

# COMMUNITY

## Nancy Hutchinson, CEO of KEDC, Elected Executive Council President of AESA

The Kentucky Educational Development Corporation (KEDC) proudly announces that its Chief Executive Officer, Nancy Hutchinson, has been elected Executive Council President of the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA), a national organization representing over 550 educational service agencies across the United States.

Hutchinson, who has led KEDC since July 2012, brings extensive experience in educational leadership to her new role. Prior to her tenure at KEDC, she served eight years as superintendent of Bath County Schools. Under her guidance, KEDC expanded its services, including establishing a second office in Lexington to serve member school districts better.

Her election to AESA's Executive Council in 2023 marked the beginning of her national leadership within the organization. As Executive Council President, Hutchinson aims to foster collaboration among educational service agencies, advocate for equitable educational policies, and promote innovative practices that enhance student learning outcomes.

"I am honored to serve as Executive Council President of AESA and look forward to working with colleagues nationwide to support educational excellence," said Hutchinson. "Together, we can share best practices and develop strategies that address the diverse needs of students nationwide."

"AESA is extremely fortunate to have Nancy serve in this important leadership role. She has been an extraordinary leader for school districts throughout her region, in Kentucky, and with ESAs across the country," said Dr. Joan Wade, AESA Executive Director.

"Nancy is an amazing person and a great leader. She will do a fantastic job in her newly elected role as Executive Council President of AESA." John Bass, Chief Operating Officer

For more information about AESA and its initiatives, visit [www.aesa.us](http://www.aesa.us).  
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Director of Marketing  
Kentucky Educational Development Corporation



Architect Jonathan Ruiz, David Rhodes with Packs+Walker, and District Facilities and Transportation Director Phil Dettwiller discuss proposed paving at Owingsville Elementary School and the School Bus Garage.



Photos by Cecil Lawson  
Supt. Steven Evans thanked all school staff for making this school year go smoothly.

## Bath Board of Education holds May meeting

By Cecil Lawson  
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Bath County Board of Education members wrapped up their regular May meeting this past Monday evening with construction updates, planning for the Middle School renovation, and approval of the 2025-26 tentative budget.

David Rhodes reported that contractors were working to wrap up renovation work and that substantial completion of the final work in the high school gymnasium is scheduled for June 30. He said the HVAC system in the gym has been installed and will be switched over to the new system next week.

Jonthan Ruiz discussed change order requests, including a credit for a graphic panel reduction in the restrooms, \$120; and options for filling in an un-

needed space in the brick on the gym exterior, \$3596, which is mostly labor.

Board members voted to approve those requests and tabled another request for tuck-pointing on the gym's brick exterior until prices were verified.

They also agreed to approve asphalt resurfacing in two areas, using contingency funds leftover from both the LAVEC renovation \$200,747, and from the high school renovation, \$194,000. The two areas to be repaved include the parking lot and road around Owingsville Elementary School, and the area around the bus garage, for a total cost of \$387,000, with the possibility of having some room for lowering the price after inspectors look at the soil conditions under blacktop. Ruiz said the repaving project might also use around \$5000 from the district's General Fund, if necessary.

Ruize also asked board

members to schedule dates for special-called meetings for them to review schematic designs of the Bath County Middle School renovation and development designs. Board members voted to approve June 16 at 2 p.m. and August 19th at 10 a.m.

They also voted to appoint Transportation and Facilities Director Phil Dettwiller to review and provide conditional approval for survey proposals for the middle school renovation project.

District Finance Director Brittany Combs gave a brief review of the FY 2025-26 tentative district budget, estimated at \$38.6 million, down from last year's \$57.3 million. The lower amount reflects the expenditure of constructions funds from the recent renovation projects.

Combs said state equalization funding in the tentative budget, known as SEEK, is up this year to

\$4586 per pupil, and salary schedules approved last month by board members are also included. The budget also includes funding for two new school buses, increased funding for professional development and textbooks, funding for four school resource officers, and increased funding for property insurance. The budget includes a contingency of \$850,000.

Board members voted to approve the budget.

During their meeting, board members also approved a final amended 2024-25 calendar, approval of a \$2000 stipend for the high school Mock Trial Coach and a retroactive payment to the current Mock Trial coach; approval of a four-year contract with ProSource for copier and printer services across the district; and approved advertisement for bids to mow at Crossroads Elementary School.

## Kentucky Supreme Court Chief Justice rules against request for local judge's disqualification

By Cecil Lawson  
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The Chief Justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court has ruled that a local Circuit Judge will not be disqualified from presiding over criminal cases following a request made by the 21st Circuit Commonwealth's Attorney.

Chief Justice Hon. Debra Hembree Lambert issued her ruling on April 30, 2025, in response to affidavits filed by Commonwealth's Attorney Ashton McKenzie and Circuit Judge Hon. David Barber.

Under Kentucky Revised Statute 26A.020, a party that asserts that a judge will not be fair and impartial at trial may file an affidavit with the circuit clerk stating the factual basis for this belief. In turn, the circuit clerk then files the affidavit to the Chief Justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court for review and a decision.

