

‘BURNS’ From Front



Fire crews poured thousands of gallons of water on the debris fire with little effect. It was left to burn out on its own.

more resources. With no fire hydrants nearby, the Jackson Fire Department issued a second alarm, calling for additional support from two local fire departments with tanker trucks. The Vancleve Fire Department arrived with two tanker trucks, and Watts-Caney brought one tanker to haul water to support Jackson Fire suppression efforts.

The fire departments used a bulldozer to move some debris and to prevent flames from reaching a large pile of wood and a stack of railroad ties.

By Wednesday morning, smoke still poured from the piles of debris on the site.

The debris has been hauled to the location following the recent rounds of flooding. The debris would have been removed and disposed of legally, and the county reimbursed. County FEMA officials feared that the county would now be saddled with the entire cost of removing the burned remains.

“This could cost us thousands of dollars to clean up,” a county official said on Monday as several stood and watched the piles burn. “We must determine how much was burned and see what we can do with it now.”

With little effect, fire crews dumped thousands of gallons of water on the fire. They isolated the flames and secured the site using a dozer to separate the burning piles from the other debris. The Kentucky Department of Highways District 10 Office posted signs near the area south of Jackson, warning drivers of the possibility of smoke on the roadway and urging caution in the area.

The fire is expected to burn for several days, and fire crews continue to monitor the area.

The debris site stopped accepting debris and closed on Friday, April 18. Officials have not identified the cause of the blaze, but, based on the numerous fires found, said that it was “suspicious in nature.”

PSC rejects lower water rate request

The Kentucky Public Service Commission rejected a request from the Breathitt County Water District to avoid a 13.23 percent increase in county water rates.

On March 20, 2025, the Water District filed a “motion of waiver” with the KPSC to offset the raise mandated in the decision from a final order in January 2024. The order instituted a 54.07 percent increase to cover the financial needs and requirements of the Breathitt County Water District to be phased in over three years.

On January 31, 2024, the rates rose 18.04 percent and went up another 15.30 percent on January 31, 2025. The motion

of waiver sought to avoid the 13.23 percent increase slated for January 31, 2026, citing the recent flooding. The request sought to prevent “significant, negative impact on the customers.”

The rejection of the Breathitt County Waters District’s request was announced on April 17 after the PSC determined that the annual report did not provide updated financial information from the water district.

Under the PSC order from January 2024, the 13.23 percent water increase will go into effect in January 2026 unless the Breathitt County Water District files another appeal.

‘COUNCIL’ From Front

to the City Council and his presentation that the smell and sound were issues for several residents in the neighborhood.

Several students and administrator from Jackson City School discussed their agricultural class and the goals of the chicken program. Britany Back, agricultural teacher at JCS, noted that the program enhanced the school’s educational efforts by teaching students leadership, responsibility, financial sustainability, math, and science.

Mayor Thomas told those gathered that the “chicken ordinance,” last amended on January 23, 2014, allows only five chickens and no roosters. She stated that the one previous waiver for educational purposes granted to Breathitt High School did not request a rooster because it was not an “egg-based” program.

“I really don’t think there should be an exception made,” Patton Avenue resident Virginia Meagher told the council. She said she did not want her property value to decrease because of a “smell from the feces of the animals” and things happening in the neighborhood.

“I understand there are lots of ideas that the school has to alleviate any kind of nuisance that may be happening to residents

in that area,” Goff said. “I am actually in full support of this program, and I don’t want people to hate me for having my concerns.”

Councilmember Steve McIntosh discussed the origins of the ordinance and commented on the importance of “Adam and Eve” versus “Adam and Steve,” as well as the important role roosters play in making more chickens.

Jackson City School officials noted that the school planned to move the chicken portion of the agriculture class to a vacant lot between the Board of Education and Hurst Lane, which is larger and more secluded.

Mayor Thomas noted that the council needed to pass a resolution permitting an “educational waiver,” but needed to amend the ordinance to permanently change the law to allow educational waivers in the future.

Councilman Steve McIntosh proposed that the council pass a resolution to allow a temporary waiver for one rooster and up to twelve hens for educational purposes until the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved by the council.

The council approved the bills, minutes, and reports submitted from city departments.

‘RESCUE’ From Front

the base of the cliff on a small bench. After checking on Spicer, Prater walked out of the woods and attempted to summon help from neighbors.

Fire crews staged at the mouth of Mill Creek and tried to reach the woman from there based on the information they received. Crews later discovered that the woman was not at the head of Mill Branch and refocused their efforts in the Spicer Branch area.

