

OMICRON

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“It is one of the most transmissible viruses, this variant, in modern human history,” Beshear said during Saturday’s briefing. “We hope the sickness that it causes is milder and there are some indications of that but this thing is going to spread so fast that any school that is not doing mandatory masking, any business that is not having their folks wear masks, could see entire schools, entire shifts get infected very, very quickly.”

“We have found a way to live with COVID-19 even while so many people are dying, we’ve found a way to go back to work and stay in school. But folks I’m telling you, if we don’t make the decision to put back on that mask in these situations, it’s going to disrupt everything we have worked so hard to get back up and going.”

Health officials are now saying that the Omicron variant spreads quicker than Delta and other variants.

“The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is probably one of the most transmissible or contagious infections we’ve had in the last century at least,” said Dr. Steven Stack, Kentucky’s health

commissioner, during Saturday’s briefing. “To put this into perspective, a person who gets influenza may infect one to two other people. The Delta variant really escalated COVID’s transmissibility and one person with the Delta variant may infect up to five other people under the right situations. Omicron, now, it may be that one person with Omicron could infect up to 18 to 20 additional people. This is not the progression we want.”

The CDC expects that anyone with Omicron can spread the virus to others, even if they are vaccinated or don’t have symptoms. But it is still unknown if this variant will cause more severe illness than the Delta variant or the original COVID-19 virus.

Dr. Stack and Beshear agree that people need to use the tools we have learned and been given to protect themselves against all variants of COVID-19, such as getting vaccinated and wearing a mask.

According to the CDC, current COVID-19 vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant but breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are still likely to occur. New information released by

Moderna says that the booster dose should offer protection against the Omicron variant.

“The bad news is that Omicron is so effective at infecting people that the breakthrough cases are going to go up, so the number of people who are even fully vaccinated and boosted who could have mild disease, so think about having cold symptoms, will go up almost certainly,” Dr. Stack said.

“To those that are unvaccinated, just consider now to possibly be the time. With as contagious as this is going to be, you’re going to get the Omicron variant,” Beshear said.

Beshear urged that people get vaccinated rather than wait to get treated once they have already contracted the virus, as scientists are still working to determine how well existing treatments for COVID-19 will work against the Omicron variant. Based on the changed genetic make-up of Omicron, some treatments are likely to remain effective while others may be less effective, according to the CDC.

Beshear offered some tips for upcoming holiday get-togethers during Monday’s briefing, including getting vaccinated or boosted, getting tested beforehand and wearing a mask while in close proximity.

Fiscal Court approves excavator purchase, road closures

By Nita Johnson
Staff Writer

Keeping the county’s roads in good shape is a primary responsibility of magistrates, and having the necessary equipment is vital to that goal.

In their bi-monthly meeting on Tuesday, members of the Laurel County Fiscal Court voted to purchase another piece of equipment to ensure that is continued. Magistrates approved the purchase of a Case Compact Excavator from the Kentucky state contract in the amount of \$75,461.25. They also voted to advertise for bids on a concrete box culvert replacement, before discussing two road closures.

Laurel County Judge Executive David Westerfield told magistrates about Peachtree Street in mag-

isterial district #2. Westerfield asked for the road to be closed as a county roadway, although the road will remain as a public passageway. Westerfield said the developer for that property did not complete the road as planned. He also addressed a partial road closure in District 4 for Fields Road. Westerfield said he did not have the exact specifications of that road on hand, but magistrates approved a partial closure for the road.

Magistrates also approved:

- Order of Affiliation with Woodbine Rescue Squad
- Laurel County Sheriff’s 2022 budget (which runs on a calendar year, January through December)
- Laurel County Sheriff’s annual order setting maximum salaries for deputies and assistants.

TRIALS

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- William Petrey, 38, of Woodbine, Ky., is charged with the April 21 murder of Rebecca Warren.
- Tony Taylor, 32, of Elisha Feltner Road in London, is charged with first-degree assault against a female on September 28, for shooting her in the chest with a gun.
- Cases set for trial included:
 - Christopher Ryan Caldwell - first-degree assault, trial date March 7.
 - Shartuse Ryan Lyttle and Julia Ann Helton - possess/manufacture counterfeit substance and first-degree possession controlled substance, methamphetamine - trial date, March 10.
 - Robbie Bert Baker - second-degree burglary and theft by unlawful taking - trial date March 16.
 - Quincy Shun Demarcus Jones - first-degree

- strangulation and first-degree criminal trespassing - trial date May 2.
- Brian Keith Napier - second-degree robbery, first-degree criminal mischief and resisting arrest - trial date May 11
- Bobby Ray Henson - first-degree wanton endangerment - trial, May 12.
- William Ralph Whittle - multiple charges of theft by unlawful taking and criminal possession of forged instrument - trial date May 11
- Mickey Wayne Grubb - two counts of first-degree assault and leaving scene of accident - trial date May 9.
- • •
- A former South Laurel High School student will serve 2 1/2 years in jail for assaulting a school staff member.
- Nicholas Scott Carroll, now 19, was sentenced on Dec. 15 in Laurel Circuit Court for third-degree assault. Carroll was arrested on April 16 following an altercation at the southern county high school.

- He was indicted by a Laurel County grand jury in May on charges of assault, second-degree disorderly conduct and third-degree terroristic threatening.
- The indictment states that Carroll tried to fight with the school principal and created a “hazardous or physically offensive condition by trying to fight school employees.” Carroll then threatened to kill or cause injuries to “everyone at the school,” according to the indictment.
- Other persons sentenced included:
 - Brandon Louis Harris, 39, of Corbin, will serve 11 years in prison for assaulting a 3-month-old infant between June and July 2017.
 - George E. Lewis III, 33, of East Bernstadt, was sentenced to 2 years and 1 day from a Nov. 28, 2020 incident in which he strangled a female. Lewis was also indicted for fourth-degree assault and unlawful imprisonment, but those charges were dismissed.

- Marcus Lee Abner, 45, of London, will serve a 10-year sentence for trafficking methamphetamine on Sept. 9, 2020.
- Dakota William Smith, 24, of London, will serve 2 1/2 years for fleeing and evading police and first-degree wanton endangerment. That stems from a April 22 incident in which he fled police in a vehicle and endangering the life of another person.
- Edgar W. Sizemore, 23, of London, will serve 2 years in jail for the Feb. 22 theft of a 2006 Ford Expedition. That sentence will run consecutively with two other 2-year sentences for the Dec. 2020 theft of a 2008 Chevrolet Colorado and Feb. 3, 2021 theft of a 2018 Chevrolet Spark.
- Those sentenced on Monday, Dec. 20 included:
 - Ashley Bluewett, 3 years for trafficking in methamphetamine;
 - Andrew D. Myers, 5 year sentence for amended charge of second-de-

- gree robbery.
- Logan Robert Simpson, 5 years for amended charge of second-degree robbery.
- Keith Lay, receiving stolen property and con-

- victed felon in possession of firearm - 5 years enhanced to 6 years.
- Charles Lee Scruggs, 10 years for trafficking methamphetamine and Carfen-til or Fentanyl derivatives.

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Merry Christmas

And Happy New Year!

May beautiful moments and happy memories surround you with joy during this season of humankindness.

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