



Observer Corps Report

Observer #2

Meeting Observed: Knox County Commission

Meeting Date: April 27, 2026

Agenda:

https://public.destinyhosted.com/agenda_publish.cfm?id=56691&mt=ALL&get_month=4&get_year=2026&dsp=ag&ag=5079&ln=91265#nothing

Video Recording:

<https://archive.org/details/co-com-r-267-260427>

Three Main Observations:

1. Lack of clarity on issues between Knox County Sheriff's Office, the Bridge to Safety program, and the Family Justice Center took up about 90 minutes of back and forth between speakers and Commissioners, but still went unresolved. The decision of what group will receive Victims Assistance Assessment monies is postponed until more preparation can be done.
2. "Recognition of Right to Self-Defense on Knox County Owned Property" passed on first reading after being amended on the fly, as Commissioners were unsure of how the ordinance would actually be enforced and whether there was a realistic need for an ordinance to fine lessees of Knox County properties for unwittingly posting incorrect signage regarding firearms.
3. Some public speakers were concerned about Commissioner Durrett's post about crossover voting, and some spoke against Commissioner Fox's planned presentation in which he plans to argue that Islam is incompatible with Western civilization.

Feature Evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Meeting started on time?	Yes		5:01 pm
All members	Yes		
Members attentive?	Yes		

Did members come prepared to discuss agenda items?		Mixed	See notes below on R-26-4-904 and O-26-4-103
Agenda posted 72 hours prior to meeting?	Yes		
Agenda items clearly described what was to be discussed?			
Adequate opportunity given for public input?		Mixed	<p>Members of the public who had signed up were allowed to speak for a minimum of 3 minutes.</p> <p>Although Commissioner Fox's "March Madness" presentation (to describe Islam as incompatible with Western civilization) was deferred to a future meeting, some members of the public still spoke on that topic. Commissioner Fox's tone toward speakers who disagreed with him was so discourteous that Commissioner Oster intervened to remind him that he was speaking to citizens. Commissioner Fox attempted to debate speakers on their knowledge of Islam, rather than engaging with the content of what the speakers had shared.</p> <p>Multiple members of the public spoke about crossover voting. Some were concerned about a social media post by Commissioner Durrett (Democrat) stating that she votes in Republican primaries and encourages others to do the same. Others reiterated that in Tennessee, voters do not register as members of any party.</p>
Was there an appearance that some action items were discussed in closed rather than open session?		No	
Was background information available to the public?		Mixed	See note below on R-26-4-904.
Facilities adequate (room size, lighting, ventilation, speakers, audible, ADA accessible)?	Yes		

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
League of Women Voters of Tennessee - “Electoral Processes”	https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/lwvtn/pages/47/attachments/original/1621308017/Electoral_Process.pdf?1621308017 This position supports the “standardization of polling place procedures,” and public speakers mentioned seeing new signage and language at the polls during this primary, which may cause confusion and uncertainty. This position also supports the “governing of all primaries by state statute” but does not directly address crossover voting or party membership.
League of Women Voters of Tennessee - “Election Systems”	https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/lwvtn/pages/47/attachments/original/1621308016/Election_Systems.pdf?1621308016 This position supports promoting competitive elections and minimizing “wasted” votes. One reason often cited for crossover voting is to not “waste” a vote in one party’s primary when the only candidates in that party are unopposed in the primary, or when that party does not even have candidates running for certain offices.

Other notes/concerns?

R-26-4-904

Commissioners seemed unaware of just how complex the issues between Knox County law enforcement, Bridge to Safety, and Family Justice Center were, and not fully aware of the legal implications or community impact of diverting Victims Assistance Funds from the Family Justice Center to the Bridge to Safety program. About 90 minutes were spent with speakers from both groups sharing different perspectives and disagreements, while the Commissioners tried to get to the bottom of interpersonal conflicts and to determine what the actual operational, programmatic differences are between the groups.

Clear background information for why funding would be diverted from Family Justice Center to the Bridge to Safety Program has not been made available to the public. There was little clarity on the Knox County Sheriff’s Office’s prior involvement in Family Justice Center board meetings or the issues that led to a rift and the formation of the Bridge to Safety program. Commissioner Jackson mentioned reviewing minutes of past board meetings, and Commissioner Oster mentioned meeting with individuals from the Bridge to Safety program for insight. However, there was still much confusion and differing stories about what transpired in Board meetings, emails, and in the Family Justice Center office spaces.

Ultimately, R-26-4-904 was postponed until both groups can sit down and workshop with Commissioners, so Commissioners can be more prepared before the resolution is revisited.

O-26-4-103

This ordinance ultimately passed as amended on first reading. The ordinance was amended during the meeting to limit the maximum possible fine and allow a number of days from time of notification in writing by the Law Director’s office for lessees of Knox County owned properties to remove signage that violates State law regarding the carry of firearms. Prior to being amended, during the meeting, it appeared that the actual implementation of this ordinance had not been defined. Commissioners did not know who would be responsible for notifying lessees that they were in violation, until Deputy Law Director Mike Moyers confirmed that the Law Director’s office could do that.

Commissioner Jay asked whether a County ordinance was even necessary for the Law Director’s office to notify a lessee that they were in violation of State law, which Deputy Director Moyers confirmed was not necessary. Other Commissioners noted that the ordinance codifies a penalty to something that has not been

identified as an existing problem; the only instances the Commissioners are aware of when a lessee has violated this were honest misunderstandings that were promptly corrected by removing inaccurate signage.

The Fiscal Note for the ordinance states that there is no fiscal impact. However, as Commissioner Rawls pointed out, most lessees of Knox County buildings are other Knox County government agencies, and fining County agencies for a violation of this ordinance clearly would have a fiscal impact on the County. Even for non-Knox County government lessees, the possible court orders and litigation that could be required to enforce the ordinance would cost the County.