of Emerald Charter Schools is to provide free, sustainable, high quality public schools

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Teacher Survey goes before BOE Tuesday

By Mike Steely
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The results of the Knox County Teacher Survey will be discussed in a Board of Education (BOE) Work Session Tuesday, January 21st. Both the Joint Education Committee and the Knox County Commission have waited for discussion of the survey until the BOE discussion.

The survey indicates the majority of teachers unhappy with many parts of the system’s implementation of new teaching guidelines, unannounced classroom evaluation visits, and evaluation results.

A discussion at the Commission’s meeting, also on Tuesday, offered by Commissioner Tony Norman, remains on their schedule work session the same day, at 2 p.m., so the matter may not reach the County Commission until their regular meeting on January 27th.

Also being discussed at the BOE work meeting is a presentation and discussion of TVAAS Assessment system. TVAAS measures the performance of students from a variety of tests and variables to measure progress.

The elected Board will also hear a report from Teacher Working Group appointed by Chairperson Lynne Fugate about the teacher protests and complaints.

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Teacher Survey Results: Middle School Teachers

By Mike Steely
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Last week *The Focus* published the results of the recent Teacher Survey of Elementary School Teachers. The survey was divided between Elementary, Middle, High School and teachers who teach on multiple levels.

This week we look at Middle School Teacher responses to the multiple-choice survey. The Board of Education has not publicly discussed the results yet and neither has the County Commission, although it does appear on the Commission's tentative agenda for their upcoming work session Tuesday.

The replies by Middle School Teachers were somewhat similar to those of the Elementary Teachers with a couple of exceptions.

One half of those teachers responded that teachers with Level 5 evaluations (the highest) should have their classroom evaluations reduced to one unannounced visit but 74 percent of the teachers disagreed that "both state required classroom observations be unannounced."

56.8 percent replied that one observation should be unannounced and one announced.

More than 61 percent disagreed that the "district should participate in the writing assignment for the

optional grades" and 56 percent agreed that the schools should transition to a balanced calendar for all schools.

57 percent disagreed with the teachers have the opportunity to provide input and 67 percent disagreed that "Teachers in my school/district are trusted to make sound professional decisions."

66 percent also disagreed with "Teachers in my school/district are recognized as educational experts."

An overwhelming majority, 75.1 percent, agreed that "Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn," but 47.8 percent disagreed that "Overall, my district is a good place to work and learn."

One School Board member recently commented that the teachers feel that their schools were good places to work, but the Knox County school system was much like voters' feelings about the U.S. Congress; very few voters have faith in Congress but most re-elect their representatives.

The upcoming School Board primaries and elections may be a way to test that theory.

Next week *The Focus* looks at the replies from High School Teachers, which vary quite a bit from the other results.

Knox County Schools 2013 Teacher Survey - Preliminary Results

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think all professionally licensed teachers in TEAM schools should have both state-required classroom observations be unannounced.	45.8%	28.2%	15.9%	6.6%	3.6%
I think all professionally licensed teachers in TEAM schools should have 1 announced and 1 unannounced classroom observation for their 2 state-required observations.	9.4%	10.1%	23.7%	36.5%	20.3%
I think all teachers with Level 5 summative evaluation scores from the prior year should have the state-required observation protocol reduced from 2 formal observations per year (covering 2 domains per observation) to 1 unannounced formal observation	7.7%	15.1%	26.1%	30.7%	20.4%
I think the district should transition to a balanced calendar for all schools.	16.8%	9.0%	18.0%	27.6%	28.6%
I think the district should participate in PARCC field testing.	25.9%	22.6%	28.0%	17.9%	5.6%
I think the district should participate in the writing assessment for the optional grades.	34.3%	26.2%	19.1%	15.7%	4.7%
This is the way PLCs function at my school.	7.6%	14.6%	15.0%	45.8%	17.1%
My PLC enhances my instructional practice.	17.8%	20.9%	21.3%	30.2%	9.8%
I think Common Core State Standards will benefit instructional practice and student learning.	15.4%	23.0%	29.6%	27.0%	5.0%
Teachers in my school/district have the opportunity to provide input regarding the district's strategic direction.	25.0%	32.0%	20.4%	20.9%	1.8%
Teachers in my school/district are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	30.6%	36.4%	10.9%	17.2%	4.9%
Teachers in my school/district are recognized as educational experts.	33.0%	33.2%	17.2%	14.4%	2.1%
Teachers in my school/district are encouraged to participate in school, district, and/or state leadership roles.	10.7%	18.1%	30.3%	35.9%	4.9%
Teachers in my school/district have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).	29.1%	35.1%	14.8%	18.0%	3.0%
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	3.5%	9.1%	12.4%	43.9%	31.2%
Overall, my district is a good place to work and learn.	18.8%	28.8%	22.2%	26.5%	3.7%

Audit changes, Old Knoxville High School and Teacher's Revolt

Cont. from page 1

They may also discuss "putting on hold" a monthly parking increase at the City-County Building Garage for county employees and approving a grant of \$ 45,000 to supplement

the salary of one Juvenile Probation officer.

The commissioner might also talk about approving the January 14th actions of the Audit Committee and recommendations of changes brought by the new Internal Auditor.

The approval of a contract with DataBank IMX for a contract of \$ 170,000 may be discussed to install and maintain an electronic content management system for the Circuit Court Clerk's office.

Possibly getting the most

attention could be discussions on the "teacher's revolt and the Superintendent's Contract," a motion

on the agenda from Commissioner Norman, a discussion on the Joint Education Committee, and a

separate discussion regarding the Audit Committee meeting.

Emerald Youth Foundation Launches Public Charter School Effort

Cont. from page 1

in Knoxville's urban neighborhoods to ensure that all students have access to an outstanding college preparatory education.

For its public charter school model, Emerald Youth Foundation has chosen two schools in Cleveland, Ohio. They are Breakthrough Schools' E Prep middle school and Village Prep elementary school. Emerald Youth made the

selection after conducting extensive national research making site visits.

Breakthrough Schools has a track record of excellent student outcomes: in 2012, its students—who are more than 97% minority and approximately 85% low-income—significantly outperformed Ohio public school students (urban and suburban) on average on every single test at every single grade level.

Breakthrough Schools' E Prep and Village Prep Schools' leadership has agreed to work with Emerald Charter Schools to export its model to Knoxville.

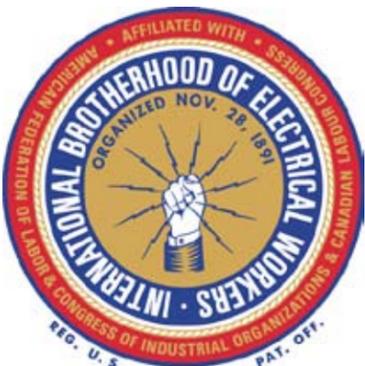
Public input about Emerald Charter Schools' proposed plan is ongoing. A series of community meetings will be held January 21. Visit www.emeraldcharterschools.org for details.

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On March 29, 1968, MLK went to Memphis to support a union. And not just any union; a labor union that was fighting for the rights of employees. The negotiations were not going well. The union told MLK and King gladly accepted their invitation to come and lend his support to the union's cause.

King supported the labor union and ultimately died supporting them.

So the next time you are wondering why we should care about what happens to labor unions, just remember why Martin Luther King, Jr. went to Memphis.



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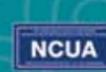
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