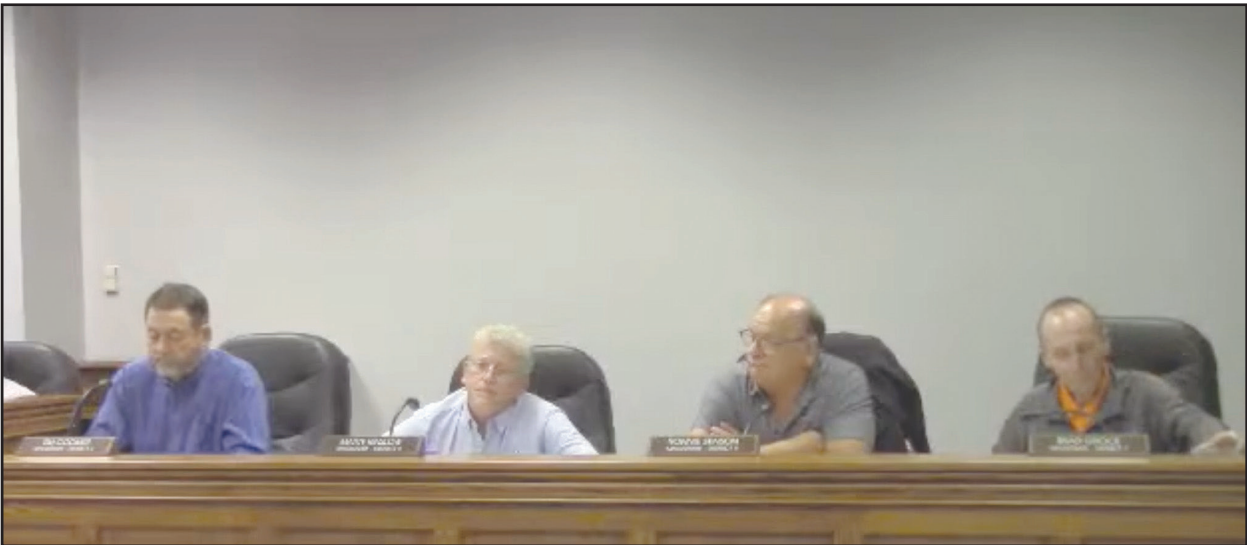


# Solar Ordinance Approved



▲ Photo | Screenshot YouTube Barren County

**Barren County Fiscal Court met on Tuesday, May 20, where an ordinance relating to future solar energy systems was approved in a second reading. From left, Barren County Magistrates Tim Coomer, Marty Kinslow, Ronnie Stinson, and Brad Groce.**

**Angela Briggs**  
*Freelance Reporter*

Solar panels are still a go for the county and so are the 1,000-foot setback requirements.

At the last fiscal court meeting, Magistrate Tim Coomer suggested amending the proposed solar installation ordinance that would require anyone wanting a waiver on the 1,000-foot setback requirement would have to enter into a contract agreement with a solar company as a non-participating, adjacent property owner.

County Attorney Mike Richardson said last week in the meeting that the setback would start from the property line and that railways and roadways would be included and the owners of those properties would have to sign off as well.

Discussion centered around whether the county should set these setbacks at 1,000 feet. Magistrate Brad Groce pointed to KRS 278.704, which gives counties the ability to set these 1,000-foot requirements in certain situations, afterwards saying that, if approved, “all we’re really doing is enforcing something that’s already a KRS.”

Richardson said that while there is a small carve out in the legislation for counties, it only applies in certain circumstances, telling the court ordinances have to be able to pass judicial review, adding “there has to be a rational basis between the law you are enacting and what your objective is.”

Magistrate Ronnie Stinson said that he didn’t think anyone wanted the government telling them what they could do on their land, but there are extreme circumstances where the county may have to step in and he didn’t feel this met that bar.

“I’ve got to do what I think is right,” he

said. Kinslow said he agreed with Stinson, saying, “We know people on both sides of the issue,” but they have to find the best solution for everyone.

Botts said that both Cumberland Parkway and Veterans Outer Loop cut through his property and the right-of-ways are not maintained. He added that if people didn’t like the way the panel installations looked, “We’re still going to see it at 1,000 feet.”

Planning and Zoning Director Kevin Myatt confirmed to the court that if the county fails to pass this ordinance, they will continue to use the “50, 10, 10” rule.

Coomer asked Myatt if this did not pass, “Twenty feet from your house you could legally have a solar panel.” Myatt said, “Technically, this is correct.”

The court took a roll call vote with Magistrates Coomer, Tim Durham, Kinslow, Groce and Botts voting in favor and Magistrates Stinson and Derick Pedigo voting against.

The court approved the contract for the new sports complex with Sherman, Carter Barnhart Architects. Judge/Executive Jamie Byrd said this “is part of the million dollars I was given by the House and the Senate for multi-county projects.”

She added, “This is all money that is in our account, coming from Frankfort, this is not coming out of tax dollars locally.”

Botts made a motion that the court deed about 2,000 square feet of property on West Main Street to the City of Glasgow. The city plans to install a set of steps that will connect the upper parking lot behind the county attorney’s office to the street level at West Main Street. Richardson said he was in full support, telling the court that walking from the upper parking lot to his office is

a safety issue for both his staff and the public, especially during bad weather. The court unanimously approved the transfer.

