



MATT GOINS

Members of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council sit on a dias, sometimes referred to as the “horse shoe.” Debates have recently cropped up over the council’s seating chart.

Lexington has 67 city boards. New subcommittee to look at upping diversity

BY BETH MUSGRAVE
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The Lexington council is starting a subcommittee to look at upping diversity and transparency of the city’s 67 boards.

“The goal of this subcommittee is not only to make sure the makeup of our boards and commissions truly represents the people of Fayette County, but to also make them more efficient, accessible and impactful for our communities,” Lexington Vice Mayor Dan Wu said at a news conference Tuesday at city hall announcing the new subcommittee.

Lexington Fayette Urban County Councilwoman Shayla Lynch said in 2023 she met with tenants who requested more renters on city boards. Lynch said she then broadened the scope and looked at representation on all city boards.

CivicLex, a local non-profit, completed an analysis of the city’s boards and commissions in March and found the boards needed more diverse representation and better training, and needed to be more

accessible to the public.

Other findings by CivicLex:

- Limited public awareness & accessibility: Many boards lack clear public meeting schedules and most Lexington residents don’t know they exist.
- Representation gaps: Many boards lack clear public meeting schedules, and most Lexington residents don’t know they exist.
- Operational challenges: Some boards lack clarity on their roles and struggle with recruitment.

CivicLex made more than 14 recommendations. The subcommittee will begin meeting Aug 28.

“Creating policy and pathways to make our city’s boards and commissions more accessible to all is work that excited me, and it will benefit our community for decades to come,” said Lynch, who will serve as co-chair of the committee with Wu.

“If you are interested in serving on a board or commission, please visit the city’s website, lexingtonky.gov and apply. We need your voice at the

table.”

COUNCIL AND GORTON HAVE FOUGHT OVER KEY APPOINTMENTS

The move comes as the council and Mayor Linda Gorton have tussled over appointments to two key planning boards: the Urban County Planning Commission, which oversees major zone changes, and the Board of Adjustment, which oversees conditional use permits for things such as short-term rentals and variances for city land use regulations such as setbacks.

The mayor appoints members of city boards. The council confirms members of the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment, the two most powerful boards in the city.

The council has failed to confirm two of Gorton’s appointments to those boards in the past two years, which is rare.

Last year, the council failed to confirm Janice Meyer to the planning commission. According to city rules, Gorton has 60 days to appoint someone after the council votes not to confirm. Gorton did not. Under city rules, the Plan-

ning Commission then appointed its own member, former member Frank Penn.

In late June, the council also failed to confirm Anissa Martinez to fill a vacant spot on the Board of Adjustment. Martinez works as a security specialist for Bechtel, an engineering company in Richmond.

Gorton has appointed Ross Boggess to fill the open position on the Board of Adjustment. A council confirmation hearing is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Thursday. Boggess is a podcaster and works for an Atlanta-based developer, according to his LinkedIn profile.

The council deliberates and votes on those appointments behind closed doors. The reason why appointees are not confirmed is not made public. The council is allowed to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters, including appointments to boards and commissions.

Council members have previously complained Gorton takes too long to fill appointments to the city’s main planning boards.

Lexington is lowering its property taxes. But your tax bill may not go down

BY BETH MUSGRAVE
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Lexington will slightly lower tax rates next year, but homeowners may not see a decrease in their property tax bills.

The Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council took its first vote during a Tuesday council work session to approve a tax rate that would generate a 4% increase in revenue, thanks largely to new properties being added to the tax rolls and increasing property values.

But the merged government’s portion of individual homeowners’ property tax bill is very small — about 6%. The remaining property taxes go to the state, the school system and other smaller taxing districts like Lextran.

Someone who owns a \$260,000 home, the average home price in Fayette County, paid the merged government general fund \$197.60 in taxes this year, said Melissa Lueker, director of budgeting for the city, during Tuesday’s work session.

That’s a tax rate of .076%, or 7.6 cents for every \$100 of assessed property. (To do the math, take \$260,000/100=\$2,600, and multiply that by .076).

Next year’s rate will be .075% — or 7.5 cents for every \$100 of assessed property. That means that same \$260,000 homeowner will pay \$195 in taxes to the general fund, the city’s main checking account. The general fund pays for police, fire and most city services.

The city also charges for waste pickup, street lights and street sweeping through the urban services

fund. Different homeowners are in different taxing districts. Some districts receive all four services. Some receive only street lights or waste pick up.

An average homeowner pays \$455 for all three city services. Under the new taxing rates for those services, that bill will drop slightly to \$449.80.

Homeowners’ tax bills show which urban service district a home is in.

The council will hold a public hearing and take a final vote on the tax rate on Aug. 28. No council members voted against or raised objections to the rate during Tuesday’s council work session.

The bulk of personal and property taxes — 64% — go to the Fayette County Public School system, city officials said Tuesday.

The school system will set its property tax rate later this month. The majority of the revenue for the city’s budget comes from occupational taxes or taxes on wages.

