

AURORA

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gather all the information until we get all our forensic analysis back; it’s incomplete,” Pratt said. “Marshall County Sheriff’s Office is still conducting their investigation. We’re still conducting our investigation. The medical examiner is waiting on some things, too. Once they get all their information back, then I’ll sit down and determine the cause of death.”

Although the investigation is ongoing, Pratt said he was glad they were able to provide closure to the family because she was found.

“She’s been missing since June 28, so they’ve had a lot of unknowns and questions and doubts and fears, and at least by this now we know where Mrs. Kathryn is, and we have her located,” Pratt said. “That definitely brings peace to the family, so they can have some closure



Contributed photo

When she was reported missing, Kathryn Pipitone, 54, was last seen in Aurora on June 28.

and some understanding to what happened.”

Pipitone’s neighbor, Steve Baumia, was arriving home when Pratt and his team were conducting their search.

“When I got home from work, it was pretty late, and the coroner was there, and there were like seven, eight

police cars, and I wondered what was going on, but I just, I kind of stayed on myself,” Baumia said. “I really feel for the family, and I’m sorry that it happened.”

The case remains under investigation by the Marshall County Sheriff’s Office.

BOARD

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By law, the school district can set a rate that will increase their revenue by no more than 4%. A rate that would generate more than 4% more revenue than the prior year would require a public hearing. District Finance Officer Brooke Gibbs explained that an exoneration is not included in that figure, and the original increase was due to a five cent exoneration.

An exoneration occurs when there has been an error in the valuation or tax bill of a property, which led to that property receiving a refund. The exoneration allows the taxing district to recoup the funding they had anticipated receiving prior.

Following the approval of the rates, it was determined that the exoneration was included by mistake, due to an error on the part of the Property Valuation Administration. Marshall County Property Valuation Administrator Tony Henson declined to be interviewed, but provided a written statement. Henson’s statement read, in part;

“On Tuesday, August 19, 2025, I became aware, via a journalist, that the Marshall County School Board was ‘increasing their tax rates due to an error in the Marshall County PVA office.’

“After a few phone calls and some research, it became apparent that an error had been made on a form that my office submitted to the Department of Revenue in June. A total on one of the pages of that report erroneously included a number from a different category. This resulted in a very large number, allowing the school board to calculate a tax rate significantly higher than expected.”

Henson’s statement went on to say that the mistake was corrected and resubmitted on Wednesday, Aug. 20, approved on Thursday, Aug. 21, and was “in the hands of taxing entities” by Friday, Aug. 22.

This correction allowed the Kentucky Department of Education to adjust their reports, providing the local board with the correct information to set the rates.

The original rate sparked considerable pushback from the community, leading to many attending the Aug. 28 meeting. While the district does not generally include public comments in special called meetings, board chair Darla

Doss said that after the new rates were presented, she would entertain questions from the community as a part of the discussion.

Superintendent Bill Thorpe began the meeting by explaining that the district tax rates are among the lowest in the state.

The 2024 — 2025 Fiscal Year real estate rate of 44.7 cents per \$100 of assessed value was the 16th lowest out of 171 school districts in the state. The motor vehicle tax rate of 44.6 cents per \$100 of value was the 6th lowest in the state.

Thorpe then explained that the district spends over \$2.6 million dollars each month for basic expenditures like utilities, debt service payments, and payroll. Thorpe also claimed that the district is the primary employer in the county with approximately 660 employees.

Thorpe also explained that, while the district receives funding through a state level program called SEEK, which is intended to help equalize funding in districts across the state. However, when property values increase, leading to the district getting more money locally, the SEEK funding decreases.

Further, Thorpe explained that, contrary to what others have claimed, the teachers have received minimal raises in recent years. In 2021 teachers received a 1% raise, in 2022 they received a 2% raise and a one time payment of \$1,100, in 2023 they received a 3% raise and a one time payment of \$1,000, they received nothing in 2024, and they received a 3% raise, and in 2026 they are set to receive no raise, but a one time payment of \$1,200.

Thorpe then noted that in 2025 the average cost of building a new school was approximately \$450 per square foot. The Marshall County High School renovation project cost the district approximately \$13.093 million, whereas building a brand new school would have cost \$100 million or more.

Gibbs then took over to present the new tax rates, and explained the process that goes into the determination of the rates. In her explanation of the rates, Gibbs

shared a graph that showed the rates for the 2024 — 2025 fiscal year was the lowest the rate had been since 2014.

Gibbs then explained that, as previously reported, the error had been on the reports submitted by the PVA, but have since been corrected. The corrected rates real estate and personal property were 44.9 cents per \$100, and 45 cents per \$100, respectively.

The corrected rates allow the district to collect the allowed 4% increase in revenue, and only increase the payments of the community by approximately one tenth of a cent on real estate and two tenths of a¢ on personal property. Both rates include a 0.2 cent exoneration.

