



Observer Corps Report

Observer: Margaux Cowan-Banker

Meeting Observed: Knoxville City Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday January 20, 2026

Agenda <https://knoxvilletn.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=3894>

Video Recording

Three Main Observations:

1. Resolution 12-k *“authorizing the Mayor to execute a Second Amendment to C-24-0416, an agreement with Axon Enterprise, Inc., to provide additional goods and services to the Knoxville Police Department in support of the City’s existing Axon Systems at an additional cost not to exceed \$9,407,699.82 (Requested by Police Department)”* passed 8-1. Councilmen Grant and Thomas as well as Councilwoman Parker had questions for Chief of Police, Paul Noel about the use of drones, which he stated are only used in response to emergencies and cannot, by state law, be used to surveil (Freedom from Surveillance Act). Councilwoman Amelia Parker insisted that approving such a large sum item warranted public information sessions/workshops which hadn’t been held. Chief Noel stated the media had adequately covered the topic and the public had been adequately informed.
2.) Resolution 12-o, *“authorizing the Mayor to execute any and all documents to award a total amount not to exceed \$60,000.00 in Empower Knox Youth Mental Health grants to provide support and programming for youth and young adults to six community-based organizations in the City. (Requested by Office of Community Safety and Empowerment)”* was postponed two weeks on an 8-1 vote. The majority of the council decided they’d like more time to learn about the 6 recipients, the selection process and the determining factors of how the money was divided between the recipients. Councilwoman Amelia Parker disagreed that postponement was necessary. Her reasoning was that council had swiftly approved the aforementioned 12-k, which dealt with a much larger sum, and had declined to postpone it for further public input.
3. Proposed ordinance 13-r, *“An Ordinance approving the request of Dickerson, LLC for an amendment to the South City Sector Plan from Low Density Residential to South Waterfront Mixed Use District Type 2 for property located at 1137 Simpson Street, leaving any and all special purpose land use classifications unchanged. (Planning staff recommended approval; Planning Commission Approved 13-0) (File No. 12-A-25-SP) (Council District 1) (Requested by Knoxville-Knox County Planning)”*, was denied by a vote of 7-2. Councilwoman Karyn Adams specifically cited concerns of constituents over the slippery slope nature of rezoning to mixed use and the long term effects that could wrought on the neighborhood. Two individuals from the public made comments on this item. See below.

Feature Evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Meeting started on time?	X		6:00 p.m. on the dot
All members present?	x		
Members attentive?	x		Not all council members engaged in discussion but all appeared to pay attention and follow the course of the meeting appropriately.
Did members come prepared to discuss agenda items?	x		As best I could tell. As mentioned above, not all council members engaged in discussion or discussion at length but all appeared to pay attention and follow the course of the meeting appropriately.
Agenda posted 72 hours prior to meeting?	x		
Agenda items clearly described what was to be discussed?	x		
Adequate opportunity given for public input?	x		<p>Minimal public participation was observed at this meeting.</p> <p>Mathew Thompson of Dickerson, LLC spoke to the development he would be overseeing (townhouses) if item 13-r (mentioned in highlights) was approved.</p> <p>Drew Harper, VP of Yes Knoxville spoke in favor of approving item 13-r as he saw rezoning to “multi use” as a step towards overall progress for Knoxville–(it reduces sprawl, lowers carbon emissions via more walkability, grows tax base on existing infrastructure)</p> <p>No one spoke at the public forum.</p>
Was there an appearance that some action items were discussed in closed rather than open session?		x	

Was background information available to the public?			This one is difficult to answer. I felt I had the information I needed but councilwoman Parker was very adamant that the public deserved more opportunity to weigh in on and be further informed of the details pertaining to item 12-k (mentioned above)
Facilities adequate (room size, lighting, ventilation, speakers, audible, ADA accessible?)	x		

Were there any issues on the agenda relevant to LWV positions or programs? View the League's [National](#), [State](#), and [LWVKKC](#) policy positions.

LWVKKC Policy Positions: Childcare, Land Use, Health, Homeless/Mentally Ill Persons, Urban Forestry, Use of School Facilities by Communities, Teacher Recruitment & Retention

League Position	Issue
Land use	An Ordinance approving the request of Dickerson, LLC for an amendment to the South City Sector Plan from Low Density Residential to South Waterfront Mixed Use District Type 2 for property located at 1137 Simpson Street, leaving any and all special purpose land use classifications unchanged. (Planning staff recommended approval; Planning Commission Approved 13-0) (File No. 12-A-25-SP) (Council District 1) (Requested by Knoxville-Knox County Planning)

Do you recommend League action on any of these issues? No

Other notes/concerns?

- The meeting had low overall attendance by the public.
- There was a contentious air between Councilwoman Amelia Parker and the mayor and the council in general surrounding items 12-k and 12-o

Mayor/Council Member Announcements:

- -Mayor's report highlighted the ribbon cutting of Lumen Flats (18 units of housing for young people aging out of the foster care system), the reopening of the Gay Street Bridge and a reading of a proclamation stating KPD is fully staffed for the first time since 2014.
- -Karyn Adams highlighted the new South Knox Art Trail which will run from Kerns to Ijams via an old rail bed and thanked Parks & Rec for their attention to Vestal Park traffic issues.
- -Nathan Honeycutt took a moment to acknowledge the passing of Natalie Haslam and to highlight the success of West Hills advocates for safer walking paths in getting their path plan implemented.

