



The Knoxville Focus

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PHOTO BY KEN LAY

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee speaks at the Knox County Republican Party's Lincoln Day Dinner in West Knoxville Saturday night. Lee, the state's 50th governor, is pictured with county Knox County Republican Party Chairman Randy Pace, Representative Tim Burchett and Burchett's wife Kelly.

Gov. Bill Lee speaks at GOP dinner

By Ken Lay

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee was the keynote speaker at the Knox County GOP Lincoln Day Dinner in West Knoxville Saturday night. Lee, Tennessee's 50th governor, spoke briefly at the annual fundraiser at the Rothchild Catering and Conference Center. This was his second speech in

Knoxville and he continued to vow to make good on his campaign promises to provide the Volunteer State with great jobs, schools and neighborhoods.

Lee, who gave the State of East Tennessee Address at the University of Tennessee's Clarence Brown Theatre in March, again remarked that he

is honored to be Tennessee's governor and how he considers himself blessed to work with the state's legislature.

"I had a perspective about how it was going to be to work with the legislators in Tennessee and now that I've gotten to work with them, I am extremely honored," Lee said to his many

supporters who attended Saturday night's dinner. "They are truly citizen legislators who love Tennessee."

The governor promoted his Educational Savings Accounts, which strive to give students in failing schools the opportunity to transfer within the state's

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City Council asked to delay Recode vote

"We've got a lot more work to do. The neighborhoods need time."

By Mike Steely
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The consensus of Thursday's City Council Work Session on Recode appears to be to postpone a final vote. The results of two years and numerous public meetings on totally rewriting the city's zoning and enforcement regulations may not be decided in a final meeting May 14.

But several city council members, including Marshall Star, Lauren Rider, Andrew Roberto and Mark Campen favor making that date another work session and voting on the controversial reworking of city zoning 30 days later. The council met in November session Thursday evening in what had been announced as the final Recode discussion. Council members Gwen McFarlane and

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Final vote on next mayor's salary on council agenda

By Mike Steely
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The Knoxville City Council meets Tuesday evening and the main topic will probably be the proposed pay raise for whoever is elected mayor in November. The second and final vote is the first item on the agenda and two weeks ago Council members Andrew Roberto and Seema Singh-Perez voted "No." Councilman Marshall Star abstained from voting because he is a candidate.

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WANDERING NO MORE Theater Knoxville Downtown Finds Long-Term Location

By Bill Howard

After a long and wandering journey, one of Knoxville's most iconic theaters has a new home. And this time, it should be permanent.

On Friday, April 5, "One Slight Hitch" opened at Theater Knoxville Downtown at their new location, 800 S. Central St. for the previous 13 years, the theater had resided at 319 N. Gay St., across from what used to be Regas Restaurant.

"We're really excited to finally be in a space that we think we can occupy for a long time," said Bonny Pendleton, TKD Board President since 2009. "It's a wonderful

upgrade from our previous place; this is exactly what we've needed for quite some time."

TKD's first iteration - Knoxville Community Theater - formed in 1976 by interested volunteers, but didn't initially have a home. According to longtime TKD Board member Windie Wilson, performances took place at a variety of venues, including the Biju Theater, World's Fair Park, Knoxville Museum of Art, and the Black Box Theater in Bearden.

For a time, the theater took up residence in the Moses Center in Mechanicville, but a conflict with the city ended that arrangement. By now it was 1987, and the theater, whose name was changed to Theater

Knoxville, was again looking for a home.

"It was essentially homeless again," said Wilson.

Performances again took place in various venues, mostly in downtown. But in 2005, a fortuitous event led to what would become the theater's home until early this year.

Mark Moffett headed another theater outfit called Theater Central, which resided at 319 S. Gay St. He decided to leave Knoxville, and since he was essentially the embodiment of Theater Central, his departure meant the end of that organization. Theater Knoxville decided to occupy the space, and added "Downtown" to its name.

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School board mulls over budget and strategic plan

By Anne Plim

Chairperson Terry Hill called the April 3, 2019 meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon. Several board members were absent due to family issues and personal illness, including board Secretary Terry Costney, 7th District Representative Patti Bounds, and 8th District Representative Mike McMillan.

Chairperson Hill

announced that the 2019-20 Knox County Schools budget will be discussed at a special called meeting of the Knox County School Board on April 24, 2019 which is the already scheduled quarterly meeting of the board. April 30, 2019 is the deadline to submit the budget to county commission.

Hill called on Representative Jennifer Owen to update the board on legal

proceedings in Nashville regarding vouchers and charter schools. Owen related that a state board is being created to authorize charter schools. No longer does a prospective charter school need to approach the local school district about starting a charter school in their area; the prospective school may go directly to this newly appointed board.

Secondly, Owen reported that House Bill 939 is

the Educational Savings Account Bill. This bill allows parents to use public funds to send their children to private schools or to cover other educational experiences. The biggest problem with this bill is that when a student accepts funds (voucher funding) she gives up federal rights to Special Education funding. Another problem with the bill is that students do not have to spend all of

their allotted funds (approx. \$7300). Parents can put this money into a savings fund to earn interest until the student is age 22. This could be an incentive for the student not to graduate at age 18. A third problem with the program is that to qualify for the program, a family of four must substantiate that they earn no more than \$64,000 the year before the funding is given. However, there are no restrictions that the

family income remain that low throughout the funding process. This makes it possible for families of four to earn substantially more after receiving the state funds. This and other potential for fraud is very concerning to some legislators. Also concerning for some is the movement of public funds away from public schools to voucher programs that

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**Special Women's Event
Sunday, April 14
2 p.m. - 4 p.m.**

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Doors open at 1:30 p.m. with refreshments available
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Featured Speaker:
Betsy Frazier, founder
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