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Friday Storm Devastates Areas Of Union County

Although county officials in both the judge/executive's office and the UC Emergency Management office as well as the school system spent much of Thursday, May 15 and Friday, May 16, monitoring the weather through the National Weather Service, nothing could have stopped the devastation that struck Union County Friday evening when estimated 155 mile per hour winds preliminarily classified as an F3 tornado swept through the county leaving in its wake several miles of destruction. Weather predictions also had residents across Kentucky on alert, and in Union County a number of videos of the tornado can be found on Facebook as people stood on their porches watching and filming the funnel cloud as it took shape. Voices in the background are chilling as those videoing the storm warned their families to take cover and others prayed the storm would stay in the fields and not harm homes or residents. But that payer was not to be....

According to Lee Baird, the county EMA director, a Saturday morning survey revealed that 46 homes were affected—17 of those homes were destroyed while another 15 sustained major damage. The records also show that nine homes had minor damage and five others were also affected by storm. Thankfully, only minor injuries occurred.

By daylight on Saturday, the devastation could be clearly seen as families and friends of

those affected responded to help salvage what was left. Throughout the day on Saturday individuals from other areas of the county were posting mementos—pictures, pieces of a handmade rocking horse with an inscription to a child—on Facebook so those items could be returned to their owners.

The areas most impacted were the Robinson Road area just south of Morganfield on the west side of US 60 and Terra Hill on the east side of US 60. The storm appears to have made its way across KY 130 then crossed US 60 and before crossing KY 56. As it made its way across 56, it appears the funnel cloud lifted before reaching the Whispering Meadows area.

The debris field is littered with tin, downed trees, and roofs of houses as well as trees, home insulation and personal belongings. In some cases, the houses are a pile of rubble, in other cases only a shell remains—windows were blown off, roofs were lifted off, but the walls stand as a stark reminder of what once was.

Emergency crews were quick to respond, pulling six family members and two pets out of one house on Terra Hill, and checking other homes to verify the safety of those who rode out the storm in basements, closets and inner rooms. Volunteers also brought chain saws and other equipment to clear roads for emergency personnel. The Kentucky Department of Transportation and Union County Road



THIS PICTURE OF the tornado that devastated the county last Fruday night was made by a Union County resident and shared multiple times on Facebook. Dozens of Union County homes were destroyed or damaged by the storm which swept through the area.

Department worked through the night Friday clearing state and county roads while EMS, rescue and other personnel worked to insure the safety of residents to be sure everyone who lived in the affected areas was accounted for.

By daylight, people huddled together at various home sites putting together plans for clean-up while others used chain saws to remove trees and others combed through debris trying to salvage

family valuables and keepsakes. Moving trucks were seen arriving at some homes as residents tried to salvage what they could, and workmen tarped heavily damaged roofs to keep out more rain. Local vendors brought in equipment to clear driveways so damage could be assessed.

According to Judge/Executive Adam O'Nan, Governor Andy Beshear had contacted him twice by early Saturday morning. The

first call came on Friday night—a check in by the Governor to get a brief update on the seriousness of the damage—and again early Saturday morning to hear a report on the health and wellbeing of those who rode out the storm in their homes. Union County was more fortunate that other parts of the state where over 20 storm related deaths were reported. In Laurel County, a 39-year veteran firefighter died from injuries he received working to save others.

The scene in Union County on US 60 was one of multiple agencies working together to help those affected. The sheriff's department closed roads and directed traffic to give power companies and county road department personnel the room they needed to start the process of restoring power, clearing debris and insuring the safety of all residents. Heavy traffic created some issues as many people made their way along US 60 to view the damage or tried to get to homes of loved ones to help with clean-up. At one point the highway was down to one lane traffic due to a downed power line and pole near at the Terra Hill/Robinson Road intersection on US 60.

Throughout the day on Saturday, Baird and Kentucky EMA Area 4 director Patrick Hardesty along with Sean Sheffer and Melissa Coker assessed damaged homes to determine the types of assistance families needed. Baird urges those who have damage from the storm to complete the

form reporting damage at <https://tinyurl.com/ucstormdamage>. A QR code can be scanned on the Emergency Management Facebook page.

On Robinson Road, personnel from the Division of Water checked the water tank to insure it sustained no damage while an inspector flew a drone over the tank to check the many communication antennas attached. That inspector told The Sturgis News Saturday morning that he was checking because of the reported communication issues some agencies were having after the storm. Further down Robinson Road, Kentucky Utility trucks lines the roadway as linemen began pulling lines and working to restore power, and at the intersection of Robinson Road and KY 130, crews from 5 Star in Clay were also working to replace damaged poles and lines as were other linemen from other companies. Dozens of Spectrum trucks and crew members were also visible as they worked to restore internet and phone service to affected areas.

