

Digest

Daviess Fiscal Court

During its meeting Thursday at the Daviess County Courthouse, Daviess Fiscal Court took the following actions:

- Heard Owensboro Health Community Report 2025
- Heard treasurer's report for January, 2025
- Approved minutes of February 4, 2025, Daviess County Fiscal Court meeting
- Approved all claims for all departments
- Approved Resolution 03-2025: A resolution for a temporary moratorium on Wind Energy, Solar Energy Systems, and Solar Panel installation
- Approved grant agreement by and between the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Department for Local Government, and Daviess County to establish an agreement for Owensboro Regional Recovery
 - Approved contract with the Green River Area Development District for Administrative Services for the Community Development Block Grant Program for Owensboro Regional Recovery
 - Approved grant application for Kentucky Pride Fund Composting
 - Approved grant application for Kentucky Pride Fund Household Hazardous Waste Management
 - Approved grant application for Kentucky Pride Fund Recycling
 - Approved change Order 08 for Bid No. 2324-67: Courthouse Renovation Project (Courthouse)

- Approved awarding quote for Election Equipment to Harp Enterprises, Inc (Clerk)
- Approved awarding quote for Additional E-Poll Books to Tenex Software Solutions (Clerk)
- Approved awarding quote for ActiveComms Licenses to Active911, Inc (Fire Rescue)
- Approved accepting proposal by Bell Engineering for Pickleball Court Site Design Services
- Approved declaring the following as surplus inventory: 1996 Freightline Pumper (Fire)
- Approved awarding Bid No. 2425-53: One (1) New ½ Ton 4WD Crew Cab Pickup Truck (Fire Rescue)
- Approved awarding RFQ No. 2425-64: Two (2) New Leachate Pumps (Solid Waste)
- Approved promoting Eddie Reddish to road supervisor effective 2/2/2025
- Approved reappointing Michael Boyd (SPT) to the Owensboro-Daviess County Airport Board effective 3/2/2025 through 3/1/2029
- Approved appointing Jimmy Edelen (Keith Riney S3T) to the Daviess County Property Maintenance Code — Board of Appeals effective 3/1/2025 through 2/28/2028
- Heard first reading of KOC 921.685 (2025) 02-2025 — An Ordinance Amending Text in Article 8 of the Owensboro Metropolitan Zoning Ordinance

SOLAR

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The temporary moratorium, which is in place for 12 months, states “laws will take time to adequately develop to meet the needs of our community and potential site development for alternative energy companies.”

NextEra Energy Resources, the company looking to to construct a roughly 1,200-acre solar farm that would generate 150 megawatts of clean, renewable energy in Daviess County, worked with Judge-Executive Charlie Castlen on the ordinance text amendments — which addresses the impact of a proposed solar farm on agricultural land, including setbacks from other property and stricter decommissioning policies.

The company is expected to hold off on moving forward with its project application while the temporary moratorium is in effect.

Commissioner Larry Conder cast the lone vote against the moratorium. He argued solar projects should be handled the same as any other business.

“There are other models of businesses that bought farmland, and those same concerns would exist regardless,” he said. “For example, the casino. They bought 20 acres of farmland. Same issues, abating property owners, flooding, make sure you take care of the roads, same things exist there, and I’m sure, as time progresses and the state approves more forms of gambling, they will expand; they will buy more property.”

“The same thing happens whether it be a chicken farm or hog farm or

anything else.”

Conder said he also sees the moratorium as “kicking the can down the road” since the proposed project has been discussed for months.

“This has been an issue for at least seven months,” he said. “I believe that we, as elected officials, should look at this; we’ve had seven months to do it, not for sure what one more year is going to get you. But I do believe that it sends a signal that if you don’t have a business that’s liked, you might want to think twice before you come here, because you might have a moratorium slapped on you.”

Castlen doesn’t believe the moratorium detracts from economic development.

“I absolutely do not agree,” he said. “This is limited to solar and is absolutely not broader than that.”

Word of NextEra’s proposed project came to light last July.

