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BOE slightly amends strategic plan

By Ken Lay

The Knox County Board of Education work session was conducted with little fanfare Wednesday night at the City-County Building.

The sparsely attended meeting adjourned less than an hour after it began. The agenda for this Wednesday's regular session was approved swiftly.

The one item that generated discussion was the school district's Strategic Plan for 2019-2022.

A draft of the plan was released at the previous regular session. It has been four months in the making. It was modified just hours before Wednesday night's work session.

It was discussed briefly by the board members, many of whom they had little time to review the revised plan.

The Strategic Plan is aimed at seeking community engagement, its objectives are to increase student achievement, creating a positive culture and eliminating disparities.

It calls for the community to join forces with the school board to increase literacy rates, produce ready graduates and minimize the effects of poverty, mental health and addiction of the county's nearly 63,000 students.

The Strategic Plan has been a long time coming and was the one item Wednesday night that was addressed during the public forum.

Knox County resident Lance McCold spoke. He is one of several community members on multiple coalitions striving to improve education in the school district.

McCold made it no secret that

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Kimberly Longmire with her daughters, Katlin and Abby, with the car donated to them by Volunteer Rides and King Collision.

King Collision donates car to Powell teacher

By Mike Steely
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For the third year King Collision turned a wreck into a wonderful gift for a very worthy person. Thursday the company, at 2707 Old Callahan Road, donated a 2016 Nissan Quest to Powell Elementary 4th grade teacher Kimberly Longmire.

She's a mother of two girls, one of which suffers from Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy. Cindy McCoy and Kelly Long of The Focus sat down with the car earlier in the week to talk about the special program Volunteer Rides.

"When Bill King learned about the program he started the process," McCoy said. She explained that if a car is damaged in a wreck at 75% of the vehicle's value it is "totaled." The totaled car is then rebuilt and gifted to a special person. State Farm donated this year's car which was taken to King Collision where a total rebuild was begun.

"We get parts donated from local businesses and vendors and our employees donate their time during the repairs. Rebuilt cars are perfectly safe and legal."

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Representatives of several Knox County companies and organizations, friends and relatives of Kimberly Longmire watch as the Powell teacher is given a car from Volunteer Rides and King Collision.

Council members reflect on first Recode workshop

By Mike Steely
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If there is one takeaway from the Knoxville City Council's Recode workshop Thursday night, it is that several other meetings will be needed. The next meeting to be held February 20, will deal with residential zoning codes and that one may be as long and even more debated.

The council's three and one-half hour work session was focused on proposed zoning changes in commercial, office and industrial districts. The discussion often went off topic and got lost in specific details.

The Knoxville Focus caught up with several city officials and council members the following morning prior to the city's annual budget meeting.

"I think we made a lot of ground up (sic) last night," Councilman George Wallace said, adding, "I think we made a decision that we want a final draft at some point in time, stop making changes and we want clarity on whether or not to send out notifications to every property owner."

Councilman Mark Campen also spoke on the notification of property owners.

"My main comment was that property owners who's property will be 'down-zoned' must be notified directly as to the zoning change for their property," Campen told The Focus. "Also, at the very least, landowners who live outside of Knoxville need to be notified directly since they are unlikely to see a notification in the paper, etc. I believe we all agreed that all property owners need to be notified, regardless of the zoning change."

"It was a really robust discussion," Councilwoman Stephanie Welch said. "It ranged from broad

policy issues to specifics," she said, adding, "It looks like there's going to be a third meeting."

"There was a lot of detail about when you rebuild a building and at what point can you make a change to a commercial building," said Deputy Mayor Bill Lyons.

"We just got started last night. There will be at least two more workshops spread into March. We are taking a deliberative review of the latest version. It's important impacts are considered, how this will really work," said Councilwoman Lauren Rider.

"This has the potential to

make property use easier and better, more flexible. We need to really comb this before we make it law," she said.

Vice Mayor Finbar Saunders, who chaired the work session, described the Recode meeting as long. "I thought we got a little bit in the weeds and I was hoping to stay on the policy."

"It was a little confusing," he said, adding, "We pretty much agreed last night there's going to have to be more meetings."

Speaking of proposed requirements for commercial buildings Councilman Marshall Stair said, "You

can understand where the tension is, you don't want it where someone redoes a whole building or for non-conforming parking lots to be there forever."

"We're going to need more workshops," Stair told The Focus.

The February 20 meeting is open to the public and will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the main assembly room of the City-County Building. The scheduled topic is Residential districts (single family, multi-family, general residential districts).

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