

# Schools offer incentives to recruit bus drivers

By Burton Cole

BUTLER — Short of bus drivers, the Pendleton County School District is ready to pay current drivers \$1,500 for every new driver they recruit.

Superintendent Joe Buerkley told the school board during its November meeting last week at Sharp Middle School that the district is short five drivers and is anticipating a sixth vacancy soon.

At a previous board meeting, it was noted that other staff, including Assistant Superintendent Matt Compton, have doubled up duties to keep the bus routes running.

“Our team has done a phenomenal job covering, with no impact to services,” Buerkley said. “However, if this trend continues, transportation services will be impacted.”

Buerkley told board members that his team wanted to offer the \$1,500 incentive to any current bus driver who refers someone who becomes a new bus driver. The goal is to keep the money in-house rather than pay an outside head-hunter to find drivers. The motion to offer the incentive passed unanimously.

## AUDIT

An audit of district finances conducted by accountants Kelley, Galloway, Smith and Goolsby of Ashland found Pendleton Schools to be in good fiscal shape with a clean audit and no findings for recovery for the year that ended June 30.

According to the audit, which is published on the district website:

- The district began the fiscal year with \$19.54 million in all funds, and ended the year with \$18.05 million. The decrease primarily was because of major renovation projects to the stadium at Sharp, and to the school itself, in conjunction with an increase in state and federal funding provided specifically for those projects.

- The general fund recorded \$23.11 million in revenues, primarily from state funding, and property, utilities and motor vehicle taxes. The district spent \$21.96 million during the fiscal year.

- The district owns \$55.28 million in total assets, including cash, buildings and materials, an increase of about \$5 million largely due to renovations. The liabilities of \$27.63 million is down about \$8 million.

- The only note auditors made as a problem was,

“We noted an instance in which office supplies for high school personnel were purchased with school activity funds” when the purchase should have been made with district funds. The situation was considered “very minor” and noted as an oversight. Auditors recommended that the district provide training to high school personnel “to ensure that operational expenses are not purchased from school activity funds.”

Aside from that, no “difficulties” or “findings” were discovered during the audit.

## OTHER BUSINESS

- Under the “Great News” portion of the meeting agenda, the board recognized the efforts of Klaber Wolfe and Sam Hodge of Pendleton County High School, and Taylor Flannigan of Sharp Middle as cross country team members who qualified for state.

- The board unanimously agreed with Buerkley’s recommendation to go with the first of three options for next school year’s calendar, which essentially mimics the current school year calendar.

Students will return to school Aug. 13; fall break will be Oct. 6 to 10, with the preceding Friday, Oct.



The Pendleton County Board of Education last week recognized cross country team members who qualified this year for state competition. From left are board members Derek Brown and Kevin Barnard, Pendleton County High School team members Sam Hodge and Klaber Wolfe, board member Laura Schack, Sharp Middle School team member Taylor Flannigan, and board members Amber Beebe and Cheryl Griffin. Photo by Burton Cole.

3, also a day off for the Kentucky Wool Festival; spring break will be April 6 to 10; and students’ last day will be May 20. With the usual Christmas break, that schedule ensures at least one day off every month.

Option 2 would have added a day off on April 3, which would have bumped the last day to May 21. Option 3 would have started school on Aug. 6 and ended classes May 12.

- At Buerkley’s recommendations, the board appointed member Derek

Brown and community leaders Walt Hornbeck, Tyler Heilman and Jeff Aulick to the Local Planning Committee.

The 20-member committee also includes four building administrators, the district facilities director, a district staff member, a representative of the building and zoning department, four parents, four teachers and the superintendent.

The Local Planning Committee will review the district facility plan.

- Pendleton County Education Association President Shonda Justus reviewed activities for American Education Week, which was last week.

Monday was the kickoff day; Tuesday was Family Day, inviting parents into the classrooms; Wednesday saluted education support professionals; Thursday was Be an Educator for a Day, giving community leaders and others the opportunity to teach classes; and Friday was the day to honor substitute teachers.

# Butler prepares for LED streetlights

By Nila Harris

BUTLER — At its regular meeting Thursday, Butler City Council signed a contract with KU to install LED streetlights in the city.

The installation will take place the third or fourth weeks of December, depending on crew and material availability.

The council meeting was held Thursday because of the unavailability of several council members on the regular meeting date earlier this month.

In other business:

- Some street signs will be purchased and installed, including speed limit signs and a park liability sign. The maintenance depart-

ment will replace a few lids on water meters that need to be fixed.

The city purchased jackets for city employees. The council held its second reading of radio read water meters.

- The city of Butler received a CSX Pride and Service Grant of \$2,500 to help alleviate some of the costs for apparatus for first responders.

The city has also applied for a \$40,000 grant through the Gary Sinise Foundation. This grant, should the city receive it, would be used to purchase battery-operated extrication equipment for the pumper rescue truck owned by the city.

The pumper rescue

truck would be equipped as a heavy rescue vehicle, for high angle, low angle, and water rescues — the first of its kind in Pendleton County.

- Fire Chief Adam Fuller told council members that a smoke detector drive is being held in the city. Residents may receive a smoke detector and may be able to get help with installation from the department.

A 2004 E-one Freight liner structure pumper was purchased, he said.

Fuller also said he recently received training to become a state approved fire inspector. He will be able to inspect all buildings except government buildings.

Northern Pendleton Fire Department also participated in joint fire training sessions within the city this month.

- The Butler Christmas Parade will take place on Dec. 14. Lineup is at 5 p.m., with the parade starting at 6 pm.

