

Council ...

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es ... That is a bowl and they will come up all sides and they will bring their own [alcohol] ... Anybody can come over the top with coolers and partake anytime they want to, and it's hard for law enforcement to control that."

Councilman Sorrell again cited the bracelet/hand stamp aspect of his proposal, noting that those caught with unauthorized beverages could be removed from the event.

Police Chief Wayne Lewis told the council that opening up a public venue for alcohol sales with licensed sellers would hinder law enforcement's ability to make alcohol-related arrests.

"My understanding of the law was that if you have a venue license that you sell alcohol, then that's no longer considered a public place," Lewis said. "Which ties the hands of law enforcement ... You can't just go snatch them up for alcohol intoxication. Whereas, the way it is now, you can."

City Attorney Daniel Frederick concurred.

"Not only does it do that, but permitting alcohol consumption in public places also imposes greater scrutiny on law enforcement," Frederick said. "If you are saying that alcohol consumption in public places is legal, what you've effectively done is abrogated that statute, at least in that place and time. Therefore, [law enforcement no longer has the ability to arrest someone on reasonable suspicion of intoxication ... So it does substantially weaken law enforcement."

Mayor Kyle Risner asked if the language of such a proposal would also allow vendors to sell alcohol gospel and faith-based events at Old Mill Park.

"We'd just not sell alcohol [at that time]," Councilman Sorrell said. "You're not going to want to sell alcohol at a Christian event."

Attorney Frederick indicated that such an exclusion could result in first amendment complaints before further discussing issues related to special alcohol licenses, discretion and content discrimination.

Additionally, Attorney Frederick told Mayor Risner that the authorization of alcohol sales and consumption on city property would subject the city to additional liabilities, particularly in regard to overselling and potential alcohol-related wrongful death claims.

Attorney Frederick further noted that the city's qualified immunity would not apply to alcohol sales on public property, as that does not constitute a "necessary function" of a municipality.

Councilman Sorrell inquired as to whether the prevention of overselling to event attendees is the responsibility of the vendors, stating that he had not heard of litigation against an entertainment or sporting venue related to the overselling of alcohol.

Attorney Frederick replied, "Lawyers, whenever they have a death case, are always hunting for a deep pocket. There will be claims. I can assure you of that."

Councilman Sorrell further stated the city's need for additional revenue.

"Every tourist dollar we get from outside of this area is a new dollar," Sorrell said. "It's not just us passing the same dollar around ... We have to find a way to compete. If not, people will take their money somewhere else."

Councilman Walter shared public concerns about the city being "wide open to the point of letting anything go" and worries about people "walking around with open beers" at the Sorghum Festival.

Jason Tackett, a member of the Morgan County Morgan County Ministerial Association, also spoke extensively about what he described as the council's moral responsibilities.

"[The proposal] speaks of special events," Tackett said. "But these aren't just special events that occur in the private sector. They are events that are hosted and planned by the city government, and as such the city would take complete liability for the morality of the event."

"Even if you try to sponsor an event that allows this to happen in one section [of a venue], it does not keep from the moral culpability of the consequences that flow out of that section. These events are not private events. They are open to the

public and intended to be for families."

West Liberty United Methodist Church Pastor Jamie Brunk indicated that he had "very mixed emotions" about the proposal.

Kayla Williams of Gateway Community Action Agency stated that she felt Councilman Sorrell's points regarding new revenue were valid, but also questioned whether enough funds are available to compensate law enforcement for additional patrols.

Bookkeeper Ashley Conley – who also serves as the city's Alcohol Beverage Control administrator – noted that revenue gleaned from alcohol sales cannot be used to patrol events and venues offering alcohol.

Mayor Risner asked if the council wished to pursue the amendment proposal, and Councilman Walter opined that a formal amendment should be presented for consideration.

"We don't have an amendment," Walter said. "We just have matters of opinions and speculation right now. I don't think there is anything for us to move on."

The discussion concluded with no action taken on the matter.

Utility Rates Discussion

In other news, City Clerk Amy Cox told the council that she and administration staffers have spoken with department heads about potential rate increases for city water, sewer and gas services.

"We are facing large increases," Cox said. "Two hundred percent on certain parts and things that we need to make the sewer plant run, and we're facing the same thing with gas and water. It's a problem that's happening everywhere – not just here."

