



Observer Corps Report

Observer: Jane Skinner

Meeting Observed: Knox Co. Board of Education - Called Meeting

Meeting Date: 2/5/26

Agenda – Consideration of a Resolution to Request the Tennessee Education Commissioner Decide the Waiver Request of Wilberforce Academy of Knoxville to Operate a Religion Public Charter School.

Video Recording

Three Main Observations:

1. Public speaker Lance McCold read board members their oath of office.
2. Kat Bike made a motion to postpone the resolution indefinitely. Motion failed – 4 yes, 3 no, 2 recused. Returned to the original resolution. Wright moved to vote; Morgan seconded. Final vote 3 yes (Morgan, Wright, and Kristy) 3 no (Templeton, Fontenot-Ridley, and Bike) 1 pass (Butler), 2 recused themselves (Henderson and Triplett). Original resolution failed.
3. Wilberforce Academy hasn't even applied and missed the deadline. d

Notes:

Only one item on the agenda for the Called Meeting.

Mr. Dupler (Law Director) provided background information on the resolution, explaining that active litigation is usually not discussed publicly, however he explained the school board is taking proper steps under state law and asking the State Dept. of Education to address the matter. Law department wants to defend the lawsuit to the best of its ability.

Ms. Bike confirmed that Wilberforce Academy didn't submit an application. She expressed that the board is doing work on behalf of an organization that hasn't even taken time to complete an application.

Ms. Fontenot-Ridley asked about if state grants a waiver, what happens next.

Ms. Kristy asked if it comes back to the board, it comes back on the merits of the application. Mr. Dupler confirmed this, but said that because the application deadline has passed, the organization couldn't apply until next year.

Ms. Templeton asked several questions about if Wilberforce requested a waiver. Feels the board is being bullied through the lawsuit by doing presumptive work. Wilberforce started with a lawsuit. Can't support pandering to this kind of work around.

Rev. Butler expressed concern that if the waiver is granted, this sets a precedent for organizations to file a lawsuit to get what they want. Struggle with the why the resolution because the board doesn't have the authority to grant the application.

Ms. Morgan believes passing a resolution strengthens the school boards defense in the lawsuit.

No other board members commented.

Feature Evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Meeting started on time?	X		Started at 3:30 p.m.
All members present?	X		
Members attentive?	X		
Did members come prepared to discuss agenda items?	X		
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		
Was there an appearance that some action items were discussed in closed rather than open session?			
Was background information available to the public?			
Facilities adequate (room size, lighting, ventilation, speakers, audible, ADA accessible)?			