Just as O'Nan and Union County road department workers had done when a deadly tornado hit Dawson Springs several years ago, Hopkins County Judge/Executive Jack Whitfield responded in kind and was in the county Saturday to help where he was needed. Webster County Judge/Executive Steve Henry, Webster County Road Foremen Randy Norman, WC EMA director Jeremy Moore and other Webster County first responders and road

Continued on Page 7

Sturgis Council Meets; Approves Budget, Discusses Water

The Sturgis City Council met in regular session on Wednesday, May 14 with Mayor Billy Adams presiding and all council members present. City Clerk Sandra Germane and City Attorney Vickie Davis were also present.

The council met for over 90 minutes, discussing 24 agenda items, reviewing the monthly financial report, approving two appointments, and declaring a city-owned fire truck as surplus property.

Following the approval of minutes from two meetings held in April, council members heard reports regarding the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department, the code enforcements board, the Alcoholic Beverage Control account, and the collection of property taxes by the Union County Sheriff's Department.

The volunteer fire department has an active roster of 25 members, and 17 of those members are CPR certified. The department responded to 57 calls in April, and members will be participating in the field day activities scheduled tomorrow at Sturgis Elementary School.

Code Enforcement Officer Rick Mills has written several notices of violation in the past few weeks. He noted that several properties are currently in various stages of clean up. He also told council members a group is currently tagging properties in the community with graffiti. An investigation of those incidents is underway.

Mills also serves as the ABC officer in Sturgis, and he told members all alcohol taxes are currently up to date.

All financial accounts for the city show positive balances; however, Mayor Adams told members water costs for the city continue to be a problem. The most recent water report showed water loss at over 48%. The city has received \$2.2 million in grant funds from the state for work on the city infrastructure. Those projects are along 13th Street, Main Street, and 1st Street.

The mayor also told council members the Union County Sheriff's Department "did an amazing job" collecting 2025 property taxes. Property tax collections totaled \$203,851.92, and according to Mayor Adams, collections

were at a significantly higher percentage than in previous years.

He also told members that sheriff's officers responded to 45 incidents in Sturgis in April and spent nearly 32 hours of call time in the community.

Discussions are underway with Mark and Audrey Livers concerning the establishment of a farmers market in Sturgis. More information concerning that project will be forthcoming.

In April, council members asked for public donations to help with the purchase of the tennis courts in Sturgis. Those courts are owned by the Union County Board of Education and have been appraised at \$4,000.00. Members decided to proceed with the purchase, with funds for the purchase coming from LGEA funds. Mayor Adams will contact the owners of H & H Hardware concerning the possibility of leasing a portion of the courts for storage.

The council approved the mayor's request for a quitclaim deed for property located at 609 North Monroe Street. The city will pay the delinquent taxes on that

property and will then convey the property to a neighbor who has an interest in the lot. According to the mayor, the delinquent taxes total about \$900.00. It will be the responsibility of the purchaser to clean up the property and bring it up to code.

Council members approved the appointment of Mike Hardesty to the board of adjustments and Sandy Patterson to the codes enforcement board.

The council approved the conversion of 141 street lights in Sturgis to LED lights. That project comes at a cost of \$27,800, which will be paid over a 60 months period. According to Mayor Adams, the project would not begin until summer 2026 because of a back log of work for Kentucky Utilities Company.

The council discussed the city-owned camp sites at the Union County Fairgrounds. Mayor Adams expressed his desire to turn those lots over to Union County Fiscal Court, citing the funding is not available to maintain the areas. The sites are rented annually during the Kentucky Biker Rally, and the city receives an annual payment

from the rally. No action was taken on Wednesday, and Mayor Adams will contact Carlene Thomas, organizer of the rally, to determine the best course of action.

The council held first reading and approved the 2025-2026 budget ordinance in the amount of \$3,238,475.10.

A 1991 fire truck is need of repairs, estimated to be at least \$36,000.00. On Wednesday, council members approved declaring that truck as surplus property. It will be advertised and sold.

Mayor Adams also reported an investigation is underway by the Kentucky Attorney General's office concerning possible misappropriation of funds within the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department. That investigation was initiated at the request of the Kentucky Fire Commission, and results will be sent to the Franklin County courts when completed.

Mayor Adams and council member Hunter Davis had a very positive report concerning the water test wells which were opened recently near the former city water treatment plant. The results

Continued on Page 7