

Celebrating 156 years 1869-2025
The Woodford Sun

157th YEAR - No. 16 — 14 Pages

Versailles, Kentucky

April 17, 2025

\$1.00

Woodford County begins to wring itself out from devastating floods

By Scott White
MANAGING EDITOR

As the flood waters began to recede last week, the scope of the damage to Woodford County’s historic river hamlets began to reveal itself.

Woodford County Emergency Management Director Drew Chandler said 259 homes and structures in Clifton, Buck Run, Lower Clifton, Shore Acres, Fintville, Mundy’s Landing and Oregon Road suffered damage.

And though the numbers could go up, Chandler said the current breakdown is one home destroyed, 221 with major damage, six with minor damage and 19 affected.

All of the roads in the area required washing out by the Woodford County and Versailles fire departments. Over a thousand cubic yards of debris has been removed by a variety of trucks, with more to come. Electricity is still shut off in most houses. Several large trash receptacles have been strategically placed throughout the flood zone. Internet access has now been restored. Pallets of clean drinking water bottles dot the area.

The Red Cross has been operating an emergency shelter, and transitioning into other housing is being worked on for those who’ve used it.



DREW CHANDLER takes his medicine, a tetanus booster from a Woodford County Health Department nurse at its mobile vaccination unit that was set up in Clifton. (Photo from Woodford Emergency Management Agency)

Chandler said homes where power was turned off due to flood waters invading the electrical system or meter box will need to hire a reputable contractor, obtain a permit and then have the repair approved by the county’s electrical inspector before electricity is restored by Kentucky Utilities. The contractor typically sets up the inspection.

As of Wednesday morning, Chandler said all roads are now open except Mundy’s Landing and Williams Lane—nearly the north and south poles of the county.

Public Safety is “back to business as usual, with the exception of Sheriff Wilhoit keeping the security detail installed at the river in place for now to both be available to residents and

serve as a warning to folks who shouldn’t be down there,” he added.

Further, he said, “This is just the start. We are waiting on the president’s declaration of a major disaster.”

As explained by the Sun last week, the initial emergency declaration by President Donald Trump and Gov. Andy Beshear only makes initial, emergent resources available. A “Major Disaster Declaration” unlocks significantly more resources, which otherwise would be borne by the county, for both local government and individuals. In fact, the Feb. 14 floods in Woodford County did not receive a major disaster designation.

Versailles Mayor Laura Dake said, “The City of Versailles stands with the county in offering its assistance post-flood. The work of the Versailles Fire Department, the Versailles Police Department, and Public Works has been integral to supporting rescue efforts and repairing infrastructure; these departments will continue to be available as affected members of the community start to rebuild.”

The formal request for major disaster status was sent by Beshear in a letter to Trump on April 11 enumerating 13 counties, including Woodford, that said, in part, “Because of the severity of this severe storm event, I am requesting a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Kentucky as a result of this . . . severe weather event and request you authorize and make available all programs under Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, Categories A – G, and Direct Federal Assistance (DFA).”

Twenty other counties were included in a lower level of assistance. The entire Kentucky congressional delegation (two senators and six congressmen) sent Trump a letter on April 14 supporting Beshear’s request, “We appreciate your consideration of this request, which will provide assistance to communities in every corner of Kentucky during this critical time of need. Thank you in advance for your timely action on this matter.”

Beshear visited Lower Clifton and Shore Acres late last week to see the damage for himself.

“I want to thank everyone in Woodford County for being there for your neighbors during this difficult and painful time. You all have shown strength, love and kindness for one another,” Beshear said. “We can – and we will – get through this together.”

The flooding produced an “all-hands on deck” response from local agencies, and non-governmental organizations, including the Red Cross, the Woodford County Salvation Army, Journey Church, First Baptist Church, school groups and myriad individuals and informal volunteer groups.

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A TEAM FROM THE SALVATION ARMY distributed vital clean-up materials, food, and personal hygiene kits to the flood-stricken areas along the Kentucky River. Their efforts are ongoing. (Photo by Drew Chandler)



A RIBBON CUTTING ceremony and open house was held at the Versailles Fire Department’s newly-renovated Station No. 1 on Locust Street on Sunday afternoon, April 13. Versailles Mayor Laura Dake is pictured in the top photo with, from left, front, VFD Fire Chief T.A. Rankin, VFD Assistant Fire Chief Brandon Brown and former Versailles Mayor Brian Traugott. VFD firefighters, also pictured, returned to Station No. 1 on Saturday, March 15. The \$1.397 million renovation and expansion project involved three buildings. Firefighters can now prepare meals in a kitchen and eat in a dining room. In addition to providing living spaces for firefighters, Station No. 1 has a more welcoming environment for the public who can enter a vestibule so they can ask for assistance. In the photo at left, Chief Rankin is pictured with members of his family: wife Sarah, daughter Tenley, son Jax, and mom Sissy Rankin. (Photos submitted)

