

City still considering nuisance ordinance

STAFF REPORT

Nuisance regulations returned to the forefront of discussion during Monday's Marion City Council meeting as officials continued exploring how to strengthen enforcement, particularly involving junk and abandoned vehicles.

While council members have expressed interest in updating the ordinance, no specific changes have been proposed. City Administrator Adam Ledford asked the council for clearer direction moving forward, urging members to review the existing ordinance, which dates back to the 1970s, and return with recommendations in April.

Mayor D'Anna Browning said the city should consider distinguishing between commercial and residential properties when addressing some nuisance violations. However, she cautioned against allowing businesses to use that distinction as a loophole

MARION City Council

to accumulate inoperable vehicles.

Council discussion suggested some openness to exceptions for commercial properties, though members did not define what those exceptions might include. Councilman Cutter Singleton indicated he does not view certain items placed in front of businesses as a nuisance.

Ledford said he plans to provide council members with a full copy of the ordinance for review ahead of further discussion.

In related business, the council is considering issuing a request for proposals to establish a formal towing and storage arrangement tied to nuisance enforcement. Ledford said the city currently operates without a formal agreement and has been

studying how other Kentucky cities manage the process.

The proposal would create a non-exclusive system allowing multiple towing providers, while setting standards for storage, insurance and procedures for handling abandoned vehicles. Companies could ultimately seek legal authority to dispose of vehicles, with proceeds first covering city costs.

Council also gave first reading to an ordinance establishing Marion's first demolition permit process. The no-cost permit would require coordination with utilities, insurance considerations and attention to traffic impacts before demolition begins. Final approval could come as early as next month.

Additionally, the council approved advertising for bids on surplus city equipment, with sealed bids due May 15.

Nelson County airman dies in refueling crash

Tech. Sgt. Ashley B. Pruitt, a Kentucky native and graduate of Nelson County High School in Bardstown, was among six U.S. Air Force airmen killed



Pruitt

March 12 when a KC-135 refueling aircraft crashed in western Iraq during operations connected to the conflict with Iran.

Pruitt, 34, served with the 99th Air Refueling Squadron at Sumpter Smith Joint National Guard Base in Birmingham, Alabama. She was an assistant flight chief of operations and a boom operator instructor responsible for overseeing aircrew readiness, training and flight operations while teaching other airmen the procedures used to refuel aircraft in midair.

During her time at Nelson County High School, Pruitt was active in the Air Force Junior

ROTC program, where she developed an early commitment to military service. As one of the unit's most accomplished cadets, she helped establish the foundation of the school's AFJROTC program, earning numerous awards for leadership, academics and community service. By the time she graduated, she had logged nearly 400 hours of volunteer work and was known for donating prize money from a VFW Voice of Democracy essay contest to assist homeless veterans.

Pruitt joined the Air Force in 2017 and completed enlisted aviator training the following year. Over the course of her career, she accumulated thousands of flight hours and held several leadership roles connected to aerial refueling operations.

Military officials said the crash occurred in what they described as friendly airspace. The cause remains under in-



vestigation. Pruitt leaves behind her husband and two children.

Ag bills moving along

Two bills sponsored by Jason Howell, R-Murray, cleared a House committee last week and could soon be considered by the full Kentucky House of Representatives. Howell represents Crittenden County as part of his legislative district.

Senate Bill 5 would make it easier for Kentucky schools to purchase locally grown agricultural products by removing procurement barriers and allowing districts more flexibility to work directly with farmers.

Senate Bill 199 would align Kentucky pesticide labeling standards with federal rules set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The bill recognizes EPA-approved labels as sufficient under state law in duty-to-warn claims, which supporters say will provide regulatory consistency and help shield farmers from potential cost increases tied to litigation.

Crittenden County Public Library | What's to Read

Crittenden County Public Library has released its latest list of new titles available for readers and listeners through its digital catalog, featuring a mix of memoirs, thrillers, romance and historical fiction.