These increases will total a \$1 increase on a home valued at \$100,000.

Following Gibbs’s report, Doss and board member Will Coursey praised Gibbs for noticing the drastic increase and contacting KDE.

Doss then opened the floor for questions. Several community members asked clarifying questions regarding the rates, other ways for the district to cut costs, and concerns over the district electric bill.

During this discussion, Thorpe and the board members explained various ways that the district has attempted to cut costs by eliminating positions and cutting back where possible.

The rates were approved unanimously, with board member Amy Waggoner attending and voting via Zoom.

The board also approved the Fiscal Year 2025 — 2026 Federal District assurances for the release of federal funds. This was a standard procedure required for the disbursements of any federal funds in the district.

The board encouraged the attending community members to attend other board meetings in the future.

The board regularly meets on the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. at the district’s central office. The next scheduled meeting is a planning meeting, to be held at 5 p.m. on Sept. 15, the Monday preceding the third Thursday. The next regular meeting will follow on Sept. 18 at 6 p.m.

LAKE

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fishing both off of the pier and by boat.

However, many took advantage of the day for other hobbies. Mike Muller is an avid birdwatcher, as well as a teacher. The holiday gave him the opportunity to spend the day bird watching, particularly looking for peregrine falcons, rather than in the classroom.

“I birdwatch a lot,” said Muller. “I mean, I birdwatch three times a week, usually on the weekend. Friday, Saturday, not Sunday, and today I guess, since Monday, usually, I’m at work. I’m a teacher, but we’re off today.”

For many, the weekend is a time to gather with family. Though, as time goes on, traditions change. Michael and Diana Lawrence spent part of the day walking the trail across Kentucky Dam, as a part of their transitioning of traditions.

“Well, in the past it was always a time for me to celebrate my gran’s birthday,” said Diana. “Her birthday usually fell on Labor Day, and she passed away at 105. So, the weekend is kind of bittersweet for me now.”

Historically, the couple always spent the weekend with family.

“I have a big fami-



GRACE BOATRIGHT JACHIM | Tribune-Courier

Many people opted to spend Labor Day on the lake.



GRACE BOATRIGHT JACHIM | Tribune-Courier

Numerous people took to the beach at Kentucky Dam to celebrate Labor Day.

ly, he has a big family, but my family would get together and grill out, and just spend time together,” said Diana. “It was really all we would ever do.”

As their traditions have shifted in recent years, Diana now makes a point to have an ice cream cake to remember her gran with each year.

Many families dotted the beach, and boats

dotted the lake, while many seasonal businesses welcomed customers for their last weekday opening of the season, as many will transition to weekend hours.

While many opt to celebrate by spending time with family, the holiday still serves as a reminder of the work put in by average American workers, and their impact on our everyday life.

CURE

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Pink Fund, which directly benefits local women fighting both breast and ovarian cancer,” said Griffith. “We’ve been able to increase the amount of benefits [for] each recipient five times what it originally was. So, you know, instead of \$50 increments that we were giving out, we’re now giving out \$250 increments to these ladies. It has been utilized more than ever before, and we are so grateful.”

Through the fund, the club provides women fighting breast, cervical, and ovarian cancer with gas cards, wigs, and/or

cold therapy socks and gloves. Each applicant is able to receive up to \$250 of assistance. While preference is given to women who reside in Marshall County, the program was recently made available to women in surrounding counties.

The event raised money through team registrations, corporate sponsorships, hole sponsorships, and the sale of hats and t-shirts. The event raised a total of \$6,400 for the fund, allowing the club the ability to assist 25 women undergoing treatment in the area.

The tournament was won by the team sponsored by Hendrickson Wealth Management and Retirement. The

team included Griffith, Rich Hendrickson, Travis Thompson, and Mat Thompson.

The event comes just one month ahead of the club’s annual Paint The Town Pink event, which is set for Sept. 27. The event is held annually on the last Saturday of September as a way to begin Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is recognized in October.

What originated as a walk through the city of Benton with a speech made has evolved into an all day event with vendors, food trucks, raffle prizes, games, and multiple ways to recognize breast cancer patients and survivors, as well as ways to remember those that have died.

Following a relocation

and weather complications in recent years, the 2025 event is set to host a pep rally, rather than a walk, and attendees will have the opportunity to purchase a card to write the name of their loved ones on to display. There will be three different designs of cards, one for current patients and survivors, one for those that have died, and one for patients and survivors to recognize their loved ones and caregivers for helping them through their treatments. Those funds will also benefit the PTPP fund.

The event is set to begin at 9 a.m. on Sept. 27, at the Joe Creason Community Building at H.H. Lovett Park in Benton.

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Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

THE TRIB

HISTORY

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