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Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn visited South Knoxville Elementary School last week. She spoke at the school's graduation and had a question-and-answer session with third and fourth grade girls at the school's library Wednesday morning.

Penny Schwinn visits South Knoxville Elementary

By Ken Lay

Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn made a stop in Knoxville Wednesday morning and came to South Knoxville Elementary School.

Her stay was brief but the morning was busy for Schwinn, who gave the opening remarks at the school's fifth-grade graduation.

Following her time at that ceremony, Schwinn went to the school's library where she was greeted by a group of inquisitive third and fourth-grade girls, who had plenty of questions.

Schwinn also purchased doughnuts for the students, as she discussed how she ended up working in education.

Schwinn was pleased to make the

trip and she felt the 30-minute question-and-answer session was a bit brief. She left her email address with South Knoxville principal Tana Nicely so the students could email her over the summer break.

"I go to schools every day but I don't get to Knoxville as much as I would like," Schwinn said before heading to catch a plane back to Nashville. "I'm excited to be here and to visit with these girls."

Schwinn, a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, took questions from the students about her job, her family and her decision to become a teacher and later, an education commissioner.

"I wanted to be a doctor, and my aunts were both maternity nurses," she said. "I was a candy stripper at a

hospital and I loved it."

"My aunts told me that I should come and see a baby being born and I saw it and decided that I wanted to work with children once they were out. I have two young girls and I wanted to prove that I could be a teacher and a mother. I wanted to be a commissioner because I wanted to do more to help teachers because we don't pay teachers enough money."

Nicely was excited to have Schwinn make a visit to South Knoxville.

"She's very approachable and she bought the doughnuts and she asked how many she needed," Nicely said. "I called her office and the people there were really helpful."

"I've never dealt with anybody in that level of government that approachable."

Council approves Gateway Park, sale of Supreme Courthouse

By Mike Steely
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The Knoxville City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to authorize the mayor to execute an agreement with Charles Blalock & Sons Inc. for the construction of the Knoxville Urban Wilderness Gateway Park.

The new park will be an entrance to one end of the

Urban Wilderness and is located at the southern end of the James White Parkway. Mayor Madeline Rogers delivered her "State of the City" address there recently. While some Chapman Highway area residents want to see the parkway extended through the

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What is a majority in the upcoming city election?

By Mike Steely
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According to the Knox County Election Commission the race for mayor, with several candidates on the ballot, could be decided in the primary election. The victory would be hard to come by because the rules say "any candidate for mayor receiving a majority of all the votes cast for the office of mayor in the primary shall be declared elected without the necessity of a runoff."

Does that mean 51% or does it mean a simple majority? The Focus asked Cliff Rodgers, administrator of the election commission. Were there only two candidates the candidate who got 51% would be placed on the general election ballot without printed opposition and that's done to permit

write-in candidates.

Cliff Rodgers told The Focus that "majority" in the election means 50% plus one vote.

Rodgers also said that potential candidate Mike Chase, a Knoxville restaurateur, picked up a petition the week of the deadline and returned it with 43 names. Rodgers said that he called Chase and urged him to pick up another petition because only 22 of the names qualified to vote in the city election. Rodgers said many of those signing the Chase petition were county residents or didn't live in a correct precinct.

Chase didn't pick up an additional petition and thus did not make it on the ballot.

"I keep telling people not to wait until the last

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Parkview Broome Road celebrates its Grand Opening

By Amy Box Felloheller

Some people might describe the newly opened Parkview Retirement Community for active seniors as posh or elegant, but a better description for the independent living facility would be family and community, which is echoed by the residents as well. One resident said, "I love it, oh my goodness, yes... it's just a beautiful place and there's so many nice people."

After fifteen months of construction, the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony

was held on Friday, May 17, 2019. Knoxville Chamber of Commerce employees, Parkview residents and staff members, and McBride Company employees alongside Knox County Commissioner Evelyn Gill, celebrated Parkview's newest West Knoxville location at 770 Broome Road. Tours of the facility and refreshments were offered following the ceremony.

All of this is for the residents and by the residents. This particular vignette grew out of the idea of a small town to meet

their needs," said Jay McBride, McBride Company owner, as he pointed to the second floor designed to give residents an "Andy in Mayberry" feel.

"Our competition is the home, so that is what we are trying to create, that kind of environment. Part of our challenge is we are not assisted living. People don't choose to go to assisted living, but people have to choose to live here," explained McBride. With 25 percent of the Parkview

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Residents who moved into Parkview Retirement Community before its grand opening stand proudly for a picture with their new home. Photo by Amy Box Felloheller.

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