Among the top selections this week is *You with the Sad Eyes: A Memoir* by Emmy-winning actress Christina Applegate. The book offers a candid look at her life growing up in Hollywood, her career in television and film, and the personal challenges she has faced along the way.

Also featured is *It's Not Her* by bestselling thriller author Mary Kubica, a suspenseful novel centered on two families at a secluded lake resort where a mysterious scream leads to a chilling crime. Another popular pick is *Lady Tremaine* by Rachel Hochhauser, a reimagining of the classic Cinderella story told from the perspective of the often-maligned stepmother.

Other newly highlighted titles include *And Now, Back to You* by B.K. Borison, Keeper of Lost Chil-



dren by Sadeqa Johnson, *The Astral Library* by Kate Quinn, *A Far-flung Life* by M.L. Stedman, *This Is Not About Us* by Allegra Goodman, *Lake Effect* by Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney, *The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives* by Elizabeth Arnett, *The Bookstore Diaries* by Susan Mallery and *Wait for Me* by Amy Jo Burns.

Most of the titles are available through the library's digital services as eBooks or downloadable audiobooks. Readers can browse the catalog online or place holds through the library's digital platform.

The Crittenden County Public Library is offering free Wowbrary email alerts that allow residents to see the library's newest books, movies, audiobooks and other materials added each week. Library Director Regina Merrick said the alerts provide a convenient way for patrons of all ages to discover new titles and reserve items at no cost; anyone can sign up at www.wowbrary.org, even without a library card.

City answers lawsuit by former admin

STAFF REPORT

The City of Marion, Mayor D'Anna Browning and its legal counsel have filed formal responses in federal court to a wrongful termination lawsuit brought by former city administrator Diane Ford-Benningfield, denying most of the allegations and asking that the case be dismissed.

The response, filed Feb. 25 in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky in Paducah, addresses a lawsuit Ford-Benningfield filed earlier this year claiming she was forced out of her job after raising concerns about a city employee.

In their answer to the complaint, attorneys for the city and Browning argue the lawsuit fails to state a valid legal claim and should be dismissed. The filing denies that the defendants violated Ford-Benningfield's constitutional rights or any federal or state civil rights laws.

Ford-Benningfield's lawsuit alleges she was retaliated against after raising concerns about the hiring of an employee. In their response, the defendants acknowledge that Ford-Benningfield did raise concerns about the hiring and that the mayor was aware of

the employee's prior criminal history. The filing also states the mayor approved the employee's appointment.

However, defendants deny Ford-Benningfield's broader claims that her termination was unlawful or that city policies were violated.

Court filings also acknowledge that Ford-Benningfield never told the mayor she was resigning from her position. The defendants dispute other claims surrounding the circumstances of her departure and deny allegations of retaliation, discrimination and other wrongdoing.

Ford-Benningfield's lawsuit alleges violations of the First Amendment, denial of due process under the Fourteenth Amendment, violations of the Kentucky Open Records Act and unlawful employment practices under federal and state civil rights laws. She also alleges discrimination based on age and gender, noting she was 62 when she left the position and was replaced by a younger male.

The city's response raises a number of legal defenses, including sovereign immunity, governmental immunity and qualified immunity for officials. The defen-

dants also argue that some of the claims may be barred by statute of limitations and other provisions of Kentucky law governing lawsuits against local governments.

The filing further states that city officials acted in good faith and with an objectively reasonable belief that their actions were lawful, and that some decisions were made based on advice from legal counsel.

Marion city legal advisor Bart Frazer, who is also named as a defendant in the lawsuit, filed a separate response Feb. 27 denying wrongdoing and asking that the claims against him be dismissed. Frazer's filing similarly argues that the complaint fails to state a valid legal claim and asserts that actions taken in his role advising the city are protected by various legal immunities.

Both filings ask the court to dismiss the lawsuit with prejudice and award court costs and attorney fees.

Ford-Benningfield is seeking damages that include lost wages, liquidated damages, emotional distress, reputational harm and attorney fees. The case remains pending in federal court.



