

Local

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Official pushes for renovations at Adrian Burnett school



PHOTOS BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS/NEWS SENTINEL

Inna Slisher teaches ESL class on one side of a room that is being used by two teachers at Adrian Burnett Elementary School on April 17. Adrian Burnett is on the 2016-2020 capital plan, with \$4.5 million scheduled for renovations in the 2019 fiscal year.

Middle schools may be upstaging elementary needs

By Gerald Witt

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Knox County Commissioner Charles Busler wants a major upgrade to Adrian Burnett Elementary School's mobile classrooms and old construction.

Adrian Burnett is on the 2016-2020 capital plan, with \$4.5 million scheduled for renovations in the 2019 fiscal year. What Busler and others fear is that the money still won't be enough to fix all the issues there.

He characterized the school as being overlooked amid community outcries from Gibbs for a middle school after Schools Superintendent Jim McIntyre included a new Hardin Valley middle school in his capital plan but not one for Gibbs. The school board reinstated the Gibbs middle school plan. Now Knox County Commission must decide whether to fund it.

"My families here are not going to be that vocal," Adrian Burnett Principal Angela Harrod said.

McIntyre has another answer for the school, and several other elementary schools in the North Knox area, with a proposed \$21 million elementary school to open in 2019.

Busler, however, said he'd prefer something closer to the neighborhood, something that feels more like a community school.

"If this school was out west, this wouldn't be a problem," he said.

Board of Education member Patti Lou Bounds gave credit to McIntyre's idea for a unified north central elementary school, with a caveat.

"He's forward-thinking to come up with one way to solve all the needs, but I'm not sure one pathway will fix it," she said.

And Harrod said she's concerned the



Instructional assistant Judy Beeler teaches a small group in the cafeteria at Adrian Burnett Elementary School.

capital funds for Adrian Burnett could disappear.

"The school was placed on the capital plan, and keeps getting moved down," she said.

The school is more than 40 years old and sits near Halls. It has classrooms that were designed to be open — during a time when multiple open classrooms under one roof were popular among educators. Now those same classrooms have been walled off from each other, yet teachers can be heard from one classroom to the next.

The mobile units are equipped with



Dehumidifiers run day and night in the portable classrooms at Adrian Burnett Elementary School.

freestanding dehumidifiers the custodial staff must empty regularly.

There are no functional closets, except for one the size of a small coat room near the administrative offices. It contains pipes.

On a recent tour with Busler, Bounds and Harrod pointed out several needs. Busler pointed to the gaps around the doors, and what he called safety concerns around the small school campus.

Bounds, a former elementary educator, explained what she saw as barriers to effective education.

Harrod, well, she just gets by as best she can with the staff, students and resources. Her 64 staff members share meeting spaces and two restrooms. The 525 students have four restrooms as well, with a couple scattered in the mobile units Harrod calls "learning cottages."

Intervention lessons that target the lowest-performing students are held in hallways because there aren't any free class spaces available.

"We cannot hold any special events here," Harrod said, standing in the muggy, low-ceiling gymnasium on a rainy Wednesday.

Pet talks pushed a week in Knox

■ Commission also bumps resolution talk

By Gerald Witt

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Knox County Commission officials deferred discussion on a proposed animal welfare ordinance, and pushed a discussion item on honorary resolutions, but that doesn't mean commissioners were quiet on either matter.

Chairman Brad Anders said in a Monday commission work session that an alternative proposal came to his email for animal welfare.

"It will have some more detail in range of temperatures and things like that," Anders said, adding that he had not gotten the chance to review it himself.

Other commissioners had scant details on the proposal.

He told commissioners that he would forward the proposal to them this week.

"It's different in some ways and in some ways the same," he said.

A proposed ordinance that commissioners Jeff Ownby and Amy Broyles support would define what adequate shelter means for outside pets and stipulate they be brought under more substantial cover during freezing weather or extreme heat.

Broyles said the secondary proposal still may need to be checked with the county's law department.

"I don't know if this will be the case," she said.

Commissioners also deferred talks on rules and procedures for honorary resolutions from the work session until next week's legislative meeting.

The discussion comes after a resolution Broyles backed in March, which commission unanimously approved, that recognized women's groups in the county during Women's History Month.

Among those groups were the local chapter of Planned Parenthood, an abortion clinic, a roller derby team, the League of Women Voters of Knoxville/Knox County, and local chapters of both Republican and Democratic political groups, among others.

Broyles said she suspected the discussions are a result of that honorary resolution, which Knox County Mayor Tim Burnett vetoed.

"I'll just wait and see," Broyles said. "I know there are a lot of women upset with the response."

She said that some women in the audience were present Monday in case discussion happened sooner than expected.

"I want to see that commission embraces a diverse community," said Jamey Dobbs, a past president of the local League of Women Voters chapter. She added she was there as a regular citizen. "Does (commission) represent all constituents with a variety of viewpoints?"

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Blog: News and notes from government reporter Gerald Witt at knoxbeat.wordpress.com

Sansom Sports welcomes first athletes

■ Complex to open today for soccer matches

By McCord Pagan

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Starting today, the children of Emerald Youth will have a new place to play ball.

The Sansom Sports Complex, at 340 Dale Ave., is hosting its first soccer matches today as a new addition to the Emerald

Youth foundation's recreational space.

While sports activities are moving to the new center behind the Fort Sanders neighborhood, the complex still is being finished, with the ribbon-cutting set for an undetermined date in the summer, Emerald Youth spokesman John Crooks said.

The finished complex will feature four fields, three of which are synthetic grass, and a 4,000-square-foot multipurpose building for weight training, ticket

sales and concessions.

The new complex, along with a partnership with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, will help the group expand its sports programs beyond the 1,200 children currently are involved with Emerald Youth's club teams.

"This sports complex will be a game changer in the number of kids we can serve," Crooks said.

The construction of the project is a gift from Bill Sansom, CEO of H.T. Hackney Co., and his family.

"[The Sansom family] is making a big investment in our work," Crooks said.

Emerald Youth works with local churches in providing after-school activities such as academic support and Christian teaching to almost 2,000 inner-city Knoxville children each year.

"We want to grow the number of kids in our recreational sports, improve health, wellness and encourage choices in life to help them improve," Crooks said.

"We've seen sports help

these kids grow in all these areas."

Much of the group's work, like one-on-one tutoring after school or sports programs, are critical to the children's success in life, Crooks said.

"We really have seen it make a difference on thousands of kids," he said.

Support from the Knoxville community, such as with the 22nd annual Emerald Youth Prayer and Fundraising Breakfast on May 1, is necessary to the organization's outreach, Crooks said.