

# Giving back to KAT employees

By Mike Steely  
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"They are our front line people we don't think about. They provide an essential service," said Cameron Brooks of Realty Executives Associates and the Knox County Election Commission.

He was talking about Knoxville Area Transit employees. Brooks had been pondering how he might show them some appreciation and he called

Councilman Andrew Roberto. The two men talked about it and decided on a meal for the employees and followed through with the idea Friday.

Brooks and Roberto began raising funds on Facebook and contacted Yassin's Falafel House. "KAT Worker Appreciation Day" was announced and Friday at 11 a.m. Brooks and Roberto met at the restaurant at 706 Walnut Street to pick up individually wrapped and bagged

chicken or steak gyros and french fries.

Ventrice Hodge, vice president of the Amalgamated Transit Union, joined the two men in helping to bag the 200 lunches with restaurant owner Yassin Terou. The staff of the Falafel House spent many hours and effort to prepare and begin bagging the food.

"I know Yassin really wanted to give out to the community," Brooks said.

They worked to coordinate the meals with KAT's

Human Resources Office and delivered the meals to the KAT office on Magnolia Avenue to be given out to employees.

Hodge said the bags of food would be picked up by transit drivers as they report for their work shifts.

Brooks said that a fund raising effort to cover the cost of the food exceeded what was sought and the rain held off as they loaded two vehicles to deliver a free meal to the KAT workers.

# Absentee voting expanded to everyone

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Until last week voting by mail in Tennessee was permitted only for registered voters who were 60 years old or older, traveling or had physical conditions that qualified for appoint-

to let anyone who requests an absentee ballot to receive one. She ordered that state and local election commissions update their websites to let voters know how to request an absentee ballot.

Two weeks ago retiring Knox County Director of Elections Cliff Rodgers

election for the August 6th primary and local election. The election commission is also available by calling 865-215-2480.

In the election four years ago 880 absentee ballots were cast according to Cliff Davis, the new director of elections. He told The Focus Bridge that

# City Human Resources Department passes first reading

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Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon's push to create a Human Resources Department passed in a split vote Tuesday. Several citizens called into the Zoom meeting to speak for and against the measure but a 7-2 vote passed the creation of the new department on first reading at Tuesday's city council meeting.

Mayor Kincannon said she hopes the next city council meeting won't be via the internet but live. That meeting could see the second and final reading of the ordinance.

Dr. Vickie Hatfield, Civil Service Merit Board Director, remarked that the amended ordinance excluded employees and

creation of a new department, said the ordinance was "not written in a cooperative experience."

The 21-year employee also said the creation of a new Human Resources Department moves most of her duties to HR where they become the duties of one person appointed by the mayor.

Hatfield said the idea is "the most divisive" she has ever seen and that most of the city employees oppose it. The Civil Service Merit Board voted 3-2 against creation of the HR department.

However, the spokesman for the fire department and the past president of the Knoxville Fraternal Order of Police supported the creation. Mark Taylor said the current