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Knox Health Board mandates masks

Senior Writer steelym@knoxfocus.com

indoor businesses to flatten the Health surge of COVID-19 but the effort saw some resistance

Phase Two for the county. She County Board of Health voted to Deputy Law Director Myers owners, employees and customseemed the only one in charge Wednesday's meeting of the until June when the Knox County Knox County Board of Health saw Law Department forced her to masks being required in most seek approval of the Board of

an's efforts and accepted Gover-The board's involvement nor Bill Lee's "Tennessee Pledge" goes back to orders issued by campaign. Last week the number Jacobs, who voted "No." Dr. Martha Buchanan in March of COVID-19 cases surged and, in

public places, exempting statefinanced schools and churches.

All of the board members, led by Dr. Patrick O'Brien and Dr. The board then paused Buchan- James E. Shamiyeh, voted to approve the mask requirements except Knox County Mayor Glenn

The board's action was stronginstituting Phase One and then an emergency meeting, the Knox Iy opposed at the meeting by

require mask wearing in most. Morton who called the action "unconstitutional, vague and unenforceable.

> Not wearing a mask inside a public building could result in a misdemeanor charge and a \$50 fine or even jail time. Dr. O'Brien told the meeting he didn't want anyone to be charged and suggested issuing a warning. The ruling applies to business

The day before the board's ruling Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon issued a mask requirement for any city-owned or leased buildings

The order took effect Friday but just hours after Wednes day's ruling, Knox County Sheriff

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KCS Task Force meets again to discuss students' return in fall

By Ken Lay

The Knox County Schools Community Task Force had one final public meeting to discuss options for reopening schools on Monday, June 29

It was the second meeting and a follow-up to the initial meeting held on June 24 at the Sarah Simpson Professional Training Center

In the first meeting members of the task force, which is chaired by Dr. Jerry Askew of Alliance for Better Nonprofits, mulled through data collected from an online community survey on the Knox County Schools website. The task force members were ask to come up with questions based on 150 pages of information. The survey had 30,000 participants.

The questions presented by members of the task force resulted in creating even more questions about reopening Knox County Schools, which were closed in March, in the midst of the spring semester.

"We were asked to react to and study the data," Askew said. "We were asked to come up with questions, and those questions have led to more auestions.



Knox County Schools Executive Director of Student Supports Jason Myers addresses the district's Community Task Force at a meeting in South Knoxville last week. He discussed a multitude of issues including how to serve students with disabilities and heath protocols as the schools prepare to reopen in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

County Board of Education at Wednesday, July 8. That meeting will be held at 5 p.m. at

force's findings to the Knox to physical distancing protocols. The meeting will, however, be its work session meeting on streamed on the KCS website.

Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas will the Andrew Johnson Building. then make the decision on how

Askew will present the task. Attendance will be limited due to reopen the district schools at the board's regular session meeting on July 15.

> A wide array of topics was covered in last week's meeting.

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Masks, cameras, appointments at City Council

By Mike Steely Senior Writer steelym@knoxfocus.com

Tuesday's City Council meeting, following an hour-long discussion on KUB's future, saw Mayor Indya Kincannon address her recent order requiring anyone in a city building to wear a mask

The mayor noted that over the past two weeks cases of COVID-19 have doubled in the county and called that a "big uptick." The order applies to all city-owned or leased buildings and she said it applies not only to employees but anyone entering the buildings

"I don't have the explicit authority but everyone one should wear a mask as a common courtesy," Kincannon said, adding, "I want to lead by example. The mayor added that anyone entering a city building without a mask will be given one to wear

The order does not apply to children under 12 years old or people with a qualifying medical condition. She said the city would be putting signs up.

Later last week, Mayor Kincannon extended the mask order to all city buses and trollies. If riders don't have one they will be given a mask

She also said that a provider has been selected in the search for body cameras for the police department.

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Filling in the GAP

Grandparents As Parents take care of kids when Mom or Dad can't

By Bill Howard

Probably few would disagree ferent circumstances in which a nightmare. child can grow up and do well, the best environment to be raised involved parents.

has the luxury of living in such resource to help them. The pro- es and services," Van de Vate an arrangement. A number of gram - Grandparents As Par- said. "Before Covid-19 we had events or circumstances can limit, or outright prevent, a parent ty Action Committee's Office on meetings. Now we're doing a from being involved in the child's Aging. GAP's program manager weekly conference call meeting upbringing. Some children wind is Tracy Van de Vate. up in foster care. It's well known

a wide array of outcomes, rang- purpose of it is to support grandthat, while there are many dif- ing from being a God-send to a

ous family members, including, in is with two responsible and increasingly, grandparents. In that is raising a younger sibling Knox County, as in other places, because of all sorts of reasons." Of course, not every child such caregivers have a valuable ents - is a part of the Communi-"Grandparents As Parents

that the foster care system has started 20 years ago, and the parents and other relatives raising a family member as their Other kids wind up with vari- child," said Van de Vate. "It also could be an aunt, uncle, or sibling

> "We connect people to resourcactual in-person support group so that they can connect with

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Ms. Ermal Stanley on her porch June 24. Ms. Stanley – or "Oogie," a nickname her - has been a GAP client for five years. She's been raising her 14-year-old granddaughter for about ten years. "The meetings they have are so beautiful," she said. "You're there with other people who are in the same situation." Photo by Bill Howard.



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