

Task force approves healthy KY recommendations

Capitol Update

FRANKFORT — The Make America Healthy Again Kentucky Task Force unanimously approved recommendations Dec. 16 for lawmakers to consider during the 2026 legislative session.

Co-Chair Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer, R-Alexandria, said the task force has learned from health and wellness advocates during the legislature's interim period. She said task force members want to look at lifestyle medicine and the role of nutrition.

Funke Frommeyer also said parents must provide good examples of healthy living for wellness initiatives to be effective for



Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer

young people.

"We need to educate our kids, but if the parents aren't walking it and talking and living it," she said.

Among the group's recommendations are calls to support "Food is Medicine" programs and encourage

the purchase of healthy foods with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program dollars.

The task force is also seeking ways to improve healthy meals in schools, strengthen physical education requirements for high school graduation, and increase awareness among health care providers about the impact of nutrition and diet strategies on health outcomes.

Co-Chair Rep. Matt Lockett, R-Nicholasville, said improving health outcomes should be important to everyone and he urged lawmakers to communicate among each other on proposed bills.

Rep. Emily Callaway, R-Louisville, said she also

agrees about the importance of collaboration.

"What I've heard come up multiple times is opportunity for our local health departments to participate. And I just don't see a consistency there, so I'm personally going to be reaching out to that cabinet and just seeing what the disconnect is," she said. "Louisville should have a very strong health department, and with that health department, it should include obviously this mentality that food is medicine."

Callaway pointed to the Dare to Care Food Bank and its push to provide fresh food for the people it serves. She said the group is purchasing land to grow food and creating a facility

specifically for fresh food, along with offering cooking classes.

Funke Frommeyer told task force members that other states are being proactive to promote and educate people about wellness.

"Both Texas and California have some very meaningful bills around some conversations that we've had presented during our interim, so I just wanted to suggest to our members consider really reviewing some of what has now been put into legislation in other states," she said.

In addition to groups such as the Dare to Care Food Bank, Funke Frommeyer said faith-based groups can help people lead healthier lives, mentioning

a large church in Louisville that has community gardens.

"There are faith-based solutions throughout the states that are taking really, really small actions that can grow into something quite meaningful," she said.

Earlier during the meeting, Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, also shared some ideas and observations he gleaned when he was a grocer.

For instance, Higdon suggested that SNAP benefits could be issued twice a month rather than once a month because milk and fresh fruits and vegetables won't last an entire month.

Lawmakers are scheduled to convene the 2026 legislative session on Jan. 6.

School district waits on bus orders

By Burton Cole

BUTLER — The Pendleton County School District continued at its Dec. 15 meeting with its plan to replace one school bus a year, authorizing financing of a 72-passenger bus for \$151,706.

The Board of Education unanimously accepted an agreement with the Kentucky Interlocal School Transportation Association for its school bus financing program at approximately 3.7% interest.

The problem, said Superintendent Joe Buerkley, is the district still hasn't received the last two buses it ordered in the last two years.

"This isn't on us," he said. "It's the whole state of Kentucky."

The state has approved only three vendors nationally that all school districts across the commonwealth can use for bus purchases. This has led to orders being backed up all across Kentucky.

"The bus we ordered two years ago is in Kentucky and should be delivered any day now," Buerkley said. "The one we order a year ago is still in production. In six weeks, we should have it."

Buerkley also noted that when he became superintendent of schools eight years ago, school buses cost

about \$88,000. They have nearly doubled in price since then.

In other action at the Dec. 15 meeting:

- Approved the close-out form for the Sharp Middle School renovations and stadium project, officially bringing that project to close.

- Approved a change order request of the new tennis courts being built behind Sharp Middle School due to the need for cement stabilization, installation of finger drains and relocation of the courts 8 feet to the east because of water leaking out of the hill on the south side of the courts.

Buerkley said that when crews were laying the pad for the courts, water began seeping out of the hill toward the woods and was seeping toward the football field. The problem needed to be dealt with now, or it would be a bigger problem down the road as water undermined construction.

- Authorized payment of \$191,070 to O'Heil Site Solutions for work completed on the tennis courts project.

The board also Authorized payment of \$225,506.70 to O'Heil for the next section of work completed on the tennis courts.

The reason there were two payouts

this month is that the vendor missed its deadline to get paid the previous month, so both were paid out this month.

- Accepted a donation of \$1,100 from the Great Lakes Construction Co. of Hinckley, Ohio, for the North Family Resource Center to assist with Christmas sponsorships.

- The Pendleton County School District sailed through an audit by the Kentucky School Boards Association with KSBA reporting no findings of errors or weak financial practices, and that there were no difficulties performing the audit.

"There's a lot to be proud of here," board Vice President Laura Schack said, noting that Superintendent Joe Buerkley and Director of Finance/Human Resources Jennifer Pierce were to be commended for keeping the district on track.

- Approved a comprehensive district improvement plan for the 2025-26 school year as submitted by Laura Pugh, executive director of teaching and learning. The Kentucky Department of Education requires each district to complete and submit a plan by Jan. 1 of each year.

- Agreed to continue with Robert Ehmet Hayes and Associates as the district's architectural services firm.

Kentucky fisheries benefit from discarded Christmas trees

KY Fish & Wildlife

FRANKFORT — Used Christmas trees can have another life after the holiday season.