Judge Byrd told the court she wanted to address some things in regard to the recent county audit and the 13 “findings” by the state auditor’s office. (Findings are defined as “results and conclusions from an audit, highlighting discrepancies, weaknesses, or issues, within an organization’s financial reporting, compliance or internal controls.”)

She said that staffing changes were partially to blame for the findings and not having enough staff to oversee certain aspects of the county’s finances are common “dings” for smaller counties to receive.

While the Transportation Committee had no business, Judge Byrd took the opportunity to explain why the county would, or would not, accept the lowest bid on a project. She said there are “times we need certain things and certain services that others cannot provide.” She added while the county received more bids for asphalt this year than last, the overall amount of these bids is down 15%.

Sheriff Kent Keen told the court that total CAD calls, as of mid May, were a little over 4,500, which averages out to 32 per day. As for the details of these CAD calls, Keen told the Barren County Progress, “They come from all over the county, from the other side of Temple Hill to Hiseville, from Tracy to Bon Ayr, and everywhere in between. Deputies have to not only get there as safely and as soon as possible, but they also must be prepared to deal with the situation. This is why training is a top priority.”

County Clerk Helena Birdwell told the court that during the month of April, the county clerk’s office took in over \$223,000, the largest

amount since March of 2021. She also told the court that special vehicles would soon be legal to drive on county roads.

Senate Bill 63 was passed this session and deals with street legal special vehicles, which include mini trucks, military vehicles, UTVs and side-by-sides. Currently, these vehicles are titled in Kentucky, but they do not have to be insured or licensed. Birdwell says that to drive these on the roadways, they must have a license plate, be insured, and be inspected by the Sheriff’s Office. The fiscal court is set to adopt an ordinance at their next meeting.

Birdwell said the clerk’s office now has several new license plates available, including plates for the Cattleman’s Association and EMS. A portion of the proceeds from these plates will go to help these organizations.

Coroner Tim Gibson told the court that during April there were 17 death investigations, 15 natural and two accidental, bringing the yearly total to 78. Gibson asked the court to keep his office in their thoughts, noting the toughness of their job.

Jailer Aaron Shirley said that during April, the Barren County Detention Center road crew put in 6,000 hours, cleaned a little over 130 miles and picked up over 800 bags of trash.

The Fiscal Court recognized May as “Beef Month”, noting the work done by the Barren County Cattlemen’s Association. According to the proclamation, Barren County is not only the leading beef producing county in the Commonwealth, but also east of the Mississippi.

The Court also declared May 18 through May 24 as “Emergency Medical Services Week”, thanking all the individuals, both paid and volunteer, for their dedication to our community.

## BARREN COUNTY

# State Audit Findings

**Allyson Dix**  
*Managing Editor*

State Auditor Allison Ball released an audit for the financial statements of Barren County Fiscal Court that note 13 findings in the report, which was for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

Some of the audit findings include a lack internal controls over monthly bank reconciliations, accounting functions, financial reporting, and disbursements, as well as untimely financial reports, improper debt disclosure, and not following procurement procedures for purchases over \$40,000.

The audit notes, “Deficiencies and reporting errors include understated account balances, unprepared financial statements for funds, unbudgeted funds, unreported budget amounts, over expended appropriations, fraudulent checks cleared bank account and caught by the bank not the county, and unprepared or late bank reconciliations.”

Another finding in the audit is that the fiscal court did not pay tax liabilities and retirement withholdings timely, resulting in penalties and interest. “Federal tax withholdings and employer contributions were not properly turned over to the Internal Revenue Service timely. Thirty of 50 federal payments were late, eight of 23 state payments were late, and ten of 12 retirement payments made to the Kentucky Retirement System were late.”

“Due to a lack of strong internal controls over the financial reporting process, material errors that were identified, and the potential for unidentified material errors, we cannot overcome the fraud risks with additional audit procedures; therefore, we are unable to provide the fiscal court with an opinion on whether the financial statement is free from material misstatement,” the audit reads, adding a disclaimer of opinion will be issued.

Some of the audit findings will be referred to the Ken-

tucky Department for Local Government and the Kentucky Retirement System.

Judge/Executive Jamie Byrd said internal controls have been implemented including the hiring of an additional person to provide more oversight on many of the issues found in the audit.

Byrd also said some of the issues are a result of losing the former treasurer just two weeks after she took office on January 1, 2023, five months before the start date of the recent audit.

“I also want everyone to recognize that was the audit for our situation coming six months in, and we had a treasurer leave two weeks in with no notice, and we had to figure things out in 24 to 48 hours,” Byrd said in a fiscal court meeting.

Former treasurer Jenny Hoffman resigned with no notice a mere two weeks into Byrd’s term. On January 14, 2023, a Saturday, Hoffman slid her resignation under Byrd’s office door expressing frustration with her salary and that she had accepted another job.

Amanda Steger replaced Hoffman’s position as county treasurer, approved by the Barren County Magistrates. She was sworn in on January 19, 2023. Before this role, Steger was an office manager with Pharmacy Express and Metcalfe Drugs and Parkland Drugs. She graduated from Western Kentucky University in 2014 with BAs in Science, Accounting, and Biology.

Steger told the Barren County Progress, “I feel that myself and our office have worked diligently since our exit interview at the end of May 2024 for the [fiscal year] 22/23 audit; unfortunately, with that being said, the timing of fixing certain issues and the closing of the FY 23/24 came right about the same time.”

Steger said she and others have continued to work hard in learning more from the state auditors.

“They were extremely helpful

**AUDIT,**  
*Continued on Page A8*