



George Sparks/LEWIS COUNTY HERALD
Misty morning . . . Fog on the Ohio River shrouds this tow and barges as they make their way down the river past Vanceburg. Riverside residents and early morning walkers are treated to a variety of scenic views along Lewis County’s riverfront.

Council approves contribution to dispatch center

Herald Report

Vanceburg City Council met in regular session last week with members approving a contribution to the Lewis County E911 Dispatch Center totaling \$22,500 over the next 12 months.

Emergency Management Director Dennis Brown had made a request for funding assistance totaling \$48,000 during the July meeting.

That request was rejected by a 4-3 vote and further action on the matter was tabled until this month to allow members time to further review the request as well the budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Brown said the \$4,000 monthly charge would be a bridge while the county searches for other funding sources.

Brown said the Lewis County 911 handled approximately 12,000 calls for the 2024-25 fiscal year, including 1,454 for the Vanceburg Police Department. He said the \$3.50 monthly surcharge per landline is not enough because the number of landlines has decreased.

Lewis County’s 911 budget is \$432,400 for the new fiscal year. Expenses include, dispatcher salaries, equipment maintenance, software upgrades and operational costs.

There are three projected revenue sources: \$135,000 from landline surcharges, \$200,000 from state Commercial Mobile Radio Service funds, and \$37,400 from grants and interest.

Property tax monies have not been used to support the 911 budget in the past but the dwindling number of landlines in the county have resulted in a significant decrease in revenue for the facility.

Lewis County E911 dispatchers handle all 911 emergency calls for the county in addition to administrative calls for the center.

The center dispatches for all fire departments in the county as well as Lewis County Sheriff, Vanceburg Police, Lewis

County EMS, and other affiliated agencies.

“However, actual receipts last year totaled only \$271,342.24 against a budget of \$482,542.67, creating a shortfall of over \$211,000,” Brown wrote.

Council members Nicole Cantu, John Grabill and Joni Pugh voted in favor, while Kathy McCann, Richard Walje and Angie Patton voted no. Mayor Dane Blankenship’s no vote broke the tie.

“I want to support, but I don’t want to support a whole year, so I’ll have to say no,” McCann said at the July meeting. “I mean, six months I would’ve been good with.”

Mason County and the City of Maysville have an inter-local and share responsibility and funding, and Greenup County receives county budget allocations and has pursued grants for operations and upgrades.

Lewis County Fiscal Court approved a transfer of \$45,000 to the 911 fund during their July 14 meeting.

Pugh said last week she had an opportunity to visit the dispatch center and had spoken with Judge Executive George Sparks. “I just feel like we need to help them if we can,” she said.

Walje said he understands concerns of city residents who pay county property taxes as well as city property taxes.

“What I would be willing to do, just to make it short, is to support about half of what the county has produced, which is \$45,000 . . . I know it’s not going to make some people happy,” he added.

“Also, I’ve looked at the importance of 911 and want to make clear that that would be a one time thing,” Walje stated.

He recommended the support be spread over the next year which will allow the county to consider alternative funding options for the dispatch center.

Buffalo Trace Area Development Director

Kevin Cornett addressed members and provided information on the center.

“The first thing that’s misinformation is Lewis County 911 is not funded by tax dollars of the county or the city,” he stated. “It is funded by a fee that is on your landline phones.”

“In 2006, the budget was based on 7,183 landline phones at \$3.50 per phone per month,” he said.

Cornett added that last year, the number of landlines in Lewis County totaled 3,002.

“Your revenue has dropped from \$25,000 a month to \$8,000 a month,” he said. “So you get the picture of what’s happening.”

He said there was a carry-over of reserves each year since 2018 but those reserves have been depleted “to where they have \$15,000 today.”

“The other pot of money that you get is from your cell service,” he said, holding up his own device. “So on your cell phone, you’ll look on your cell bill, you get a 70 cent charge per line on your cell bill that goes to the state of Kentucky.”

“That 70 cents does not come to the county or the local dispatch,” he said. “The bulk of that stays with the state for the technology to be on the state side so that they can send the cell calls to where we can locate that in our county,” he said.

“The county receives about 14 to 15 cents per cell phone (per month),” Cornett said. “Well, that’s a big drastic difference between \$3.50 per landline and 14 cents per cell phone.”

He said every county in the state has had the same issue over the past few years and provided some of the options other counties have adopted to address that loss of income from landlines.

“The bottom line with this issue is that it’s not taxation, it is simply the landline fee and how that has been structured through the years and it’s just now coming to a

fruition of where we stand,” he added.

He said there are options being explored for alternative funding for a long term solution but it isn’t a quick process.

Judge Executive George Sparks thanked council members for their consideration of the request and for the past financial assistance with ambulance service fees prior to Lewis County establishing its own emergency

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‘Other’ dominates new registrations

By Dennis K. Brown

Secretary of State Michael Adams announced that Kentuckians registering under “Other” political affiliations have led new voter registration for the fifth month in a row, with net new Others outpacing net new Republicans by a nearly 3-to-1 margin, as Democrats continue to hemorrhage voters.

“We see more and more Kentuckians bucking the two-party system,” said Adams. “This dynamic could make for an interesting 2026 election.”

In July, 6,186 voters were removed, including 4,958 deceased, 538 who had moved out of state, 502 convicted felons, 97 who had voluntarily deregistered, 59 adjudicated mentally incompetent, 18 duplicate registrations, and 14 identified as non-citizens.

Republican registration accounts for 47 percent of the electorate, with 1,584,157 voters. Republican registration rose by 630, a .04 percent increase. Democratic registration constitutes 42 percent of the electorate, with 1,388,758 voters. Democratic registration fell by 1,524, a .11 percent decrease. There are 364,539 voters registered under other political affiliations, making up 11 percent of the electorate. “Other” registration grew by 1,792, a .49 percent increase.

KY 344 road closure

Herald Report

In a project that got underway Monday, highway crews have temporarily closed KY 344 at milepoint 9.9 between Silver Lick Hollow and Black Lick Branch to replace a culvert underneath the highway.

Traffic should detour using KY 57, KY 9, or KY 59. The road will remain closed until Wednesday, August 13 at 8:00 p.m.

A closure to replace a second culvert next week will begin at 8:00 a.m.

Monday, August 18, on KY 344 between Silver Lick Hollow and Black Lick Branch. The nearby location at milepoint 10.1 will remain closed until 9:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 20.

Visit GoKY.ky.gov online for Kentucky travel and traffic information, or use the Waze mobile application.

Follow Transportation Cabinet operations in northeast Kentucky on social media @KYTC District 9.



Dennis Brown/LEWIS COUNTY HERALD
City, county, and Buffalo Trace ADD officials meet with state officials to discuss options for property at the old lock and dam facility on KY 8 west of Vanceburg. The officials also reviewed other locations during their visit.