Castlen said shortly after learning of the proposed project he attempted to get a temporary moratorium put in place after he learned from staff that Daviess County’s ordinance related to solar farms was inadequate, but Commissioner Janie Marksberry and Conder declined at that time to support the measure.

Marksberry said new factors have come to light that made her reevaluate her initial stance, which included advocating for the rights of property owners to conduct business as they see fit.

“With new information comes responsibility, and I have learned a lot of things that I didn’t know back when I made that statement about solar and how it can affect the neighborhoods, what it can do to properties that are adja-

cent,” she said. “So I just want to make sure that we do this right. I think it’s very important.”

“Since I was not involved in any of the text amendment discussions or given research results, and especially with the recent flooding issues and road closures, I’m concerned with possible additional contributing factors for more flooding from these projects. I would like to have time to look into this and consider the impact that a project of this magnitude is going to have on our community.”

Commissioner Chris Castlen told those in attendance that he remains supportive of solar energy. But he believes it’s important to get the ordinance correct on the front end.

“I am also a supporter of doing the best for our citizens when local government needs to help update our processes, as we need to do with our current ordinance related to solar energy,” he said. “This moratorium will give us an opportunity to investigate what has and has not worked for the communities in Kentucky, as it relates to the rules around solar farms.”

“We have several things to consider regarding the effects and changes it will have on those who own properties, that have farms, those who live in the adjoining areas and our community in general.”

Marksberry said she’s anxious to get to work on the ordinance.

“I’m just really excited about getting together with the other commissioners, with the judge, with other researchers and just really diving into this,” she said. “I told the judge when I said I would agree to the moratorium, I want to do the work.”

PATEL

FROM PAGE A1

to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol. Patel has spoken of his desire to implement major changes at the FBI, including a reduced footprint in Washington and a renewed emphasis on the bureau’s traditional crime-fighting duties rather than the intelligence-gathering work that has come to define its mandate over the past two decades as national security threats have proliferated.

But he’s also echoed Trump’s stated desire for reprisal, raising alarm among Democrats for saying before he was nominated that he would “come after” anti-Trump “conspirators” in the federal government and the media.

In a statement posted after the vote on the social media platform X, Patel wrote that he was honored to be confirmed as the ninth director of the FBI, an institution he



Kash Patel

said had a “storied legacy.”

“The American people deserve an FBI that is transparent, accountable, and committed to justice. The politicalization of our justice system has eroded public trust — but that ends today,” he wrote. He said his mission as director was to “let good cops be cops — and rebuild trust in the FBI.”

Republicans angry over what they see as law enforcement bias against conservatives during the Democratic Biden administration, as well as criminal investigations into Trump, have rallied behind Patel as the right person for the job.

“Mr. Patel wants to make the FBI accountable once again — get back the reputation that the FBI has had historically for law enforcement,”

Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said this week before Patel was confirmed. “He wants to hold the FBI accountable to Congress, to the president and, most importantly, to the people they serve — the American taxpayer.”

TENURE

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planning a political comeback. Cameron said Thursday that his values align with Kentucky voters and touted his support for Trump.

“I’m going to be an ‘America First’ senator and it’s time for a new generation of leadership,” Cameron told the AP in a phone interview Thursday evening.

McConnell’s retirement announcement began the epilogue of a storied career as a master strategist, one in which he helped forge a conservative Supreme Court and steered the Senate through tax cuts, presidential impeachment trials and fierce political fights. Yet with his powerful perch atop committees, and nearly two years remaining in his term, McConnell vowed to complete his work on several remaining fronts.

“I have some unfinished business to attend to,” he said.

McConnell walked gingerly to the podium, sporting a walking boot. Senators from both sides of the political aisle seemed to listen most intently as he told them that while there are any number of reasons for pessimism, the strength of the Senate is not one of them.

“The Senate is still equipped for work of great consequence,” he told them.

As he concluded, Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., motioned for the audience of senators, staff and Capitol visitors be allowed to applaud, which is usually not allowed under Senate rules.

Republican senators then lined up to greet McConnell, beginning with Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who hugged him, and Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who patted him on the back. He took out a tissue and made a joke, prompting the group to laugh. Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota gave him a warm handshake, and a dozen others senators soon did so as well.