Natural trees donated to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources "Christmas for the Fishes" tree recycling program can give a home to fish in many Kentucky lakes in the coming year.

This annual program uses evergreens donated after the holiday season to create underwater habitats that help fish thrive.

"Donated Christmas trees are put to work in local reservoirs as fish habitat, where they're arranged in clusters that create dense branches and small pockets for young fish to hide," said Spencer Phillips, a fisheries biologist with Kentucky

Fish and Wildlife.

"These structures also attract sportfish, offering opportunistic feeding as smaller fish venture out from cover."

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife will be accepting evergreen trees from Dec. 26 through Jan. 16 at 37 drop-off locations across the state.

None of the locations are in Pendleton County. The nearest drop-off sites are Pendry Park, 4113 Williams Lane, Melbourn, in Campbell County (Megan Clere, 859-547-1866); Marshall Powersports, 18 Taft Highway, Dry Ridge, in Grant County (David Baker, 502-892-4470); Camp Ernst Lake boat ramp area, 7615 Camp Ernst Road, Burlington, in Boone County (David Bak-

er); Lake Carnico, Carnico Road or North Lakeshore Drive, Nicholas County (Tom Timmerman, 502-682-0240); Lusby Lake/Scott County Park, Scott County Park Road, north of Georgetown in Scott County (Baker).

Trees should be real, not artificial, and should be free of lights, garland and decorations. Limbs, wreaths, brush or other plants will not be accepted.

Fish thrive in an environment that is full of different types of cover, including trees and logs. The donated trees will help restore woody structures that have previously decayed in our lakes, providing protective cover and shade for a variety of fish species.

"Each tree can provide benefits for local fisheries

for several years, gradually enhancing fish habitat that has been lost over time," Phillips said. "Local anglers also benefit from the creation of reliable fishing hotspots around the sunken brush piles."

Donated trees will be anchored to environmentally friendly weights and submerged at various depths in different lakes and reservoirs across Kentucky to provide places for fish to feed, shelter and spawn. They make great refuge and feeding habitat for game fish, and small fish and invertebrates crucial for a thriving ecosystem.

The locations where trees are installed generally become hot spots for fish species targeted by anglers. For more information or to find a drop-off location, visit the department's website, fw.ky.gov, or call 800-858-1549 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays, excluding holidays.

Candidates who've filed so far for May primaries

FALMOUTH — Filing is open for the May 19 primary election. Candidates have until Jan. 9 to file their nomination petitions.

So far, only candidates for the Republican primary have filed. No Democrats have yet filed as candidates for office.

With three weeks to go before the deadline, candidates who filed in Pendleton County as of Friday morning include:

County Judge Executive
Ronald Anthony Strong, Butler, Republican
Rick Mineer, Falmouth, Republican
James F. Poynter, Butler, Republican

Magistrate, District 1
Taylor N. Scott, Butler, Republican
Charles William "Craig" Peoples, Butler, Republican
John Jay Yelton, Butler, Republican

Magistrate, District 2
Joshua Keith Plummer, Butler, Republican (incumbent)

Magistrate, District 3
Ben W. Wolfe, Falmouth, Republican
Darrin Wade Gregg, Falmouth, Republican (in-

cumbent)

Magistrate, District 4
Shawn Joseph Moore, Falmouth, Republican
Jeffrey Scott Aulick, Falmouth, Republican
Steven D. Foster, Falmouth, Republican.

County Sheriff
Jared Brewer, Falmouth, Republican (incumbent)

County Clerk
Alan Whaley, Demossville, Republican
Kinley Glahn Scott, Falmouth, Republican
Michael R. Fleharty, Falmouth, Republican

County Coroner
Jonathon Neal Peoples, Butler, Republican

Jailer
Anthony Lee Gillespie, Falmouth, Republican (incumbent)

County Surveyor
Derrick James Daily, Demossville, Republican

Constable, District 4
Scott Edgley, Falmouth, Republican (incumbent)

Falmouth Mayor
George Allen Smith, Falmouth, Republican

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The Council agreed that the new format was better than the old Excel spreadsheets.

- Instead of the regular committee meetings preceding council meetings, Doug Buresh from the Kentucky Municipal Energy Agency shared a presentation of the agency and the role Falmouth and other cities across Kentucky play in helping to provide electricity to their citizens.

Northern Kentucky Area Development District's associate director of Community Development Planning, Katie Jo Berkshire Kirkpatrick, also attended the meeting. She is working with Hazen on several proposed infrastructure improvement projects.

- Council went into closed session to deliberate on potential property acquisition and/or proposed litigation involving code violations on specific real property. No action was taken.

- The city will issue a public notice clarifying responsibilities for sewer cleanout and the prevention of rainwater incursion.

- Due to the holiday, the next regular meeting will be Jan. 8 and the last large trash item pickup by the city will be Dec. 29.

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In other business, the Court discussed renewing the debt collection services of Transworld Systems Inc.

According to Leinart

Law Firm, TSI is one of the largest debt collection agencies in the United States, serving businesses, governmental agencies, healthcare providers, and educational institutions. Pendleton County con-

tracts with TSI to collect unpaid charges for fire department runs.

In closing remarks, magistrates commended the road department on an outstanding job of snow removal.

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