Throwback Thursday 50 Years Ago

Officers of the Marion Woman's Club were installed during ceremonies held in March 1976, with Mrs. Donald Dammert, president of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs, presiding. Pictured from left are Mrs. Robert Watson, recording secretary; Miss Nelda Phelps, vice-president; Mrs. Ralph Moore, president; Mrs. Donald Dammert; Mrs. Jack Easley Jr., corresponding secretary; and Mrs. William Tobin, treasurer.

10 YEARS AGO

March 17, 2016

■ Crittenden County FFA students participated in the Murray State University Pennyrile FFA Speaking Day. Students attending were Hannah Cooksey, Paige Gilbert, Kasey Herrin, Alexis Tabor, Sharon Collins, Jenna Wallace, Emily Hall, Caitlyn Lynch, Hannah Easley, Cali Parish, Megan Chambliss, Alyssa Curtis, Emmalea Barnes, Catherine Hutchinson, Adam Beavers, Blake Curnel, Jimmy Crider, Drake Kemper, Will Tolley, John Duvall, Jantzon Croft and Logan Shuecraft.

■ Jenna Potter, Ellie Smith, Emmie Smith, Kaitlyn Hicks, Sharon Collins, Madison Cox, Ashlyn Hicks, Jada Hayes, Kallie Champion, Matthia Long, Chandler Moss, Destiny Knight, Katie Travis, Chaylee Wolf, Hanna Easley, Brandy Book, Courtney Beverly, Jessi Brewer, Cassidy Moss and Kiana Nesbitt were members of the 2016 Lady Rocket varsity softball team, coached by Cheyanne Reed-Warriner and Victoria Baker.

■ Jerry Thomas and Ann Hodge were crowned king and queen of the Crittenden County Senior Citizens Center St. Patrick's Day celebration.

25 YEARS AGO

March 15, 2001

■ The Crittenden County chapter of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America hosted the annual Region 2 STAR Events competition. Event winners included Amy Brown, Abbie Belt, Racinda Tinsley, Sheena Clark, Alexis Phillips, Melissa Shewcraft, Kristen Wheeler, Alisha Perry, Carissa Amburgy, Jamie Day, Kayla Shewcraft, Mary Holloman, Kayla Jones and Stephanie Tinsley. Advisor was Dawn Holloman.

■ Girl Scouts from Brownie Troop 1662 sold Girl Scout Cookies. Nikki Manus was the top seller, selling 411 boxes. Troop leaders were Tracy Colter, Maetta Witherpoon and Phillis Clark.

■ The Crittenden County Extension Council was honored by the Pennyrile Area Extension Service. Representatives of the council received the Randell Barnett Award for Outstanding County Extension Council in the Pennyrile area. Those present to receive the award were Tom Moore, Perry Newcom, Dean Scott Smith, Morris Caudill, Ann Revel, Barbara Vaughn, Jeanne Davis, Brandi Potter and Nancy Hunt.

50 YEARS AGO

March 18, 1976

■ The Women's Club of Marion installed new officers. Mrs. Robert Watson was named secretary, Miss Nelda Phelps vice president, Mrs. Ralph Moore president, Mrs. Jack Easley corresponding secretaries and Mrs. William Tobin treasurer.

■ Members of the Frances 4-H Club participated in woodcraft and knitting projects. Bobby Patton, Charles Rushing and Don Travis made birdhouses and bird feeders, with Wade Brasher, Glen Driehaupt and Jeff York serving as project leaders. Knitting project participants were Joy Travis, Melissa Michel, Margie McClure, DeLois Paddock, Dana Rushing, Lori Oliver, Debbie O'Bryan, Starla LaRue, Vicki Rushing, Patty Rorer and Sandy Holloman, with Mrs. Pat Hart as project leader.

■ Markeata Brown was one of 12 players named to the Second Region All-Tournament Team after scoring 17 points in the Lady Rockets' final game against Christian County.

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