Wastewater Plant Superintendent Keith Dulen presented a report indicating that the sewer plant has been operating at a \$49,436.08 loss over the past year, and also included numbers for several potential rate increase options for residential customers:

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- **8 Percent** – Dollar amount \$1.90 for a new minimum rate of \$25.68.
- **10 percent** – Dollar amount \$2.38 for a new minimum rate of \$26.16.
- **12 percent** – Dollar amount \$2.85 for a new minimum rate of \$26.63.
- **15 percent** – Dollar amount \$3.57 for a new minimum rate of \$27.35.
- **20 percent** – Dollar amount \$4.77 for a new minimum rate of \$28.54.
- **25 percent** – Dollar amount \$5.95 for a new minimum rate of \$29.72.

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Dulen also listed commercial rate increase options:

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- **8 Percent** – Dollar amount \$1.90 for a new rate minimum rate of \$27.67.
- **10 percent** – Dollar amount \$2.38 for a new minimum rate of \$28.35.
- **12 percent** – Dollar amount \$2.58 for a new minimum rate of \$28.86.
- **15 percent** – Dollar amount \$3.87 for a new minimum rate of \$29.64.
- **20 percent** – Dollar amount \$5.15 for a new minimum rate of \$30.92.
- **25 percent** – Dollar amount \$6.44 for a new minimum rate of \$32.21.

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Councilman Sorrell asked Dulen what would be the lowest possible amount that could do at this time.

"I've projected 25 percent," Dulen said. "I know you don't want to do that, but you're losing money ... You're fixing to lose your ARPA money, and that's what you've been running off of the past few years for these big [sewer] projects. Once it's gone and we have a big project, it's going be hard to pay for that. And about every year, the sewer gets hit with at least one big project."

"One big breakdown," Mayor Risner clarified.

Clerk Cox concurred with Dulen's statements regarding federal American Recovery Plan Act, or ARPA, funds.

"ARPA has saved us for the past several years," Cox said. "I'm very thankful we had it, but there comes a time when we've got the responsibility to make sure that we've got enough to cover bills and cover these projects – not just have our bills month to month. When something major breaks down, we've got to be able to fix it."

Councilman Sorrell inquired about the availability of grant

funding, and Clerk Cox stated that city officials have applied for as much as the municipality is eligible.

Dulen said in regard to rate increases. "But it's not going to get you over the hump ... If you're losing money every month, you've got to cover what you're losing, plus some ahead. The longer it goes on, the worse it will get."

Bookkeeper Ashley Conley spoke of rising insurance and utility costs and other "across the board" expenses, while Clerk Cox discussed officials' efforts to go over the budget line by line in recent years to reduce spending.

Gas Superintendent David Hinton warned of his department's rising costs and aging infrastructure.

"Parts for [the gas system] are at 110 percent increase overall in the past three years," Hinton said. "Your infrastructure is falling apart. It's not your fault, but the system is old."

Clerk Cox repeated that rate increases are needed for the water, sewer and gas departments.

"They are all in the same situation," Cox said. "We're failing in all three places and we've got to do something to stay up."

Bookkeeper Conley also cited training and employee retention issues in those departments, with Outside Water Superintendent Kevin Cantrell confirming that the water plant

is currently short-staffed.

"You're going to have to have some money to draw people to come in to work and to compete with other places," Cantrell said. "You've got two guys running the water plant right now. That's all you've got. So if one of them decides, 'I'm going somewhere else' what are you going to do? ... [Morgan County Water District] employees currently start out at \$15 per hour. We're starting out at \$12 per hour."

"For the long haul, you better be addressing it, because in a few years two of us at the water department will be gone. In another year, you've got a guy in the gas department that's gone. You need to do something to draw people in because your manpower is going to get shorter."

Councilman Walter opined that he felt rate increases for all three departments should be done at the same time, but also noted that the council should be mindful of consumers.

"There is also the 'wow' factor," Walter said. "We're going to get hit with, 'Okay, what about those on fixed income and the elderly?' We're going to have to consider that ... What can the consumer stand?"

The discussion concluded as Clerk Cox told the council that she and City Hall staff would prepare reports for their consideration prior to next month's meeting.

Additional Information

The West Liberty City Council meets at 5:30 p.m. the fourth Monday of each month in the upstairs council room at City Hall. All meetings are open to the public.



Correctional Officer Teddy Ching, right, accepts Employee of the Month Award from his supervisor, Lt. Chuck Lindon, left.

