Farragut/ Knox County Schools Joint Education Relations Committee

Minutes from February 4, 2014

I. The meeting was called to order by Chair Littleton. Members present were Michael Singletary, Mark Littleton, Nancy Wentz, and Kristen Pennycuff-Trent, as well as Gary Palmer and Valerie Millsaps of the Town administration. Scott Bacon from Knox County Schools and Cherry Mashburn from Farragut Intermediate were also present as guests.

II. Minutes from the January 7 meeting were presented and Singletary moved to approve minutes. The motion was seconded by Wentz and approved unanimously by acclimation.

III. Special Guest Scott Bacon was introduced and Chair Littleton welcomed him back to the committee. Chair Littleton provided background on volunteer issue in Knox County schools. Mr. Bacon expressed his gratitude at being invited to the meeting and discussed the online portal for volunteers. Civicorp contracted with Knox County Schools to create a system where teachers can post opportunities and citizens or groups can go online and look at opportunities. Knox County updated procedure for volunteers to follow as of last year. Now is a four tiered system for volunteer clearance levels. Schools began sending in individuals right before the holidays. Knox County (KC) provides the financing for background checks. Speakers in class do not need a background check because they are under the supervision of a classroom teacher. Background checks are valid for six years.

a. Hardin Valley had large numbers of parents volunteering. Usually relating to chaperoning a club, team, etc..
b. Examples of requirements: not needed for bus ride with football team, but would be needed for DECA competition overnight trip with 15 students and a sponsor
c. Volunteer Registration login on school website (upper left hand corner). Knox County is encouraging all volunteers to register. Allows for tracking of organizations' participation as well.
d. Previously, most teachers were encouraged to post supervised opportunities because KC did not have a background check in place. Schools backed off on that because of security concerns, but now are encouraged to post again. Some may be classroom specific and some are school-wide. Some may have financial components and some may be time related.
e. Teachers may not be using it at this point. Communication with teachers, office staff, PTSA(and all affiliations), will be ongoing. Mrs. Mashburn spoke to the fact that teachers have just now been getting volunteer packets to parents. FIS volunteers have been working with students to prepare for upcoming tests, science lab, library, etc. She spoke about how volunteers were being used currently and needs she saw. She also mentioned the confidentiality aspect as well as the background checks.
f. Mr. Bacon spoke to the fact that volunteers at high schools are not utilized as much, but that the opportunities for specialized involvement are greater. Good opportunity to connect community with classes. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are also a good opportunity.

g. Littleton reminded us that we want to be careful not to give the impression that you must have a background check.
h. Mr. Bacon asked us to remind anyone we speak with to please check the school or school(s) that they want to work with on the online portal so that the schools can pull volunteers to contact. If volunteers don't select a school, it's difficult to find them.
i. Volunteer opportunities will be instantly emailed to teachers.
j. Singletary reminded the committee that we started with three community members that wanted to create a pool of available expertise to share with schools and then security issues arose. Should we resume conversations about creating a pool of volunteers that would supervise students on projects such as for VOLS for STEM and other related multi-week projects?
k. Mr. Bacon reminded us that the supervision of the volunteers by a KC employee would need to occur, perhaps with CTE teachers that are in the field during the summer. In the past KC had some projects where middle school students were sent with a teacher to a lab. Perhaps we could establish a connection to a staff person with school system to oversee the interaction with the business person.
l. Mr. Singletary asked if Mr. Bacon had any insight as to the possibility of getting the expertise into the schools. Mr. Bacon said he thought that the two schools (FHS and HVA) wouldn't have a problem, especially with the academy plan at HVA. It could be developed with senior portfolio project and the administration. Mr. Bacon agreed with Mr. Singletary that the summer components would have to be driven by the schools. Grant funds might be available to make connections between summer opportunities and work during academic year.
    i. Seniors have some autonomy in selecting an area of interest for their internship and portfolios.
m. Littleton commented on the uniqueness of the talents of the citizenry in our area and that we should tap into the expertise presented. However, he questioned whether or not the schools really desired that input. Mr. Bacon reminded us that the academies at HVA have connections with almost every area of industry and service. FHS also has important science connections.
n. Littleton reminded us that we've had more than one person approach the committee about getting experts into a classroom, but teachers seem to have a large amount of curriculum to teach in a short amount of time. Mr. Bacon talked about the non-profits' educational programs and how the system had a board that approved certain areas. Usually the teachers that were using those speakers were classes that did not have end of course tests.
o. Trent asked if volunteers could be asked to join a PLC meeting to discuss Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and class objectives before the volunteer presentation. Mr. Bacon said that they could, but the invitation would have to come from the teachers and administration of the schools.
p. Littleton asked if there was an area of weakness in general in the system that would benefit from volunteers. Mr. Bacon said there's really not one area. We might have five

different areas. Mr. Bacon said he didn't mind to ask each of the five principals to identify a singular area of need.

q. Mrs. Mashburn stated that they do have lots of volunteer help at FIS. Littleton stated that he recognizes that some schools like FIS have lots of volunteers, but that as a system we don't seem to have volunteers in the schools as evidenced by the individuals who have approached the ERC.
r. Mr. Bacon discussed that the STEM academy is a county wide initiative, and it is a regional academy that would allow students from surrounding counties through STEM Spark. The STEM Academy has lots of experts from UT, but they're close in proximity to the school. Littleton reiterated that as a committee we have Knox County in our name and we are not prohibited from promoting volunteers in any area that would benefit the whole community.
s. Mrs. Mashburn stated that some volunteers for their science labs are from Y12. Usually these people are parents of students in her class. She reminded us that volunteers usually are there because they want to be with their children. Mrs. Mashburn reminded the committee that the essence of a good volunteer is that they can bring the information to the level of the children. She said that she does have time for volunteers because their work goes along with the curriculum. Volunteers are solicited as they are parents. Mrs. Mashburn's perceptions of the website are that it might be scary at first, but that if it's going to help her she will take time to sit down and learn it. She spoke about a particular parent who worked at Y12 who helped greatly with science lab because he had children in her room in two different years.
t. Mr. Bacon said that there is a text box on the portal where teachers can specify topics, times, etc…
u. Littleton reminded us that we need to make sure that we can provide a connection for the experts and those who want to volunteer and the needs of the schools.
v. Mr. Bacon discussed the success of Project Grad and Dogwood Elementary using the volunteer portal. Littleton commented that FIS seemingly has repeatedly been receptive to the idea of volunteers in schools. Instead of working with all five schools, what if we take 1-2 schools as a test case? Mr. Bacon suggested that we work with FMS too. He will contact the principals and see if they can do an inservice where teachers create their profiles.
w. Singletary asked if we needed to get back on the idea of creating a list of people who want to volunteer in specific interest areas. Littleton reminded us that the volunteer portal does that. Trent recommended that we advertise the portal and Littleton followed up by saying that if we have the teacher requests, then we can revisit the pairing.
x. Littleton called for closing questions or comments and thanked Mr. Bacon and Mrs. Mashburn for attending.

IV. Littleton reminded us that we didn't get to all of our agenda. Wentz asked the committee to read the Golden Anchor Awards handout describing criteria, process, etc… We will read

and take under advisement for top of the agenda for next month. Littleton reminded us not to forget to work on items for the Farragut Life publication on the schools.

V. Meeting adjourned. Motion by Wentz seconded by Singletary.