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City Council

Historic Speedway Circle home taken by city

By Mike Steely
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A two-story old house on Speedway Circle in East Knoxville and the lot next to the home have been approved for condemnation or purchase by the Knoxville City Council.

The properties, at 3738 and 3740 Speedway, are believed to be owned by

Angela Fields and the home is in poor shape. The Abandoned, Blighted and Vacant Properties Committee recommended the action and the request to the council came from the Department of Community Development.

Community Development Director Becky Wade told the council that the

house is "unusual" and explained that in 1927 the home was moved there from Gay Street. She said the inside of the house is totally gutted.

"Hopefully someone will want to buy it," she said, noting that restoration of the inside is required with such a purchase.

"We're not sure the

house can remain, it's in rough shape," she said. Apparently the home dates to 1899.

Speedway Circle is a historic neighborhood just off Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue. It was created as a horserace track by Calvin Johnson, a former slave who became a prominent and wealthy Knoxville

businessman. Over the years houses developed on both sides of the former racetrack.

The city council also finalized an ordinance requiring financial responsibility for any vehicle released and driven from the city's impoundment lot and approved the selling of surplus real property by the

city regardless of the estimated value of the property.

The council approved an application for \$2.9 million in grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for lead-based paint control. If granted the city must match it by 10 percent.

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HAPPINESS IS...

Luke Smith is quickly greeted on the court by jubilant teammates and coaches after his game-winning shot in Catholic's 56-53 semifinal win over Nashville Whites Creek in the TSSAA Class AA state tournament Friday.

Knoxville Catholic's historic season came to an end Saturday in the Class AA state championship game when the top ranked Irishmen fell to Nashville Maplewood 60-57. The Panthers got off to an early lead and most of the game as Catholic was hampered by foul trouble. Catholic's standout senior point guard Luke Smith missed most of the third quarter as he was sidelined with three fouls. Catholic was led by Brock Jancek (16 points), Davari Reeder (11 points) and Smith (10 points). The game came down to the last play when Smith's desperation 70-foot shot failed to go in.

See more coverage on the boys' state tournament in Sports & Recreation section C. Photo By Luther Simmons.

'Umbrella' benefits discussed at conference

By Mike Steely
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The annual Knoxville Neighborhood Conference brought many community leaders together earlier this month and one of the most interesting ideas was hatched at the "Umbrella Group" workshop. The discussion and presentation, one of more than 22 workshops offered, was moderated by Ronnie Collins, president of the Alice Bell-Spring Hill Neighborhood Association. The panelists were Jennifer Wright of the Fourth and Gill

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Number of candidates for city council growing

By Mike Steely
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Eight people have listed their treasurers in the 6th District City Council race, all hoping to capture the seat now held by term-limited Daniel Brown. Brown served as the first African-American mayor of Knoxville after the election of the city mayor to governor and before the election of Madeline Rogers as the city's first female mayor.

The historically African-American district has been hugely Democratic but two situations could present an "elephant in the room" for the area. One, community activist Michael Covington, an African-American Republican who ran for county commission and lost to Evelyn Gill, could possibly change the district's party representation.

And two, a bill currently in the Tennessee Legislature could pass and make all public elections partisan, meaning that the local school board and city council races would run by party affiliation in future elections.

Currently the city elections are non-partisan. The top two winners of the primary in August go on to the General Election in November. Only voters in the open Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 may vote in the primary but everyone in the city registered to vote can select the candidates for those districts in the general election.

With the huge number of candidates so far it could well mean that Covington could emerge as number

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Knox Heritage's Todd Morgan speaks to Town Hall East members about revitalizing their neighborhoods during the group's quarterly meeting recently.

Town Hall East hears from Knox Heritage

By Mike Steely
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Knox Heritage's Todd Morgan, Director of Preservation Field Services, told Town Hall East neighborhood members that East Knoxville has lots of history to save and noted that there are several communities within the area.

Morgan was speaking recently at the quarterly meet of the group and asked if the members would like to have a more active role in the ongoing effort to

revitalize their area. He said that Knox Heritage would like to consider each area for development.

"There's lots of history in the different parts of East Knoxville," he said. He spoke about efforts in Burlington and answered questions, one dealing with affordable housing as a neighborhood change.

"Gentrification is not what we want to see happen," he said.

Morgan said that a community's progress or

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