

Farragut/ Knox County Schools Joint Education Relations Committee

Minutes from June 3, 2014

- I. The meeting was called to order by Chair Littleton. Members present were Michael Singletary, Mark Littleton, Nancy Wentz, Julia Craze, and Kristen Pennycuff-Trent, as well as Jennifer Hatmaker of the Town administration. Guest Alan Sloane was also present.
- II. The minutes from February 4 and May 6 were presented and Wentz moved to approve them. Motion was seconded by Craze. Littleton asked that the committee take the minutes to review our tasks and make sure we're on track.
- III. Chair Littleton asked if anyone had additions to the agenda. Singletary asked what the impact would be of the 1.4 million tax deficit and asked if it would impact the schools' funding. The committee decided to leave the agenda as it stands and a few opinions were shared about the funding situation. Littleton asked if Singletary would like him to ask the administration about the support for schools. He expressed that he would like the Town to know that we would hope that it wouldn't come to reducing the amount allotted to the schools and that he thought it was so great that the Town had supported the schools financially.
- IV. Chair Littleton reported on discussion of adding a more robust education section in the Town Report. Chair Littleton reviewed the process that had led to this point and results were as follows: In the next annual report we think we can get some additional copy (1/4 to ½ page) in the hard copy report. The Administrator suggested that we seek buy-in from Knox County Schools' public relations department. Increasing the content is difficult in the 2014-2015 report, which is why the general offer is ¼ to ½ range. In future years it is negotiable with the knowledge that there will be a direct cost associated with the report. We have to add four page increments. The administration requested some guidance from ERC on tone and purpose of wanting to include more information in the report; which has previously consisted of discussion on attracting families and businesses to Farragut. Our previous conversations focused on our desire to promote that Farragut is a great place to live, to have children in schools, and to bring a business. There is an understanding that the Town would support adding pages to the Town's website about the schools with hyperlinks to schools' individual websites. Even in hard copy the Administrator suggested that we could list a link to the additional pages on the Town site to give more information.
 - a. Chair Littleton opened the floor for discussion. Craze asked if the report was distributed to interested businesses or individuals from other organizations such as the Chamber. No one in the committee knew. Chair Littleton asked Sloane if he had seen any copies of the report around. He said he thought that he recalled Sue Stuhl saying it was mailed to residents in Farragut, but it is unknown as to whether or not they are distributed in any other capacity.
 - b. Singletary asked who would write the copy and who would be in charge. Littleton reported that the Administrator suggested several individuals within the Town government who were already working on the publication; however they would want to

know the tone, audience, purpose, etc. Littleton reminded the committee that we're in the prime time for working on this item. Wentz found in notes that the process began in July. Littleton suggested a work session or subcommittee to work on the task with the Town administration to make this a reality. Singletary suggested a statement of what we hope to accomplish to identify, celebrate the goodness of the schools and to let the Town writers figure out what to do this. Wentz commented that she would love to see the brag page on the FHS site added to the website of the Town. Littleton demonstrated the formatting and discussion ensued about the fonts, headings, etc. Littleton concurred with Singletary that we not try to micromanage the Town writers. Singletary suggested that we draft a paragraph description of what we hope to accomplish and let the Town writers work it out. Littleton asked if we needed a structured paragraph or just phrases and words.

