



Meeting by video on Zoom, the Knoxville City Council had some lighter moments. The council is one of the first government bodies in the state to use video conferencing, permitted in an order from the governor, during the Coronavirus emergency. Screenshot of CTV coverage.

Council passes bond issues and home delivery of beer

By Mike Steely
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In an online video conference of the Knoxville City Council on Zoom, several important bond issuance resolutions passed. Maybe more immediately important was an emergency ordinance introduced by Councilman Andrew Roberto to permit home delivery of beer.

"It went pretty well," commented Mayor Indya Kincannon after the two-hour

meeting. CTV telecast the session with images of the council members. The test of the system earlier in the week apparently helped iron out difficulties. Each council member responded from their homes and each could see the other members.

Roberto, who chairs the city's Beer Board, cleared the beer delivery with the city attorney and said the resolution will "help support our local vendors and keep folks employed." Vice Mayor

Gwen McKenzie seconded the motion to add it to the agenda as an emergency ordinance and the matter passed unanimously.

Councilwoman Amelia Parker also offered a resolution that passed, supporting the city's Coronavirus effort and authorizing the use of emergency funds when needed including possible rent subsidies. The funds could go to the Community Action Commission or other agencies

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TVA Tower and Summer Place Complex on Commission Agenda

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In the agenda for the Knox County Commission's Zoom meeting this afternoon are two items dealing with the school administration's move to the TVA Towers. The commission is being asked to approve \$3.97 million from General Funds and a Bond Premium for "renovations to the TVA East Tower." The resolution is contingent on all documents relating to the contracts with TVA be settled granting a term easement for the East Tower and a permanent easement to the Summer Place Complex.

A second resolution would appropriate \$1.6 million to the acquisition of the Summer Place Complex there via a permanent easement and a permanent easement to the Fritts Parking Lot.

Both resolutions are being requested by the Finance Department.

On the digital meeting format, Knox County Commission Chairman Hugh Nystrom said, "We will be sending out the agenda along with insight to Zoom process and everything is moving pretty quickly" of information going out to the commissioners.

When asked if he's been isolating, Nystrom said, "Other than taking food and water to my mother in-law, I have not been away from our house in about 10 days. I have spent a lot of time on phone calls."

The meeting will be aired on Community Television of Knoxville and streamed on their website, ctvknox.org, at 5 p.m. today.

CAC Emergency Response Fund to Help Mobile Meals, Seniors, and Families with Children

The Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee serves the citizens of Knox County from children to seniors. Now more than ever, they need community support to provide essential services to those in need. In addition to the monetary donations needed, CAC needs grocery store gift cards and gas cards. Those can be sent to P.O. Box 51650, Knoxville, TN 37950-1650 or dropped off curbside at 2247 Western Ave, Knoxville, TN 37921. Please call 865-546-3500 for curbside pick-up.

Donations will be used for store gift cards, groceries, gas cards, household hygiene items, and other necessities.

To donate to this fund, visit knoxseniors.org or knoxcac.org or mail a check for made out to CAC to the address above. If you are interested in volunteering, email sam.pohlot@knoxseniors.org or call the Office on Aging at 865-524-2786.

Knox County Schools unveils voluntary distance learning plan

By Ken Lay

In a specially called meeting, the Knox County Board of Education unveiled its plan for distance learning for its students while schools remain closed for approximately another month due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The plan is strictly voluntary for students, who are slated to return to school on April 24 after Governor Bill Lee requested extended closure following spring break for Knox County Schools.

"This is voluntary and it will not have a positive or negative on a student's grade," said Knox County Schools Assistant Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Jon Rysewyk. "Grades are frozen."

After nearly two hours of discussion with eight board members present, the board agreed to begin supplying work packets to students, with input from teachers, for students in grades K-8. The work will all be review material and Rysewyk said that the work will be distributed in three tiers (grades K-2, grades 3-5 and grades 6-8) and will deal exclusively in the core subjects of math, science, English and social studies. The meeting was held remotely and streamed on the Knox County Schools

website Thursday afternoon.

The work is solely intended to keep students engaged in learning while the schools remain close.

High school students can take part in distance learning online.

"At this point, we feel like going online with our high schools, because of the variety of programming, is the way to go," Rysewyk said.

The work packets for elementary and middle school students will be distributed online and at any of the 25 Knox County Schools meal distribution points. The school district also announced plans to make teachers available to teach lessons based on the packets. Those lesson sessions may be viewed on the district's website or on the Knox County Schools television station.

KCS superintendent Bob Thomas said that the packets and teaching sessions are meant only to keep students engaged in the learning process.

"Because we don't have the capabilities to offer online instruction for all students, we must follow federal guidelines concerning distance-learning initiatives," Thomas said. "Therefore, we cannot require

assignments of students during this closure because not all students have equal access, and some may require additional services that cannot be offered at home.

Many board members, including Patti Bounds, commended Thomas, Rysewyk and their teams for the work that they've done in devising the distance learning plan.

"I'd like to thank all the people for all the work that they've done behind the scenes," Bounds said. "We have 60,000 students in our district and we care about each and every one of them."

"I've seen other plans in other districts and I think ours is one of the best. In one district, they put together 800 packets and only 250 of them were picked up."

BOE Chair Susan Horn said that this time could be especially difficult for Knox County Schools due to the diversity of the districts.

"I want to commend everyone for their hard work," she said. "We have a diversity because we have rural, urban and suburban communities. That makes things unique for us because some districts only have one of those."

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