

PROJECTS,^{from 1}

ued any association with the organization, given this review and the concerns raised.

BESHEARS,^{from 1}

AFTER LANTERN STORY, WEDDLE REVEALS A PROBLEM

Four days after the Kentucky Lantern story, Weddle's attorneys later told KREF, Weddle reported a possible problem directly to Beshear: Most of the contributions in late 2022 attributed in reports to his family members and employees actually were made by Weddle — on his personal credit card.

The Beshear campaign and KDP quickly reported to KREF that Weddle had said he had inadvertently made excess donations on his credit card — donations that appeared to violate a law that prohibits a donor from exceeding contribution limits by giving in the name of others, so-called straw donors. The Beshear campaign and KDP complied with KREF's recommendation that the \$202,000 in excess contributions made on Weddle's card be refunded to Weddle.

KREF investigated the matter and last month its staff recommended that the KREF board find that Weddle had committed 20 violations of the law that prohibits a person from making contributions in the name of someone else, but that Weddle had done so unintentionally. (An unintentional violation is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000; an intentional violation results in a fine and a referral to a prosecutor for investigation of a possible Class D felony.)

The staff recommendation accepted Weddle's explanation that he was following Johnson's guid-

We will be communicating this step to the Department of Education as we fully cooperate with its review," the UK president said. The New York Times reported that the

PhD Project, based in Montvale, N.J., said in a statement on the day the investigation was announced that it had opened its process to anyone, regardless of race or ethnic-

ity, in response to Trump administration dictates to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. The statement did not say when that decision was made.

subpoena, and the records include several redactions. Weddle attorney Guthrie True said the redacted texts were irrelevant to the investigation and that KREF did not question the redactions.

Weddle began the dialogue at 12:32 p.m. on Dec. 27, asking if Johnson received confirmation of contributions from his wife Victoria, son Nicholas and daughter Alexis to the Beshear campaign. He also tells Johnson, "Paul will be sending today."

This is an apparent reference to Weddle's business associate Paul "PJ" Guastello Jr., of Kansas City, Missouri.

Guastello signed a document filed with the Kentucky Secretary of State last year as "member" of WB Transport Holdings LLC, of London.

Johnson replies with texts clarifying for Weddle contribution limits set by law. The limit for the Beshear campaign is \$2,000 for the entire primary election season. But the limit on contributions to the KDP is \$15,000 per year.

Johnson explains that many of Weddle's family, friends and employees have already given the "max" to the campaign, but even though many had already given the maximum to the KDP in late 2021 they could legally give another \$15,000 in late 2022.

"It's KDP that we need before the end of the year," Johnson said. And Johnson texted Weddle a link through which he could transmit contributions to the party.

"That's KDP link that everyone can use boss. Anyone who did the \$15,000 last year I believe should be able to again if they are

willing. Let me know how else I can help. Thank you, Randall!"

MONEY STARTS TO FLOW

Within five minutes Weddle sends Johnon texts saying that his wife, son and daughter have each donated to the KDP. "That's \$45,000."

"Yessir we are checking that we received now," Johnson replies. "You are the f----- man."

Weddle then asks if his mother and mother-in-law can give.

Johnson checks his records and replies: "Yep they're good no contribution on record. And anyone you got last year, like the Woods, Jeremy Bryant, etc can do KDP again."

This text reveals Weddle's role in raising a large bundle of contributions a year before for Beshear in December 2021. Johnson apparently is referring to the Kenneth Woods family, which owns H&K Pallet Sales, of London, and Weddle's attorney Jeremy Bryant. Four members of the Woods family, Bryant and Bryant's wife each were listed as giving the maximum \$2,000 to Beshear's campaign and \$15,000 to the KDP in December of 2021. The December 2021 contributions were not part of KREF's investigation.

Reference to credit card

While discussing the pending contributions coming from his mother and mother-in-law, Weddle tells Johnson, "I'll have to use my card they'll give it back to me."

Johnson replied, "Okay sounds good."

Weddle's lawyers say this exchange makes clear that Weddle was unaware his actions were illegal. They argue that John-

son's response gave him the green light to advance contributions of others on his credit card.

Johnson did not respond to a phone message left for him at the headquarters of the Kentucky Democratic Party.

Ensuing texts indicate Weddle transmits contributions totaling \$14,000 in the names of his mother and mother-in-law to the Beshear campaign and KDP.

"So a total of \$59,000 was given today by my family," Weddle said.

"Thank you for your support Randall!" Johnson replied. "You're the man!"

Later that day Weddle texts a list with names of nine additional donors. Johnson, however, says the campaign and party hadn't yet received those contributions. The text exchange of Dec. 27 ends here.

'JUST TRYING TO GIVE THE GOVERNOR A GOOD IDEA...'

Johnson resumes the discussion on the morning of Dec. 29 saying he still hasn't gotten contributions from donors whose names Weddle had sent two days before. And Johnson reminds Weddle of the big batch of contributions made a year earlier by PJ Guastello and his family.

"Hey bossman," Johnson tells Weddle, "I don't think we've gotten anything from the list of folks you sent the other day. PJ did his \$15K. Is his family planning to do more? Sorry to keep bothering you Randall, just trying to give the governor a good idea where we'll be after the 31st"

Again, on the morning of Dec. 30, Johnson tells

Weddle he still has received only contributions from Weddle's five family members earlier in the week and PJ Guastello.

