

SYNERGY

from FRONT

downturn in business due to governmental funded programs being cut nationwide. 'It is unfortunate that Synergy has made the decision to close their operation,' said Mayor Hoots. 'We realize that they have had a decline in their original product and have worked diligently to find another option.' Further details will be available later."

History: Mayor Pam Hoots shared at the Economic Development Authority meeting Tuesday, January 18, 2022, that the new plant Synergy Food Group is getting started this week in the former Majestic Yachts property on the corner of Burkesville Street and the Veterans Memorial Bypass. The new plant, headquartered in Murfreesboro, TN, produces and sells shelf stable meals. They opened as the new year began, as planned, preparing for building coolers and freezers in the kitchen area of the building and interviewing for the initial jobs. Columbia City Council member Craig Dean was the first employee to be hired. He is Manager of Operations. Four additional employees have been hired out of the expected 5 to 10 people to be recruited during the initial start time.

Background: The city purchased the land and building that was formerly Majestic Yachts on Nov. 8, 2021, for \$1.5 million, got a federal community development block grant for \$1 million, and borrowed \$500,000. December 1, 2021, the city started a 15-year lease-purchase agreement with Synergy Food Group, LLC for \$1.5 million. Synergy agreed to pay \$9,983.15 per month for 15 years. Until January 2025, Synergy made payments on time every month. Most payments were ACH payments from Synergy Foods directly to the city's economic development account, four payments were made by Greg Durrett, the named owner of the LLC. At the beginning of October Synergy was two payments behind. To date 38 payments in a total of \$379,359.70 were made.

June 2023: Manager Craig Dean: "Each branch focuses on providing a certain component, that when assembled or further processed, adds value to the final product. In the case of the Columbia plant, we assemble shelf stable meals at this point." And there was a reason to chose

FISCAL

from FRONT

area required for falling debris. Bryant said he would follow up with Jason Faulkner and others as options are reviewed.

The court also approved a first reading to amend the county's solid waste ordinance. The proposed change would remove the requirement that private garbage haulers report their rates to the county. Bryant explained that state law has changed, and the county can no longer mandate that information.

Committee assignments shifted as well. Todd Davenport and Sammy Baker agreed to switch seats, with Davenport moving to the jail committee and

Baker taking a position on the solid waste committee.

In other business, Bryant voiced frustration over the pace of progress on courthouse renovations. Nearly two years after the county secured a \$1 million grant, roughly \$830,000 remains unspent. Bryant said he would like to see geothermal utilities installed and believes the city may allow boring through the parking lot off Burkesville Street to make that possible. He added that winter months are ideal for interior work. Members of the courthouse committee were not present to respond.

Magistrates approved

Columbia: "When looking to locate, we knew that Columbia has a high quality work force with people who know how to work," general manager Dean says, "the proximity of the interstate system through this area, along with the ability of the City and State to work with us in the acquisition of the property, all played parts in our locating here in Adair County." "We are currently producing shelf stable meal kits in the Columbia facility," Craig Dean explains the facilities mission. This means meal kits for schools, hospitals, homes for elderly and many other customers on this level are put together in the former Majestic Yachts' building. These kits include canned food, snacks, and other items for five days or different sizes if needed. And the new Columbia branch is working and expanding. Craig Dean: "The Columbia plant was new to the company, so we started with zero employees, currently have twelve in full time, with several other part time workers looking to promote to full time soon," the general manager says and adds: "We are currently working toward our target of 50 jobs and look forward to continue to build our workforce in here Columbia in the future."

August 2023: "The reason I chose to come to Columbia is the work ethics here in the region," Synergy owner Greg Durrett explained to the team, "if you would know about the working attitude in other parts of the country, you know why I came here." And Durrett knows the working ethics of our region, as he himself grew up in Green County. What makes the shelf-stable food packages from Columbia so special is their use in cases of emergency. If a hurricane or some other natural catastrophe hits a part of the country, it is difficult just to work with frozen food packages, as it's often not possible to keep them refrigerated. And here the services from Columbia step in, because the well trained associates are able to package shelf-stable emergency packages in a very short time to help people in need.

And that's the point where the problems started in 2025, when federal funding for projects like that were drastically shortened by the new administration. The main source of income for the plant in Columbia broke away. Until editorial deadline, the headquarter of Synergy Foods in

first readings for several road-related changes, including bus turnarounds on R. Holmes Road, 402 Sandlick Road and Steve Goodin Road. A first reading was also approved to change Green River Point to a private passageway.