Commission denies Nonesuch zone change, tables action on Troy Pike subdivision

By Bob Vlach
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

A request to rezone 40.07 acres at 4750 Fords Mill Road in the small community of Nonesuch was voted down by the Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning Commission after a public hearing was reopened for additional comment on April 10. Neighbors voiced their opposition to the request to create two lots arguing the proposed zone change would open the door for additional development in an area that already has too much traffic on narrow roads and water pressure that is inadequate.

Attorney Bill Moore, representing property owner Bogdan Svintozelsky, pointed out the proposed lots are located in the heart of a small community (A-4) district where residential lots can be created and a portion of the property, where two lots are already zoned R-1B residential.

Moore said an adjacent property was rezoned to create a residential lot and apparently there was sufficient water pressure to require a fire hydrant to serve that lot, but the existence of a new hydrant at that location was questioned.

Concern was also raised about subdividing rural land when neighboring landowners are considering whether to place conservation easements on their farmland.

Commissioner Rich Schein asked Planning Director Steve Hunter to offer some clarity on how many residential lots could be created if this zone change is approved. Because internal streets cannot be constructed in the A-4 zone and new lots must be at least one acre and have road frontage, Hunter said a maximum of five to seven more lots could be created.

Commissioner Chris Sharp, who voted in opposition to not recommending the approval of the zone change to Woodford Fiscal Court, said he did not see that big of an issue with traffic if the lots are created based on what he saw when he drove to the property on three or four occasions.

In her motion to deny the request, Commissioner Whitney Stepp stated the zone change is not consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. She incorporated the summary of evidence and testimony by witnesses during the public hearing as a part of her motion, which passed by a 6 to 1 vote. Commissioners Chad Wells and Ashley Goodrich were absent.

Prior to the vote, Hunter noted the sizes of the current small community districts could change when the Comprehensive Plan is updated, and those changes could be based on where residential growth makes sense. Addressing another issue raised by a neighbor during the hearing, Hunter said before any new lot is platted in rural zones, the health department must approve a septic system.

During the public hearing on March 13, neighbors voiced concern about changing the rural character of Nonesuch.

Troy Pike zone change

The commission did not open a public hearing on a request to rezone 22.5 acres at 1470 Troy Pike from agriculture (A-1) to high-density (R-4) residential. It was tabled at the request of applicant Vision Engineering, LLC (Jihad Hallany).

Applicant attorney Scott Shuette asked for the one-month postponement to talk to the neighbors. Telling them, “We’re going to set a meeting up between now and

See TROY PIKE p. 7

Health department faces significant funding losses if fed cuts allowed

By Scott White
MANAGING EDITOR

Woodford County Public Health Department Director Cassie Prather told members of the April 15 Versailles City Council meeting that funding cuts from the Trump administration would create a significant threat to the department’s funding if allowed to go forward in court.

Prather said the federal government informed states that it was shutting down funding associated with immunizations, communicable diseases and infrastructure related to communicable disease response. Prather warned that if allowed to go forward, this would impact the Woodford County Health Department with the loss of

possibly hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Prather’s presentation was at the request of Mayor Laura Dake, who, since being sworn in last December, has regularly brought in the heads of agencies to inform the council and public about their work and how it impacts the community.

Though the city, for now, does not contribute to the health department’s budget, Dake said Prather’s status report was important for people to understand how the dramatic grant and funding cuts at the federal level are impacting Versailles.

Prather explained the cuts are temporarily prevented from going into effect be-

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VERSAILLES CITY COUNCIL honored Versailles Police Department telecommunicators who serve the community by answering 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls and dispatching them to the appropriate first responder agencies, including fire, police, EMT and emergency management. Four telecommunicators are pictured in the front row, from left, Kishma Smith, Albert Woodrum, Beth Jones, and Crystal Acke. Also pictured are Police Chief Rob Young, Fire Chief T.A. Rankin, Emergency Management Deputy Director Russ Crabtree, Versailles City Council members and Mayor Laura Dake.

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GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

Thurs., April 17, Special Planning Commission at 4 p.m.
Monday, April 21, Midway City Council at 5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 22, Fiscal Court at 5:30 p.m.