- c. Committee members suggested several phrases including: heritage of the schools, the quality of the schools, community/school relations and community connection, educational results, rankings within Knox County, TN, the nation, recreation but where is school? School is important to us.
 - i. Even though they are Knox Co schools they are an integral part of any community and especially Farragut. They still make a difference to people moving here. It's part of the community.
 - ii. The reason why we want it included is we want to brag on our schools.
 - d. Chair Littleton reminded us that this is a two-step process: hard copy deadline and the website which could be done in developmental stages. Do we want to focus just on hard copy and then talk about web pages when we come back? Littleton suggested that Trent box out a section in the minutes to clearly see the delineated draft via email for clarity. We'll take a week to add other ideas, and then we'll deliver it to the Town administration for our reasoning for inclusion. We will come back and talk more about website.
- V. Teacher Awards Discussion: Craze said that she spoke with Danny Trent and asked about the criteria for teacher awards there. He said he looks for ultra professionals that sponsor committees and do other things, listens to teacher/peer input, and reviews student test scores. Littleton reviewed that we voted to encourage BOMA to fund \$10,000 for two teacher awards at each of the five schools. We need a memo to BOMA in time for the second reading of the budget, which may be June 12. We need that memo by noon this Thursday. The memo needs to explain to BOMA why we are asking for the set-aside in the budget, it doesn't necessarily have to have all the criteria. However, topics are intertwined and we may need to hint as to the criteria. Must converge about why we're doing it to even get a shot at it this year. At the second budget reading, we are all welcome to attend as citizens. One of us could even sign in and comment. We would need to get the memo to the Town Administrator to get it in the packet for the meeting but we don't have to go to read it to them. However, we could encourage the point. Singletary reminded us that we have a council champion, Alderman Ron Honken, and he suggested that we consider it. Singletary asked if there were alternatives to money that would be meaningful such as

prominent meetings where teachers could be recognized. Littleton said that there are other things that can be done. Singletary commented that he didn't want to ask for something that wasn't there. Littleton reminded us that we have formally voted to go before BOMA to ask for this. Singletary said that all of us are in favor of rewarding teachers, but doesn't want to keep going to the well. Discussion ensued about how the amount of support from BOMA increased from \$10,000 each to \$22,000 each (needs list increase and then exclusion of bus service). We did not ask for an increase of money, although we were behind the needs list. At least two members present don't think we've ever gone as a committee to ask for money from BOMA.

- a. Craze and Wentz shared language used in Farragut Foundation's awards. The reason the ERC would want to promote this idea is so that the Town itself can encourage great teachers. Trent offered to draft a memo using language from previous discussions found in the minutes and in the Farragut Foundation awards.
- b. Singletary reminded us that he feels it might not be feasible and we could lose credibility. Littleton said we could go back to Alderman Honken and ask his opinion on the feasibility of this idea at this time. Singletary asked if we could do a memo to the Town Administrator on his perception of feasibility. Littleton reminded us that we were approached by Alderman Honken and we could now go back with our proposal and see how he feels. At the same time, the Town Administrator is engaged in the process of budget so maybe between the two we can get some advice on timing and success. Wentz suggested that we could always drop down to one award per each school instead of two per school. Singletary reminded us that he would rather know the outcome before we get too extended. Littleton asked if someone wanted to move to amend our previous vote and follow up with the Alderman who suggested the topic. Wentz said she thought we should move forward and we should consult with the Alderman as an aside. Littleton pointed out that we could always withdraw the memo if we didn't think it would get support. Littleton reminded us of our charter to help BOMA better interact with KC schools that serve our community. In this case recognizing that we have been told that KC teacher salaries are slightly under salaries for the region and we know that this year it's very unlikely that teachers will get even a cost of living agreement, we as a committee, decided that the way we could encourage teachers is to recognize that the Town really appreciates what they do when they teach here and serve our kids in Farragut, even if they don't live here. Littleton also reminded us that there are other political complications, but it doesn't change that we're trying to help the Town find ways to interact and encourage the Town administration and the teachers. Littleton also pointed out that we're giving BOMA lots of latitude in what the criteria might be for this award. Craze reminded us that if we don't ask we won't ever know. Committee members discussed this at length with statement such as: This can get very specific about things that the Town can decide that we value and there are teachers out there that are doing that and we want to encourage them in doing that. Remember what you asked us to do? Here's one thing that you can do as BOMA to reach out to these teachers in our community whose salaries are slightly below, maybe there are some

unique things that they value that we haven't thought of. We're following our mission: telling the BOMA ways that we can build stronger links to the schools. Littleton reminded us of the memo that the Town administrator needs. Can draft: Trent will do and get done earlier. We will take the draft and do email comments to meet the deadline. Email is for fine tuning the language not to move or vote.

- VI. Monthly agenda development change: Littleton thanked Jennifer for her support and asked that we feed our comments to the secretary for agenda items and the secretary will forward those to the secretary. Littleton asked for discussion and Singletary commented that we need to be reminded to do that.
- VII. Meeting adjourned by motion by Wentz and seconded by Craze.