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New system funded by city to aid homeless

By Mike Steely
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Almost unnoticed in the Knoxville City Council agenda recently was a resolution that may play a big part in coordinating various programs to help the homeless in Knoxville.

An agreement with the University of Tennessee's College of Social Work, requested by the Department of Community Development, will create a Coordinated Entry System for use by the city and various

agencies and organizations to search out shelter and housing programs for individuals and families. The vote passed unanimously without discussion.

The College of Social Work at UT currently administers a project that operates an internet-based multi-agency data base. The new CES program will enhance that support for the city office. The city agreed to fund \$90,450 which will mostly go toward staffing two new positions at UT that

will create and facilitate the CES digital referral process.

Mike Dunthorn, coordinator of Knoxville's Office of Homelessness, said the program will provide oversight for those who deal with the issue.

"This is the next level," he said. He added the Coordinated Entry System will provide a database of available services and keep track of the homeless and their needs. The new system would standardize the intake and referral

procedure, look at primary needs, find vulnerability and locate housing when available.

The university will work with the City's Homelessness Office to set metrics, review data to help the city in monitoring partner agencies and help implement the program.

UT will develop and maintain the software which will list by name the individuals for housing and service priorities and list multi-agency housing and service cases.

UT will also represent the CES through regular attendance and participation with the Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness as well as the Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition.

Knoxville's Community Development Dashboard on the internet shows 2,677 known homeless in the 3rd quarter of this year, up from 2,436 in the 2nd quarter. There were 934 new homeless in the 3rd quarter.

The most common cause

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GOLDEN GUYS



PHOTO BY KELLY KEARSE

The Catholic Fighting Irish enjoy the moment after capturing the TSSAA Class 5A state football championship with a 45-28 win over Beech Thursday night at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville. The story and more photos in Sports & Recreation, Section C.

Overcrowding at Lonsdale discussed at school board meeting

John Beckett gave a lengthy review of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Accountability for Districts and Schools Framework at the Knox County Board of Education meeting last Monday. This is the new education law.

The Every Student Succeeds Act was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding



By Anne Primm

commitment to equal opportunity for all students.

The new law builds on key areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of

educators, communities, parents, and students across the country.

One point of contention that board members brought up was the requirement that 95% of all students, in all subjects, in all subgroups, (like English as a Second Language) be tested. Representative Amber Rountree observed that Knox County has a

particular problem with what is called the "Chronically Out-of-School." These are the students that for one reason or another do not attend. Should a school receive a failing grade simply because students are truant? Does this indicate the quality of the school curriculum or the teachers?

Representative Lynne Fugate asked Mr. Beckett if this evaluation tool will make Knox County Schools look bad and he responded that he thinks we will come out okay. The caveat being that now High Schools will also receive a grade along with the elementary and middle schools.

Kinley Koontz, the student representative from West High School, inquired about how TCAP scores for Special Students and non-verbal students affect performance evaluations. Beckett answered that those scores are not included in the calculations.

Julie Thompson, the executive director of elementary education, spoke next about the Lonsdale Elementary School/Sam E. Hill Family Community Center.

Thompson stated that Lonsdale Elementary School is currently overcrowded as it serves 407

MPC membership questioned by County Commission

By Mike Steely
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Resentment over policies of the Metropolitan Planning Commission seems to be growing among some Knox County residents. The debate over requiring sidewalks in some new county subdivisions sparked questions about the power of the commission.

Commissioner Brad Anders, who has announced he may seek the office of Knox County mayor, asked pointedly in a meeting recently, "Do we need the planning commission?"

The real question is whether the county will maintain its membership in the MPC and, if not, how would the county form its own agency.

Scott Davis, a developer and former Knox County commissioner, told The Focus recently that something to be considered is a legal challenge to city appointees voting on county matters before the MPC.

Currently Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett appoints seven MPC members and Mayor Madeline Rogero appoints six members. Both city and county members consider all issues coming before the commission, elect their own chair and vice chair, and pass most of their decisions to the Knox County Commission or the Knoxville City Council.

Some issues, according to MPC Executive Director Nathan Green, are MPC only decisions and don't go beyond the planners or need other approval. He told The Focus recently that the state code places the authority of subdivision requirements squarely with the MPC without any further approval or disapproval. That doesn't apply to zoning changes, which are forwarded to either the city or county government bodies.

"If you live in Knox County you do not have the right to vote for the city mayor who is making appointments to the MPC," Davis said, adding that those appointees then vote on county zoning requests and land use.

"Basically that's taxation without representation," he said.

"Only county-appointed MPC members should be voting on county projects," Davis said.

"In my opinion the city appointees have no right to be voting on Knox County projects. The vast majority of MPC votes are split between the city and county appointees," he said.

The reverse is true, of course, that county appointees also vote on city land use questions. In some city-county shared departments, such as the Historic Zoning Commission, only city or county appointees vote on city or county matters. Each jurisdiction has separate Boards of Zoning Appeals groups.

The 15 members of the MPC serve staggered four-year terms and work with an executive director and about 35 staff members. The executive director is chosen by both mayors.

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