Commonwealth's Attorney Ashton McKenzie and her assistants filed an affidavit on March 18, asking the Kentucky Supreme Court to order Chief Circuit Judge David Barber to recuse himself from all criminal cases in the 21st Circuit.

The 21st Circuit includes Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, and Rowan Counties.

The affidavit cites instances on March 6, 7, and 10 in Bath, Rowan, and Menifee Circuit Courts, when Judge Barber disclosed that he felt his family was being attacked after the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office filed a forfeiture action against his mother-in-law's property.

property following the sentencing of her son, James Matthew Richardson, who had been convicted on multiple fentanyl trafficking charges in 2024.

Court records show

that on February 20, 2025, McKenzie filed a motion to forfeit real property, at 6 Bath Avenue, Owingsville, based on statute, that the property is forfeitable because it was used to commit or to facilitate the commission of trafficking in a controlled substance. The property is owned by Grace Richardson, and James Matthew Richardson resided there at the time his crimes, which included four counts of trafficking in fentanyl, were committed. He was sentenced to 18 years.

Barber clarified, in the affidavit and in a response he filed on March 25, that he felt Commonwealth's Attorney McKenzie, not the Office itself, was personally attacking his family. He did not recuse himself from any criminal cases and suggested remedies, including allowing the Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys to handle the cases and to create a "Chinese Wall" around McKenzie in all criminal cases in which he presided.

McKenzie and her assistants filed a Supplemental affidavit on March 27 in support of her request to the Kentucky Supreme Court to disqualify Chief Circuit Judge David Barber from all criminal cases in the circuit.

"He utilized the response to predominantly make personal attacks on Hon. Ashton McKenzie," the affidavit said, which gave them "further concern regarding Judge Barber's ability to be fair and impartial in the Commonwealth."

McKenzie also noted that Barber's response was notarized by an employee of his wife's private office, "further confirming he is carrying out the actions of his family from the bench."

Judge Barber said in his March 25 response that the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office could utilize a "Chinese Wall" for

the Commonwealth's Attorney if there is a potential conflict of interest.

McKenzie said in her response that this was "not possible" for the elected Commonwealth's Attorney, while it is possible for any assistants. She noted that "Chinese Walling" applies only when the Commonwealth's Attorney has a conflict. "Essentially, what Judge Barber is asking for is for the elected Commonwealth Attorney to not be permitted to handle cases before him due to his bias."

Chief Justice Lambert noted in her order that there is "a paucity of case law exists to guide the Chief Justice's decision," and that statute itself is vague about the authority given to the Chief Justice to make a determination. Lambert cited an Ohio Supreme Court case, *In re Disqualification of Brue* (2014), in which the Court considered a county prosecutor's request to disqualify a trial judge from presiding over all criminal cases in which the county prosecutor or one of his assistants appeared. In that case, the Ohio Chief Justice ruled that the standard for disqualification must be high and the prosecutor had to demonstrate that the bias "manifests itself in the judge's official duties."

In applying this standard, Chief Justice Lambert did not find that Commonwealth's Attorney McKenzie met it.

"Judge Barber's assertions that Commonwealth's Attorney McKenzie's efforts to institute asset forfeiture against his mother-in-law" in a separate case over which he does not preside amounted to an 'assault' or a 'attack' on his family are distasteful, and it is inappropriate for a member of the judiciary to express those views from the bench." However, she said the comments alone do not demonstrate bias or

that the "fair and impartial administration of justice is being materially impacted in the 21st Judicial Circuit."

She continued in her order that both Barber and McKenzie were elected to service the citizens of the 21st Circuit and are paid with taxpayer dollars, but both are asserting personal bias against one another. She noted that Judge Barber gave assurance in his

motion that he would follow the law, and that the parties in a criminal case are Commonwealth and Defendant, and Commonwealth's Attorney McKenzie is not a party but an attorney that represents the Commonwealth.

Court records show that an evidentiary hearing regarding the forfeiture matter of Grace Richardson's property was scheduled for May 14, to be appear

before Boyd County Circuit Judge Hon. John Vincent at the Boyd County Judicial Center. Judge Vincent was appointed as special judge in the case in March after Bath Circuit Judge Elizabeth Davis recused herself to avoid the appearance of impropriety. The evidentiary hearing has been rescheduled for July 16 in Boyd County.



To: All who are interested in the Summer Feeding Program 2025:

The Menifee County School District is participating in the Summer Food Service Program. Meals will be provided to children without charge and are the same for all children regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, and there will be no discrimination in the course of the meal service. Meals will be provided, at a first come, first serve basis, at the sites and times.

**The Menifee County School District will begin the Summer Feeding Program on Monday June 2nd and complete service on Tuesday August 5th, 2025**  
**The Central kitchen will be located at the Menifee Central.**

**Breakfast 8:30-10:00 Lunch 11:00-1:00**

*If interested in becoming a site or being an established site again please contact Christin Ricker, Food Service Director.*

**Contact Information:**

**Christin Ricker**  
**440 Wynn Flat Rd, PO Box 110**  
**Frenchburg, KY 40322**  
**606-768-8010**

**[christin.ricker@menifee.kyschools.us](mailto:christin.ricker@menifee.kyschools.us)**  
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Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442;
- or(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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