Here’s where other property taxes go based on 2024 tax rates on a \$260,000 house:

State:	9.1%
Fayette County Public Schools:	64.1%
Lextran:	4.7%
LFUCG General:	6.1%

LFUCG URBAN SERVICES

Waste collection:	11%
Street lights:	2%
Street cleaning:	0.7%
Fayette County Extension Service:	0.3%
Fayette County Soil and Water District:	0.1%
Lexington-Fayette County Health Department:	1.9%
Total property tax bill:	\$3,271.58

Lexington Blue owner asks judge to dismiss KY attorney general’s complaint

BY JANET PATTON
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Lexington Blue roofing company owner Brad Pagel has filed a motion through his new attorney, Adrienne Southworth, to have the Kentucky attorney general’s lawsuit against him dismissed.

The motion did not ask for the complaint against Pagel’s wife, Courtney, to be dismissed or complaints against any other former Lexington Blue employees.

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman’s office filed a complaint in Fayette Circuit Court alleging Pagel, his company and multiple employees violated the Kentucky Consumer Protection Act, as well as statutes governing roofing contractors. They have also been accused of unjust enrichment.

The motion is scheduled to be heard by Fayette Circuit Judge Diane Minnifield at 2 p.m. Sept. 5.

According to the Attorney General’s complaint, Pagel and his wife, Courtney, as well as employees Alex Southwell, Brooke Durbin and Nicholas Conway, accepted large deposits to Lexington Blue from hundreds of homeowners for roof repairs that were never completed or in some cases even started.

Lexington Blue closed abruptly in April and filed for bankruptcy in June. According to filings in the bankruptcy, at least 263 roofing contracts were at

least partially paid for but never completed.

Coleman’s office is seeking the recovery of potentially millions in misappropriated funds, plus damages and fines.

In an Aug. 10 filing, Pagel argues that the Attorney General has failed to pin “a specific wrongful act” on Pagel.

“Nowhere do the complaints state that Brad Pagel personally made misrepresentations to a consumer, damaged property or diverted funds with any particularity necessary to maintain this type of claim,” according to the motion.

The attorney general’s filing “does not identify a single consumer or employee to whom Mr. Pagel spoke, the date or place of any such conversation, or any statement made to such third party,” according to Pagel’s motion, which also alleges the Attorney General has no standing to allege a private unjust enrichment claim.

The motion to dismiss was filed one day before Pagel testified under oath in his federal bankruptcy case and answered questions from creditors, homeowners, the U.S. Trustee’s attorneys and an attorney from the Kentucky Attorney General’s office.

At that creditors’ meeting, Pagel repeatedly blamed his employees for steering Lexington Blue into troubled financial waters while he claimed to be hands-off despite receiving a weekly paycheck.

New Kroger Marketplace now open for Central KY shoppers

BY PIPER HANSEN
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Lexington’s newest Kroger Marketplace is open.

Central Kentucky shoppers can go inside the new store on Aug. 14, following a 7:45 a.m. ribbon cutting taking place on site, a few months earlier than expected. The store is Lexington’s third Marketplace location.

To celebrate the grand opening of its newest store at 760 Newtown Springs Drive off Newtown Pike, the grocery chain is offering the store’s first 250 customers a \$15 Kroger gift card.

The festivities don’t stop there.

Starting at 8 a.m. on Aug. 15, the first 100 fuel station customers will receive a \$50 Kroger gift card.

During the store’s first weekend open, from Aug. 14-17, vendors will be offering samples in the store. From Aug. 14-19, shoppers can get \$2 off select Starbucks drinks.

Through Aug. 26, shoppers will see an additional \$0.20 off per gallon in fuel savings.

The new 123,000-



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A development plan is being filed for a new Kroger Marketplace at 760 Newtown Springs in Lexington, Ky. Friday, Sept. 29, 2023.

square-foot store has an 18-pump fuel center, drive-thru pharmacy, Little Clinic, Wine & Spirits Shoppe, Starbucks, Murray’s Cheese Shop, and sushi bar, alongside home goods, apparel and typical grocery departments.

“Kroger has been part of the Bluegrass landscape for nearly a century, and this new Marketplace represents our continued commitment to growing with Kentucky,” said Jessica Sharp, corporate affairs manager for the Kroger Co. Louisville Division.

“This investment brings

jobs, innovation, and expanded services to Lexington, reinforcing our role as a partner in the region’s long-term economic growth.”

Kroger Marketplace stores are generally more than 120,000 square feet and add home goods and clothing sections to the department lineup. In Lexington, Kroger has Marketplace locations at Beaumont Centre Circle and on Richmond Road. A proposal for a fourth on Winchester Road was filed on May 5 by the same developer behind the New-

town Pike location.

The \$42 million store is the latest project by RD Property Group, the Kentucky-based real estate developer behind the Newtown Springs shopping center and subdivision. Construction began in August 2024.

According to the firm’s website, some acreage at the shopping center is still for lease. An online proposed site map show aside from the Kroger Marketplace, the shopping center will also have a Jimmy John’s, Little Caesars, Tire Discounters, Shell, standalone Starbucks, Hot Heads Burritos and UPS location.

Lexington’s third Kroger Marketplace is opening a day after Publix, the Florida-based supermarket chain, said it had signed a lease for a location in Georgetown, about 30 minutes north of Lexington in Scott County. The 50,325-square-foot supermarket will be adjacent to Publix Liquors. There is no projected open date for the store or anticipated construction start.

This story may be updated following Thursday morning’s ribbon cutting event.