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MENIFEE COUNTY

School District continues to wrangle with food costs

WILDCAT DEN CHILDCARE PLANS DISCUSSED

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During last Thursday's regular March Menifee County Board of Education meeting, district officials discussed their ongoing efforts to reign in food service expenses and to open the district's first child care facility.

Finance Officer Lorri Bartley delivered the monthly Treasurer's Reports. She noted that Food Services has a negative \$100,000 last month, and she said she expected the entire-of-the-fiscal year total to be a negative \$33,000.

She said she and her staff have implemented a lot of changes and have gone through the Food Services budget line-by-line. "We are analyzing everything, and we have a plan of attack."

Bartley noted last month that food prices have been "astronomical" for school meals, but the district has kept the same tasteful, nutrition meals in place for the students and has looked at other items such as reusable plates and utensils as well as ways to reduce trash waste expenses.

Supt. Spencer added that he had spoken with neighboring districts. "We are much better than what our neighbors are," he said. He said they are also working on encouraging more kids to eat school meals and are looking to increase participation in the district's summer meals program.

Bartley said she estimates the district's end-of-year balance will be

\$638,000, of which 539,489 is in the General Fund.

Supt. Spencer said he is optimistic that the Food Services negative balance can be turned around before the end of the Fiscal Year in June.

Assistant Supt. Joshua Kincaid delivered monthly reports on instruction, Botts Early Learning Center, as well as an update on the district's prospective child care facility, the Wildcat Den, also located at Botts.

He said the Wildcat Den faces barriers, including staff-student ratios. For infants, there is a ratio of 1 staff member for every 5 students, and a 10 to 2 ratio for classrooms. He said they will have to find funding to make it possible to have this level of staffing, and he said there is some concern of having only two staff on hand to handle 10 infant age children. Kincaid said they are currently looking for grant fund to help with supplemental expenses, but they also want to keep tuition affordable for parents.

Kincaid said there are currently 17 prospective full-time students and 14 part-time students. Of those, 10 are infants, and 7 are 1- to 2-year-olds.

Board member Brenda Evans said she had worked in Early Start, and they had a 1 to 4 ratio at their facility, and they had to have more staff for supervision of the infants.

Board member Elaine Martin asked if staff members had to have any certifications. Kincaid said they have to have state-mandated training, but no degrees are required. He also said

the Den's director, Jerica Blankenship, is currently recruiting staff.

Kincaid also shared a video regarding instruction in Menifee County schools.

Menifee Central Principal Kelli Abney gave a principal update. She said there over 300 people in attendance at Open House and over 250 people present at the Showcase of Learning. At least 64 kids were registered for Kindergarten next fall, with registration still ongoing the night of the meeting. Board member Julia Maness praised the Showcase. Supt. Spencer delivered the high school update, noting that ACT testing had been completed. High School graduation is set for May 23, with location and time to be determined.

About half-way through the meeting, board members recessed to host a public forum for the current update to the District Facility Plan. Supt. Spencer said the Local Planning Committee (LPC) has previously met. No members of the public spoke at the forum.

Spencer said, "We are in pretty darn good shape with our facilities."

He said the LPC recommended the following changes to the District Facility Plan: redesignate Menifee Central School from a P-8 building to a P-7 building; designate Botts Early Learning Center as a transitional facility and plans on constructing a new early learning center at Menifee Central or on school district property by Menifee Central; and addressing roofing

and HVAC roof units, and handicap accessibility at Menifee County High School.

With no comments, the forum was adjourned, and board members voted to return to their regular meeting.

Later in the meeting, they voted to approve the District Facility Plan.

Board members approved consent items, including a Memorandum of Understanding with We Lead CS, Inc., which will provide opportunities for students taking a computer science pathway; \$1000 for an interim Boys High School Soccer Coach for March 15 – June 30; and approval of the name "Wildcat Way" for the access road to the new Soccer/Track Complex.

Board members also went into closed session to discuss a personnel matter, and upon returning to open session, took no action. Board attorney Grant Chenoweth advised board members to schedule interviews with the top three candidates for Superintendent as recommended by the Superintendent Selection Committee. Board members agreed on Saturday, April 12. The meeting will be held largely in closed session.

Band Director Jim Bean introduced members of the Ky. Music Education Association's All-District Honors Band, Evan Back, Madison Flanders, and Sean Allen. Allen was also selected to participate in the All-Honor's Band at Morehead State University.

Human remains still unidentified

Menifee County Coroner Megan Smallwood Peck issued an update on her Facebook page regarding human remains found in the Means community.

Peck said, "The Menifee County Coroner's office would just like to keep the public notified that we still have no answers at this time who the human remains belong too that were found December 5th 2024, February 21st 2025 and February 22nd 2025 in the Means community. They are still at the state medical examiner's office in Frankfort being analyzed, and this is still remains an open coroner's case. This can be a lengthy process

and always once we get notified, we will notify family first then the public. We appreciate your patience in this matter. We just ask for you to pray for the families looking for answers. If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me at 606-484-3044."

The News-Outlook has previously reported that a family dog found the remains of a human arm on December 5, 2024. In the same area on February 21, 2025, a skull was found, and the following day, a Kentucky Fish & Wildlife officer assisting in the search located additional human remains about a quarter mile away.

Second Menifee County Spring Clean Up scheduled for this Saturday



A second Menifee County Spring Clean Up will be held this Saturday, March 29, starting at 9 a.m. Volunteers will meet at the Farmers Market Pavillion. A light breakfast will be served.

Trash bags and plastic gloves will be provided, and volunteers are encour-

aged to wear good shoes or boots and their own leather or jersey gloves. After meeting, volunteers will divide up and clean across the county.

This first Spring Clean Up drew 28 volunteers, who collected 152 bags of trash from Menifee County's roads.

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