More than an hour after search crews arrived, Spicer was located at 5:52 p.m. in the head of

Cotton Patch and evaluated by responders. They determined that she was ambulatory and crews aided her back up the hillside and out of the woods.

Medical personnel met her at the mouth of Spicer Branch at 8:23 p.m. after her afternoon ordeal in the woods. She suffered many “cuts, scrapes, and bruises,” and rescue crews recommended she be evaluated due to the possibility of a head injury.

Spicer was transported to the Kentucky River Medical Center for evaluation.

‘JCS’ From Front

after defeating Dunbar and Eminence, Jackson (less than 100 students) advanced to the final match where they were defeated by Nelson’s UP Center (over 2,000 students).

“I have coached this team for three years,” stated Coach Trent. “We started with a table in the back of the library. Our tools consisted of a few tools I borrowed from my husband. To say this is a big accomplishment is an understatement. I couldn’t be prouder of our Robot Gladiator Team.”

Superintendent, Wayne Sizemore, expressed the need for community support for robotics teams. “I realize robotics competition is new to our area, but it really is an opportunity to keep our kids current in today’s world of technology and manufacturing. It can open doors for our students and our community in ways we can’t even imagine. I’ll add that community support is critical and much appreciated.”

Cicadas are coming in loud



This is a cicada.

The loudest concert in Eastern Kentucky will be free of charge this year featuring billions of cicadas as the stars of the show! The 17-year cycle is officially here this year, and this will be the Brood XIV, which is also known ironically as the “Bourbon Brood.” This particular Brood last emerged here in the Bluegrass back in 2008.

Cicadas are known for their extremely loud singing at night, especially in forested areas. Sometimes they can even be deafening. This is such a rare occurrence that a number of enthusiasts will travel from many states away to witness what will be in our own backyards.

Do not fear these large black cicadas with their blood red eyes. Although they look menacing, they are harmless. They will emerge any day now and stick around for about six weeks or so before going back into the ground to prepare for 2042. So, this is just a heads up for the rare occurrence, so enjoy the cicadas and their loud singing while they’re here.

Breathitt Board accepts bids, recognizes teams

The Breathitt County Board of Education met in regular session on Tuesday, April 22, to approve several bids, pay some bills, and recognized several students and teams.

With all members present, the Board approved bids for several services, including physical therapy, fuel, pest control, soft drinks, mowing, fire extinguishers, athletic supplies, tires, food, oil, transportation supplies, and sprinkler systems for the 2025-2026 school year.

The board also approved \$100,000 to remodel and update the locker rooms for the Boys’ and Girls’ Basketball teams in the Coliseum and up to \$40,000 to purchase a new scoreboard for the baseball and softball fields.

Board members approved a motion to have Curd Surveying appraise a piece of property adjoining the Lakeside Campus “for the purpose of a potential property purchase.”

The proposed property expansion would allow for more parking and “other educational uses.”

By a unanimous vote, the Board approved an amended school calendar and set the students’ last day of school for May 30, 2025. The last day for teachers and staff was announced for June 10 to fulfill their 185-day contracts.

The board introduced the BHS Cheerleaders for winning the 2025 Kentucky In-Game Cheer State Championship during the state

tournament. The Board also recognized the Boys’ Basketball team for the 55th District Tournament win and the 14th Region Championship.

The BHS Fishing Team of Tucker Neace and Caleb Watkins was recognized for the Student Angler Federation State Championship.

Aden Howard was honored for his second-place win in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Poster Contest. The coaches and assistants were also recognized.

The Board spent nearly an hour in executive session discussing Superintendent Phillip Watt’s performance review and emerged at 6:33 without taking action.

Board members approved an omnibus motion that paid five bills totaling \$1,552,428.64 for work at the new Breathitt Vocational School and bus garage building on the Lakeside Campus.

Motions were also approved to hire architectural services for roof and gutter work at Breathitt High School and up to \$1.4 million to design and build, if feasible, a new track and outdoor physical education facilities at the former SMS campus.

After meeting for an hour and forty-five minutes, the Board adjourned at 6:45 p.m. to attend the annual Academic Boosters hosted in the Fairce O. Woods Coliseum.

Then & Now... A look back at Jackson’s history and how it looks today.

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Kentucky Highway 15 just after completion in 1960, entrance to Lakeside Estates was gravel



As seen today, the mountain is being cleared for the new road expansion



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