Bryant concluded by reading from state law outlining a county judge executive's authority during a declared emergency, including the ability to waive certain procedures and make temporary hires. When asked about a potential temporary, part-time occupational tax director, Bryant said one application has been received.

WBKO asked to interview me, and despite hesitations due to biased coverage, I agreed so my side could finally be heard. Magistrate Flatt was also interviewed.

In that interview, he stated and I quote "When you have to go out and buy a pistol to pack around your ankle because you're a little bit concerned—and I have done that—it's a little bit concerning," Flatt said.

Link to WBKO article: <https://www.wbko.com/2024/09/23/tensions-highlight-fractures-adair-county-government/>

I do not understand mentally what was going through his mind when he made that statement. It is concerning since so many shootings happen in the news

people with car batteries, flat tires, and stuck vehicles due to the hazardous conditions on the roadways," Burton explained, "I'm proud of our officers for handling that."

In addition, officers assisted with clearing the snow off of the helipad at T.J. Health

Columbia Hospital to keep it functional in case patient transport would be needed during the storm.

As the department worked tirelessly to manage the immediate effects of the storm, they

also turned their focus to recognizing other community efforts that played a role in keeping the county going strong, despite the snow and ice.

"I'd also like to give a shout out to our street department for maintaining the roads and

the city limits, along with the state highway department and the county road department," Burton

BUSY

from FRONT

says, "It was even mentioned at our city council meeting how excellent our road crews do. You

can cross over into other counties and it looks like it has not been touched, but Adair County

always has great maintained roads."

In addition to the road crews, Burton also wants to thank the ambulance

dispatch, and other forms

of emergency management

in their efforts to keep the

town and

county safe during the

weather.

Aside from response, the

month also brought forth

progress and improvement

for the

department and its

capabilities to provide

safety for the community.

For example, Officer Elliot

Smith completed 40 hours

of DOCJT (Department of

Criminal

Justice Training)

in-service training in

Richmond with a focus on

FAIR

from FRONT

2016.

In preparation for this year's event, Held spent countless hours improving the grounds. He helped build the main event track, shaped walkways and roadways, set bleachers and donated personal equipment when needed.

Statement Adair County Judge Executive Larry R. Bryant: "What I do know, from being involved with the economic development group here in town and with the state: We do have requests for information on a fairly frequent basis of do we have any facility that is available, that's ready to go. We're working on trying to get our spec building started maybe in April. I would hope that we could do some type of an inter local agreement. I'd love to have an opportunity to work with the city to try to find somebody to go in that that would benefit all."

Statement Magistrate

Chris Reeder: "I hate to

see Synergy Food Group

close. The owner and staff

worked extremely hard and

explored alternative sales

opportunities and markets

in an effort to keep the

business operating here in

Columbia and Adair County.

This is disappointing news

for everyone involved and

for our community."

He also ensured the

carnival's needs were met,

worked most major events

and even delivered lunch to

workers at the floral hall.

One of the highlights for

many children was a petting

zoo from Tennessee that set

up free of charge through

Held's efforts, giving

families the chance to see

camels, zebras, kangaroos,

buffalo and Watusi cattle

up close.

After the fair, Held continued building agricultural programming, helping bring the Bullwhip Rodeo to the new grounds

JUDGE

from EDITORIAL

fair week, he worked the rabbit and chicken shows, mentoring young exhibitors and encouraging junior members — something the association had not previously established.

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After the fair, Held continued building agricultural programming, helping bring the Bullwhip Rodeo to the new grounds

in September. The family-

friendly event featured

youth classes, bull and

bronc riding, mutton

busting and trick riders —

drawing the largest single-

event crowd to date.

Kentucky county fairs are

agricultural fairs, and those

who know Held say he is

one of the community's

strongest advocates for

agriculture — a second-

generation farmer proud of

his roots.

From labor and

equipment to mentorship

and leadership, Dan Held's

contributions have shaped

nearly every aspect of the

fair's success. For that

work, he has earned the

title of Kentucky's 2025

Fair Person of the Year.

To leave you with some

good news: while I was

at the budget workshop,

two representatives from

the Appalachian Regional

Commission (ARC) were

speaking with Deputy Judge

Compton about the current

grant she was awarded, as well

as potential grant funding

for a vocational school. This

school would not only serve

the children of Adair County

but also offer programs for

inmates to gain skills that

would help them obtain

employment and successfully

transition back into society.

I spoke with them about

the exciting progress

happening in Adair County

with economic