

Fifth Re-Zoning Meeting

Location: Holston Middle School

Date: 1-24-2017

Attendance: 200 +

Comments from Community:

- Reverend John Butler estimates that 300-500 students currently enrolled at Holston Middle will be re-zoned for the new Gibbs Middle. He stated two overall concerns: the under-utilization of local urban schools, and the closing of one or more Middle Schools in order to fill the new ones being built. He would also like to see KCS send all students to the closest school within their community.
- Seth Grossman from the Shannondale community stated that over 100 families had met, and that while they were happy for Gibbs, they did not want to lose students and should not be “ripped apart” as a community in order to fill the new Gibbs Middle School. Mr. Grossman cited the long and rich history that his community had, and the investments that multiple community members had made financially in order to make its schools successful. They have one of the only self-supported STEM programs and did not want to see that feeder pattern be broken up.
- Shawna Hibbens stated that when the new Gibbs Middle School opens her twins would be 8th graders and that would be very unfair to the extra-curricular activities if some group members stay and some go. She would like to see KCS open Gibbs Middle with 6th and 7th grades only.
- Mrs. Butler, a member of the NAACP Executive Committee, and one of the persons filing the current OCR complaint, spoke about how the lawsuit was not an afterthought, but purposefully and thoughtfully done. She stated that she was standing up for her community - just as others in the room were standing up for theirs. She also stated if research had been done up front, the problem would not exist today. She asked the current KCS Administration to think of all children, instead of a select few and to specifically think of the children on the East side.

- Kasey Engle lives in the Gibbs community, but would like the option to stay at Holston and complete her children's schooling there.
- Rachel Harris student(s) currently attend Gibbs Elementary. She would like to see them finish at Gibbs Middle and Gibbs High.
- A Representative of the NAACP, 3rd Vice President, stated that she was a public servant, who worked with children and was tired of seeing kids pulled out of their neighborhoods to be bused to other communities. This did not allow them to play sports or have extracurricular activities, because there was no bus to bring them home after practice. She also stated that there was not a "feeder" school in the urban community. She felt that the Hardin Valley Middle School was justified by growth, but that the Gibbs Middle School was not because on the East side of town, many schools were under filled. She also stated that this was the 2nd OCR complaint against racial disparity. She predicted that we would lose two other middle schools in place of the two that were being built at \$70 million. *(Russ Oaks stated that there had been no discussion on closing schools.)*
- Rachel from the Gibbs community has daughter at Gibbs Elementary School, and one daughter at Holston, in the 7th grade. She felt that they had plenty of friends no matter where they were zoned to. She was grateful that we were trying to keep kids in their community, since she was having a difficult time with transporting her students to two different communities each day.
- Joseph Smith, a Pastor from Lonsdale, asked if it was the standard to build a school within a community. If so, then he would like to see that for all students in all communities. He cautioned that he often heard what people said, but seeing what they do is sometimes different.
- One parent stated that she loved both Gibbs and Holston. She asked if they wanted to stay at one school outside of the "grandfathering clause" what options were available. *(Russ Oaks spoke about the transfer program. He stated that 70-80% that requested a transfer received it. He also stated that 11% are out of zone currently, due to transfers.)*
- Parent of twins that plan to attend Holston next year stated that she lived 11 miles from Holston and 11 miles from Gibbs. Students that already are at a school should get to stay in that school regardless of the rezoning. She

felt that the Gibbs community did not welcome her and her family and she wanted to remain at Holston.

- Clarita Buffalo sits on the Board of Town Hall East. She is also a resident of Holston Hills. She would like to see Holston made into a STEM Middle School to help attract outside students.
- Cynthia Finch lives in Holston and said that if all things were equal, she believes 300-400 students would be taken from Holston and rezoned for the new Gibbs Middle School. She suggested that KCS leave all students where they are and not rezone at all. She said that KCS needed to consider other alternatives for the low capacity schools. “They can have students in the daytime, but serve as community type centers, or other uses in the evening to help sustain the school.”
- Caroline, a teacher for 38 ½ years asked if we were going to rezone high schools. She stated that students that were bused to other communities did not have the opportunity to play sports because of the lack of transportation. She also stated that if you can’t bus them to Holston, you shouldn’t bus them out of Holston either.
- Debra Porter of NAACP mentioned several communities that had congruent elementary, middle and high schools, while the inner city areas had multiple feeder patterns. She stated that rezoning forced urban areas to lose their history and that often times they took the brunt of re-zoning.
- Kimberly, the mother of a 1st grade student at Shannondale bought a house and moved into a zone so that her daughter could remain with her pre-school friends. She felt that KCS should keep the focus on kids remaining with their friends. She also stated that Middle School is very rough age and environment for students to deal with making new friends. She felt that her child was being punished for Gibbs getting a new Middle School.
- Tomma Battle has a total of 15 kids (some are adopted)! She stated that her kids were zoned for multiple schools and that it was hard to be involved in schools that were not in your community and that a lot of people had hurt feelings over being put in this situation. She also stated that historically, African Americans and minorities were bused more than any other groups.

- *Buzz interjected that he planned to move as few people as possible and to protect families and neighborhoods. He also said that parents would have liberal usage of “grandfathering” and transfers.*
- Christina Shipley has been through rezoning at Shannondale already. She asked that we take kids with disabilities into special consideration. The parents of students with disabilities need their community support. She also stated that she had transportation issues.
- Sherry Hensley, Principal of Chilhowee Intermediate, spoke about the original OCR complaint and wanted to know what our “transition plans” were going to be after the re-zoning and requested that we make it as positive as possible.
- City Councilman Nick Della Volpe lives in the Holston Hills area. He stated that schools are very important to people’s decision on where to locate and that we had lost lots of people to west Knoxville because that’s where the growth is and therefore new schools. He felt it was very important to have good schools in every area of Knox County.
- Jeff Graham lives in the Shannondale Community and wanted to state his concern that once a decision was made, as far as re-zoning that all of the KCS transparency would disappear. He asked what assurances that the public would have that this would not happen. *Russ Oaks answered his concern by stating that once the re-zoning was completed, we would be bringing it back to the public for their input, and then it would go to the School Board, which are all open meetings for their final approval.*
- Reverend Butler, President of the NAACP Knox Branch made the following statement: The organization was no longer as concerned with avoiding the creation of racial and demographic disparities. The greatest disparity facing their community today is busing. He wants “top notch” schools in every community and for urban students to stay in their community schools.
- Ms. Lutton, Principal at Holston Middle, made an impassioned speech regarding the difference between community schools and school communities. She wants Holston to be part of a feeder system for both Elementary and High Schools. She wants to be part of a smaller pattern- that was established, and not multiple ones. Her overall goal is that this re-zoning not make Holston a “fractured community”.