EKCC recognizes Ching as Employee of Month

Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex has recognized Correctional Officer Teddy Ching as Employee of the Month for March 2025. Mr. Ching began his employment at EKCC on July 18, 2011, and is currently assigned to the 8-4 shift in the Property Room.

"Mr. Ching has had to work without a supervisor on multiple occasions due to the institution being short staffed and was still able to complete all the daily duties in a timely manner with little to no help

from other staff," said Warden Shawn McKenzie. "Mr. Ching is very consistent with his time and attendance here at EKCC and is always willing to provide a helping hand whenever he is needed and he does an excellent job wherever he may be assigned. For these and many other reasons, Mr. Ching is a very deserving recipient of the Employee of the Month Award for March 2025."

Congratulations on a job well done!

Drive ...

(Continued From Page One)

sion slip, which can be found at kybloodcenter.org.

Appointments are preferred but walk-ins are welcome. To schedule a donation, visit kybloodcenter.org or call 800.775.2522.

About Kentucky Blood Center

KBC, the largest independent, full-service, nonprofit blood center in Kentucky, has been saving local lives since 1968. Licensed by the FDA, KBC's sole purpose is to collect, process and distribute blood for patients in Kentucky. KBC provides services in 90 Kentucky counties and has donor centers in Lexington, Louisville, Frankfort, Pikeville, Somerset and the Tri-County area (Corbin).

Death ...

(Continued From Page One)

Brian Evans and Deputy Coroners Sammy Vancleave and Robbie Bradley.

Janis Mitchell's obituary can be found elsewhere in this edition.

New Salem Baptist Church revival begins Sunday, March 9th

There will be a revival at New Salem Baptist Church, 243 Hwy. 1715 (off Hwy. 172) in West Liberty, Ky., on Sunday, March 9, at 6 p.m., and on weeknights at 7 p.m. Services will run through Saturday, March 15 (?). Bro. Danny Price, Bro. Bobby Fultz and Bro. Jackie Smith will be preaching with special singing each night. Come be a part of revival, prayer and souls be saved! God bless you all.

News Of Record

MARRIAGE LICENSES

- Katrina Marie Ratliff, 25, of Ezel, Ky., daughter of Sondra Jewell Conn Ratliff and David Harold Ratliff, to Russell Tyler Lee Minix, 25, of Ezel, Ky., son of Peggy Ann Roark Minix and Russell Minix.
- Paula Ann Adkins, 48, of West Liberty, Ky., daughter of Betty Frances Williams Stone and Paul Dean Collins, to Terry Lynn Adkins, 54, of West Liberty, Ky., son of Grace Davis Adkins and Andy Douglas Adkins.

PROPERTY TRANSFERS

- Commonwealth of Kentucky to Cheryl J. McGraw and Donnie McGraw – Tract 1: 0.096 acres located at intersection southeast of Revis Road and Revis Lane. Tract 2: Land located on north

side of U.S. 460 approximately 4.5 miles from West Liberty. \$8,683.

- William C. Lewis to Larry Dale Lewis and Julie Louise Lewis – 40 acres on the head waters of Yocum Creek of North Fork between Grant Lewis and TA Brown. \$58,000.
- William Drayton Kendrick, Drayton Pierce Kendrick and Brenda Sue Kendrick to Larry Alan Kendrick – Land located on Camp Branch thence west with H.R. Lacy line and Roy Arnett line. Love and affection.

CIRCUIT COURT

New civil suits – Americredit Financial Services, Inc. vs. Sandra Gunder, Feb. 18; Leann Watson vs. Lillie Peyton, Feb. 18.

DISTRICT COURT

New civil suits – Investments LLC vs. Justin McClurg, Feb. 14; Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC vs. Lindsey R. Stacy, Feb. 18; Denali Capital, LLC vs. Justin

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17TH ANNUAL

MOREHEAD

ANTIQUES

AND

ARTISANS MARKET

February 28, 2025

4:30 PM - 8:00 PM

March 1, 2025

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM


Morehead Conference Center


111 E. First Street
Morehead, KY 40351


\$5 ADMISSION

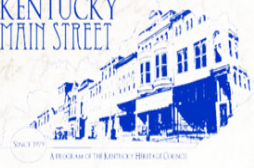
(12 and under admitted free)

FREE on-site appraisals by Richard Mook, an appraiser from KET's Kentucky Collectibles.

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