Sen. Lindsey Graham said McConnell reshaped the American judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court. “He has a lot to be proud of, and I am sure he will work hard to the very end of his term,” Graham said.

CHANGING DYNAMICS IN THE GOP

McConnell, first elected in 1984, intends to serve until his term ends

in January 2027. The Kentuckian has dealt with a series of medical episodes in recent years, including injuries sustained from falls and times when his face briefly froze while he was speaking.

The famously taciturn McConnell revered the Senate as a young intern long before joining its back benches as a freshman lawmaker in the mid-1980s. His dramatic announcement comes almost a year after his decision to relinquish his leadership post after the November 2024 election.

McConnell’s looming departure reflects the changing dynamics of the Trump-led GOP. He’s seen his power diminish on a parallel track with both his health and his relationship with Trump, who once praised him as an ally but has taken to criticizing him in caustic terms.

In Kentucky, McConnell’s departure will mark the loss of a powerful advocate and will set off a competitive GOP primary next year for what will now be an open Senate seat. Beshear, seen as a rising star in his party for winning statewide office in Republican territory, has said he has no interest in the Senate. Beshear’s chief political strategist, Eric Hyers, reiterated that stance Thursday, posting on X, “He is not running for the Senate.”

Another prominent Kentucky Republican considering the race quickly weighed in. U.S. Rep. Andy Barr said he would decide soon about his future. Also looming as a GOP candidate is businessman Nate Morris.

One common denominator among them — their professed loyalty to Trump.

McConnell, a diehard adherent to Ronald Reagan’s brand of traditional conservatism and muscular foreign policy, increasingly found himself out of step with a GOP shifting toward the fiery, often isolationist populism espoused by Trump.

McConnell still champions providing Ukraine with weapons and other aid to fend off Russia’s invasion, even as Trump ratchets up criticism of the country and its leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The senator made it clear Thursday that national defense remains a priority for him.

He and Trump were partners during Trump’s first term, but the relationship was severed after McConnell blamed Trump for “disgraceful” acts in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack by his supporters.



Mitch McConnell

CITY

FROM PAGE A1

for us, because that’s when we realized a downtown transformation wasn’t just a dream,” Brake said. “We could make it a reality.”

Mayor Tom Watson said McConnell’s support for Owensboro went beyond the riverfront.

Watson recalled joining McConnell on a tour of the old H.L. Neblett Community Center building.

McConnell noticed a roof leak and told Watson, “we need to get that fixed,” Watson recalled.

In 2006, McConnell secured \$3 million to help fund the building of the new Neblett Center.

“He has been a great supporter,” Watson said. “We’ve known each other for 40 years, and he encouraged me to get into public service. I always thought so highly of him.”

McConnell “has always been a real friend of Owensboro,” Watson said.

Owensboro will continue to have powerful supporters in Washington, such as Rep. Brett Guthrie, Watson said.

Regarding McConnell,

Watson said, “we will be hard-pressed to (find) a strong an advocate as he is” for the city.

Judge-Executive Charlie Castlen said while McConnell is best remembered locally for the riverfront project, “if you swing over to the Neblett Center, he’s the one who delivered the money for the building they are in today. He has been a friend to Owensboro and our county for a long time, pretty much out of the gate.”

McConnell’s efforts have also been pivotal nationally, Castlen said.

“When he was in leadership (as Senate majority leader), for conservatives, it meant a lot getting the majority on the (Supreme) Court,” Castlen said.

Castlen said McConnell’s retirement at the end of next year could mean the community is losing a strong supporter.

“I think for a little bit it might,” Castlen said. “I think it depends on who gets in his seat.”

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Charlie Castlen judge-executive

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

(USPS 341-660)

Distributed Tuesday through Saturday by the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer Inc. at 1401 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY 42301.

Periodical postage paid at Owensboro, KY 42301; telephone 270-926-0123. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Messenger-Inquirer, P.O. Box 1480, Owensboro, KY 42302-1480.

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