- The City Park has been reopened, and the park dedication will take place in the spring.

The council thanked Napier Palette Company and Pike 27 Auto Parts for the donations of mulch and to the Butler Lion’s Club for the spreading of mulch and cleanup at the park.

- The next meeting will be 7 p.m. Dec. 2 in the city building.

## Legislative update

# Senator reflects on season of giving and thankfulness

By Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer

As we gather with family and friends for Thanksgiving, it’s a time to reflect on the blessings we share and to express gratitude for the hard work and contributions that make our communities thrive.

Whether you’re educating students, protecting our neighborhoods, keeping our roads safe, or ensuring that goods and services reach their destinations, your dedication helps make Kentucky a better place to live.

Thanksgiving is also a moment to pause and savor the warmth of togetherness.

The days have grown shorter and the air crisper. While we might miss the long summer evenings, we now embrace the comfort of cozy gatherings, hearty meals, and the joy of being with loved ones.

For many, this holiday signals a time to reset and prepare for the winter months ahead. As the leaves fall and the days grow shorter, it’s a natural pause to reflect on the year behind us while looking forward to the season ahead.

The holidays provide a sense of renewal, a chance to rest, reconnect, and refocus on the things that matter most.

As the holiday season unfolds, there’s an air of anticipation and hope for what’s to come — whether it’s the excitement of gathering with family and friends, the warmth of long-standing traditions, or the prospect of new opportunities in the coming year.

It’s a time to cherish the present while also embracing the promise of fresh beginnings on the horizon.

As you enjoy your Thanksgiving traditions, I want to remind everyone to travel safely.

Whether you’re driving to visit family or simply running errands, please be mindful of others on the road. Let’s make sure everyone can celebrate this season with those they cherish.

I’ll also ask you to be mindful of those who may



Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer

have lost a loved one this year or are far from family. Open your circle to welcome them in and offer compassion at a time many find themselves feeling even more alone. Keep in mind that mental health doesn’t take a holiday.

In the coming weeks, we’ll continue to hear testimony in preparation for the 2025 General Assembly.

If you have thoughts on how we can improve our commonwealth or if there are ways I can better serve you, don’t hesitate to reach out.

I can be reached at my office in Frankfort at 502-564-8100, or by email [shelley.funkefrommeyer@kylegislature.gov](mailto:shelley.funkefrommeyer@kylegislature.gov).

It’s an honor to serve as your state senator. I wish you and your family a joyful and peaceful Thanksgiving!

*Funke Frommeyer, R-Alexandria, represents the 24th Senate District, including Bracken, Campbell, and Pendleton Counties and part of Kenton County. She is a Senate member of the Interim Joint Committees on Appropriations and Revenue; Economic Development and Workforce Investment; Education; Health Services; and Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology. Funke Frommeyer is co-chair of the Budget Review Subcommittee on Justice and Judiciary. Additionally, she is a member of the Capital Projects and Bond Oversight Committee, the 2024-2026 Budget Preparation and Submission Committee, and the Workforce Attraction and Retention Task Force.*

# Opinion: Support local agriculture this season

By Jonathan Shell  
Ag commissioner

FRANKFORT — As the holidays approach, Kentuckians across the Commonwealth prepare to celebrate with family, food, and festive gatherings.

It’s a time of togetherness and gratitude, and it’s also an opportunity to reflect on how we can strengthen our communities.

One powerful way we can do this is by choosing to support local businesses and buying local agricul-

tural products.

This holiday season, I encourage all Kentuckians to support our local farmers and producers by incorporating Kentucky Proud products into your celebrations.

Agriculture is the backbone of our state’s economy, and our farmers work tirelessly year-round to provide us with fresh, nutritious and high-quality products.

From poultry and pork to sweet potatoes and crisp greens, Kentucky’s farms offer a bounty of seasonal



Jonathan Shell

goods that can make your holiday meals special and more meaningful.

When you choose to purchase locally grown and raised products, you’re not only getting the freshest ingredients available. You’re also helping to keep your hard-earned dollars in Kentucky, supporting our local economy, and fostering a sustainable food system.

Local products aren’t limited to just what’s on your dinner table. It’s the season of gifting after all.

Kentucky is home to some of the finest artisans, offering everything from jams and jellies to hand-made wreaths, candles, wool goods and more.

As you shop for gifts this holiday season, consider purchasing from Kentucky Proud crafters, retailers, and holiday markets. Many of our state’s small businesses are agriculture-based and depend on strong holiday sales to thrive.

This season brings an abundance of traditions and memories to be made. Enjoy the season with family and friends at a

Kentucky Proud Buy Local restaurant that is committed to purchasing fresh ingredients from Kentucky farms.

You may even consider giving a gift card to one of these locations ensuring you’re supporting our family farms and the chefs who know how to prepare a tasty meal.

Buying local also means supporting the next generation of farmers. Kentucky has a proud tradition of family farming, passed down through generations.

Your dollars make a difference in sustaining the rural economies that make our Commonwealth so unique.

I invite everyone to visit [kyproud.com/holidays](http://kyproud.com/holidays) or stop by your local farmers’ market to discover the wide variety of Kentucky-grown and Kentucky-made products available.

When you choose to buy local, you’re not just feeding your family, you’re feeding Kentucky’s economy, supporting your neighbors, and contributing to the health and well-being of our communities.

By choosing local, we can ensure that our agricultural traditions thrive and that our commonwealth continues to be a beacon of farm-fresh goodness for generations to come.

I wish you and your family a healthy, happy, and Kentucky Proud holiday season.

*Jonathan Shell serves as Kentucky’s commissioner of agriculture.*

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