"OK I'll work on it this evening," Weddle replies.

He did. The two resumed their text dialogue that night. Here are the key texts from Weddle to Johnson on the night of Dec. 30:

At 9:29: "Ashley Gray, Kyle Gray, 30K to KDP"

At 9:35: "Chrysta McAdams, Caden McAdams, \$30K to KDP"

At 9:39: "Carmen Weddle 15K to KDP"

At 9:41: "Michael Hacker 15K to KDP"

At 9:44: "Michael Hacker 2K to Andy"

At 9:48: "Jennifer Weddle 2K to Andy"

At 9:50: "Jennifer Weddle 15K to KDP"

At 9:56: David Owens 15K to KDP 2K to Andy"

At 10:07: "Alecia Owens 15K to KDP, 2K to Andy."

At 10:07: "Lisa Weddle 15K to KDP, 2K to Andy"

At 10:09: Weddle brought the discussion to an end: "Good news I've got you 219K this week"

Johnson replied, "Haha It's a usual thing in fundraising! Yessir you have. Let me know how else I can help boss. Thank you so much. I've let the man know."

The records released by KREF include only one more text exchanged between the two, and it is a reference to the Lantern's Tom Loftus' effort to learn more about how the large bundles of Weddle contributions came about.

"Hey Randall, loftus called the KDP today" Johnson texted Weddle on March 9, 2023. "We'll probably need to hop on the phone at some point tomorrow just to make sure we are all on the same page. Thank you sir"

BOARD,^{from 1}

WOODWORKING BUSINESS CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPROVED

The committee reviewed a request from Jonathan Crowley for a conditional use permit to produce woodworking and craft items for offsite sale at 176 West Jefferson Avenue in Danville. The property is zoned RM2, which permits home-based businesses under specific conditions.

Boyle County Planning Director, Mikaela Gerry outlined zoning regulations, emphasizing that all operations must be conducted indoors without generating excessive noise, traffic, or other disturbances. Crowley assured the committee that his work occurs in a detached shop, with doors and windows closed to minimize noise.

A public hearing was held, with no opposition. After deliberation, the committee approved the permit without opposition.

CHI SAINT JOSEPH SIGNAGE APPROVED

The committee considered a variance request from CHI Saint Joseph for a wall sign at 62 West Ridge Drive. The proposed sign, measuring 139.13 square feet, exceeds the 96-square-foot maximum allowed for the property's light industrial zoning.

Planning Director Mikaela Gerry explained that

the variance was requested to enhance visibility for drivers along the South Danville Bypass, which has a 55 mph speed limit. The larger sign would allow drivers approximately 6.9 seconds to view it, compared to 3.7 seconds with a smaller version. Elizabeth Pitchford of Ruggles Sign argued that the increased size was necessary for adequate readability.

The committee agreed that the property's setback and the high-speed traffic along the bypass constituted unique circumstances justifying the variance, which was approved unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL DENIED

The meeting also addressed an administrative appeal filed by Jeffrey and Laura Alford regarding a side yard setback variance at 496 Branch Street, which was initially heard on Jan. 21, 2025. The Alford, represented by attorney Melanie Thornbury, contended that the variance application was improperly scheduled and lacked the required documentation.

Thornbury argued that the application, filed on Jan. 3, should have been scheduled for the Feb. 18 meeting instead of Jan. 20, citing the board's filing deadline of Dec. 31, 2024. She also pointed out missing information in the boundary survey and zoning compliance details. Furthermore, she asserted that the Alford and several neighboring property

owners were never notified of the variance before it was approved.

Laura Alford addressed the committee, stating, "We were never actually notified of this variance in the first place. We have also checked with the neighbor across the street and the property behind us—none of them received a letter either. The only reason we even found out was when we saw construction next door and asked the workers what was happening."

In response, Planning and Zoning officials confirmed that notification

letters were sent via USPS, using addresses from the property valuation administrator's records, as required by ordinance. However, some letters were returned as undeliverable. Additionally, they cited that a newspaper advertisement was published as required, ensuring public notice.

Attorney Johnny Gifford maintained that the board lacks jurisdiction to reconsider its decisions once a variance is granted. He emphasized that Kentucky law mandates that appeals must be filed in circuit court within 30 days.

"There's something akin to that here. Was this a void decision? I don't believe so. Even if it was void from the outset, they had 30 days for redress in circuit court," Gifford stated. "We have a circuit court in this county that is able and willing to hear that claim. The board does not have the authority to rule on it. That jurisdiction rests with the circuit court."

Committee members also referenced Ordinance 3.6.1, which states that administrative appeals may only be taken by the original applicant. Additionally, Ordinance 3.6.4 specifies

that an appeal must be based on "substantial evidence" and demonstrate that the original decision was "arbitrary and capricious."

Ultimately, the committee agreed that the Alford's lacked legal standing to appeal the decision and that the board could not substitute its judgment for that of the administrative official.

A motion to deny the appeal was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. The board clarified that a "yes" vote was a vote against the appeal.



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REMEMBER: TIME - 10:00 AM
DATE - Saturday, March 29th, 2025.
PLACE - 51 Old Schoolhouse Road, Danville, KY 40422



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