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Emerald Youth cuts ribbon on community center in Lonsdale



The Emerald Youth Foundation opened the Haslam-Sansom Ministry Complex Thursday. This is one of two turf soccer fields at the new sports and community facility located on Texas Avenue.

By Ken Kay

The Emerald Youth Foundation opened a community center in Lonsdale last week. The new Haslam-Sansom Ministry Complex officially opened Thursday. It's located on Texas Avenue between Stonewall and Sherman Streets.

It features a pair of outdoor soccer fields, a gymnasium with four courts, a workout room, a café, which doubles as the concession stand for sporting events, an arts ministry room and a community room.

The 30,000 square foot facility is home to educational facilities and a health center, which is a joint venture run by Cherokee Health Systems and UT Medical Center.

The facility cost approximately \$8 million and was funded by Dee and Jimmy Haslam and Elisabeth and Bill Sansom. The center will be leased to Emerald Youth Foundation for \$1 per year.

The new complex required approval from multiple legislative bodies including Knoxville City Council, Knox County Commission, the Knox County Board of Education, as well as the board of Knoxville



PHOTO BY KEN KAY

Emerald Youth Foundation Director of Lonsdale Area Ministries Kevin DuBose conducts a tour of the new Haslam-Sansom Ministry Complex, which opened last week. Pictured with DuBose is longtime Lonsdale resident Joey Kyle.

Community Development Corporation.

The City of Knoxville had a hand in the construction of the facility as it upgraded the infrastructure around the perimeter of the complex. The city added sidewalks, street-light and other amenities.

Emerald Youth Foundation and Chief Executive Officer Steve Diggs was extremely grateful for all the people who made the new complex, which will serve both the youth and adults of the Lonsdale Community, a reality.

"My message as we open this facility is very simply one of gratitude," Diggs said. "I am grateful to the owners who are not only contributing their resources to this project but believing with us that Knoxville is a city where every child, in every neighborhood, can have the opportunity for a full life."

"I am also grateful for the leadership of the Lonsdale neighborhood who had the initial vision for this project and worked all along the way to insure that it would become

a reality."

The facility celebrated its official grand opening in a ceremony Thursday afternoon, but members of the media were given a tour of the complex earlier in the day.

The tour was guided by Kevin DuBose, the director of Lonsdale Area Ministries for the Emerald Foundation.

"We have a Career and Calling Room where we offer educational opportunities for students until they finish college," DuBose said. "We have ACT

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Mayor Rogero agrees to save Caswell Park parcels, relocate homeless housing

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

In a letter to Parkridge residents Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero is proposing a compromise. She is suggesting closing a portion of Myrtle Street and allowing Volunteer Ministry Center to expand a homeless housing unit there.

The location is near the three parcels on Fifth Avenue adjoining Caswell Park and would save those as open space and part of the park. Rogero plans to ask the city council to withdraw a zoning change request for those three properties in January and to approve the closure of Myrtle Street when they meet in February.

She is asking the director of parks to then include the three city-owned parcels into the programming of Caswell Park. Many Parkridge residents had no objection to housing for the homeless but wanted to save the three pieces of property. Mayor Rogero says the compromise will reflect the city's support of housing and benefit the residents as well.

TVA Tower move hits snag

By Mike Steely
Senior Writer
steelym@knoxfocus.com

When the Knox County Commission meets today in regular session the proposed easement agreement with TVA to move the school administration offices to the East Tower may see difficulty in passing.

During the commission work session last week Knox County Law Director Richard (Bud) Armstrong pointed out that the agreement is "very complex" and has too many blank spaces.

"I'm not happy with what you have before you tonight," Armstrong told the commissioners. He said he prefers a lease instead of an easement. He also said that the commission "does not have the right to pick school property. He said picking a site for the school offices is the duty of the school board and superintendent."

"We have enticed the school system," he said of the only proposal presented, to relocate the offices to the TVA Tower. "This body does not have the power to dictate over the schools," he said.

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Religious Release Time Policy Opposed with 5-4 Vote at BOE

By Amy Box Felthoelter

In the midst of holiday hustle and bustle, the main assembly room of the City-County Building was found to be full again last Wednesday night as the vote for policy J-171 "Released Time Religious Instruction" was scheduled to take place.

Once the consent agenda was approved, a public forum time allowed for 22 people residing within and outside of Knox County to speak about the policy. Many individuals

gave responses in regard to what board members and forum participants said the previous week during the work session.

Many of the parents and grandparents who came to show their support for policy J-171 spoke out as Christians wanting Biblical instruction for students, yet just as many Christians disagreed with the policy, such as Charles VanBeak of Knoxville County. He is a grandfather of five grandchildren in the Knox County School system. VanBeak quoted

the "Fruit of the Spirit" passage from Galatians 5:22-23 but disagreed with the policy because it could be amended, and disruptions would hinder the learning of students. He stated the school classroom is for instruction by the teachers and not for moral teaching.

A fourth-grade student's perspective was expressed by Cloe Bryant who attends Sterchi Elementary School and the release program. She explained that program participants, "Sing and dance to worship

songs" hear a Bible story, pray, play a Bible story game, and eat a snack. "It's really fun ... I want to have a good relationship with God," she added.

First Lieutenant Ashley Rickles of the Army National Guard reminded listeners, "We have to devote religious time for our soldiers because of the importance of their religious freedoms and what it means to them. I don't see why our children should be any different."

"There is no legal

impediment to this at all, and it's good for kids academically," declared Clayton Wood who runs an after-school program through SOAR Youth Ministries. He claimed the policy to be completely legal, and informed the crowd that once-a-month large group settings are not conducive with grooming for child abuse. He said if the policy does not pass, "Parents will say the school did not accommodate me, and in Tennessee the most hostile school to the Bible

has been Knox County Schools."

Knox County parent Ginger Reese gave a parental decree in support of children learning about God during the release time. The decree began, "Today on Dec. 11, 2019, the parents of Knox County decree that we welcome Jesus Christ into our schools."

New topics addressed by community members were: parental rights not being usurped because parent

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