

School board adopts wish list budget; reality coming in May

By **Burton Cole**

BUTLER — In their January meeting last week, Pendleton County Schools Superintendent presented Board of Education members with a draft budget that shows a more than \$12 million deficient next school year.

But don't panic, he said. "This budget isn't worth the paper it's printed on, but it's something we have to do."

State regulations mandate that all Kentucky school districts produce a draft budget in January for the next school year.

However, school districts lack key information, a chief one being that they won't know how much they will receive in state funding, or about possible changes in education regulations, until the current legislative session ends April 15.

Thus, the draft budget becomes more like a wish list of everything the district would like if money

was no object rather than reality.

By the time the actual budget is produced in May, the numbers will be known and the budget will be balanced, Buerkley said.

- Shonda Justus, president of the Pendleton County Education Association, told the board that the teachers' group had four topics to address: resolutions, legislation, board appreciation and the district's draft budget.

Resolutions are hard to keep, so she recommended instead setting short-range, mid-range and long-term goals to achieve.

She noted that the Kentucky Legislature is in session and that it's a budget year, which means not only could new laws affecting education be made, but, as noted above, lawmakers will set school allocations. She said that the Kentucky Education Association is following the sessions daily, and is posting updates.

As for the draft budget,

she said, "As a teacher in the district, I hope you consider a suitable raise for classified and nonclassified staff as you have in the past." She also asked for better pay for substitute teachers, and asked the board to respect planning periods.

(Buerkley later noted that the draft budget includes 2% pay increases.)

And with January being School Board Appreciation Month, Justus presented each board member and the superintendent with a coaster that had been designed and made by technology students with 3D printers, and a box of goodies baked by the culinary arts classes.

- For School Board Appreciation Month, Superintendent Joe Buerkley presented each board member with gift bag that included Pendleton County Schools T-shirts.
- Under the "Great News" item on the agenda, the board recognized the three Sharp Middle School



The Pendleton County Board of Education at its meeting last week congratulated the three Sharp Middle School visual arts students whose work was included in this year's statewide Arts for All Student Traveling Art Exhibition. From left are board members Kevin Barnard, Derek Brown, Laura Schack, Amber Beebe and Cheri Griffin, and honoree Caden Ortlieb. Not pictured are students Sebastian Brewer and Landon Seger. Photo by Burton Cole.

visual arts students whose artwork was shown in the statewide Arts for All Stu-

dent Traveling Art Exhibition. They are Sebastian Brewer, Caden Ortlieb and

Landon Seger. The visual arts instructor is Lauren Elliott.

Council

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The agreement would protect the city from any liability. Representatives from the church will get with Brian Thompson to address zoning issues.

- Mayor Sabrina Hazen opened two sealed bids for a sewer camera. Minicam's bid was for about \$71,000 while M-Tech bid about \$65,000. The mayor noted that "the guys want to go with M-Tech because of the service representative's willingness to offer support."

Council voted to accept M-Tech's bid 6-0.

- Council voted to hold a town hall meeting to discuss fire coverage with the public at 2 p.m. March 14 at a location yet to be determined.
- Hazen said she plans to form a committee of citizens to work with her, the public works supervisor and the wastewater supervisor.

She said the committee will work on amendments to ordinance Chapters 50, 54 and 90.01, including the issuance of permits. The goal is to provide residents with direction on how to make corrections to



Falmouth City Attorney Steve Doan administers the oath of office to newly appointed Assistant Fire Chief Coby Brown at the Jan. 15 Falmouth City Council meeting.

issues on their private property.

- ABC (Alcohol Beverage Control) taxes: The law allows a third of total funds collected to be disbursed to the police for a variety of items directly related to alcohol policing.

It is estimated that as much as 70% to 75% of all calls for police are alcohol or drug-related.

Drug calls cannot be applied to ABC funding.

Falmouth has one ABC-certified officer. The

two-day training in Lexington is free.

The more officers who are certified, the more the city's police department can draw upon ABC funds and help offset the department's budget.

- There was a discussion about the need for a command vehicle for the fire department.
- Council members also discussed the possibility of adding GPS to all city vehicles to be able to keep on top of maintenance.

Road Show

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But as life took her to a job using her graphic arts degree, Rust did not make the call. A couple of years later, Rust happened to mention to her dad that she had not pursued that contact.

Soon after the conversation with his daughter, Greg Rust visited Cowan's to make some purchases and ran into Farnand. The woman mentioned that the auction house needed to hire a native arts appraiser and that the young Rust should give her a call.

The rest, as they say, is history, and Erin Rust

has been working for the company (which changed hands and is now Freeman's/Hindman auction house) for the past 10 years.

"It's a fun, unique job," Rust said.

She travels frequently to look at collections and attend trade shows. Rust evaluates and authenticates Native Arts properties for Freeman's, which has 16 offices across the United States. She examines items anywhere from the pre-historic to historic periods, and early 20th century to contemporary pieces.

"I have to know a little bit about everything," she said with a laugh. "There's been a couple of fun things

we've handled over the years."

Rust told about holding Sitting Bull's rifle and pipe, and a 30-piece collection of historical Navajo jewelry.

When asked if she had seen any counterfeit pieces, Rust admitted that she sees at least one fake per day. She has seen many phony arrowheads and tomahawks. She said that fakes can be identified by how they are made and how they feel.

When not traveling, Rust enjoys returning to Pendleton County to ride horses on her parents' farm. Rust is the daughter of Greg and Andrea Rust of Butler.

IRS

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Refundable tax credits can reduce the amount of tax owed or result in a refund, even if no tax is due.

Taxpayers can find the right product by visiting IRS.gov/freefile and:

- Select "Explore Free Guided Tax Software", then select the "Find a Trusted Partner" tool for help in finding the right product, or use "Browse All Trusted Partners" to re-

view each offer; choose the product that best fits their situation; and follow the links to the trusted partner's website to begin their tax return.

IRS Free File works on computers, smart phones or tablets.

The following trusted partners are participating in IRS Free File for 2026:

- 1040Now
- Drake (1040.com)
- ezTaxReturn.com (offers English and Spanish)
- FileYourTaxes.com
- On-Line Taxes

- TaxAct
- TaxHawk (FreeTaxUSA)
- TaxSlayer

IRS Free File helps taxpayers save money and file their taxes quickly and securely. For more information or to get started, visit IRS Free File: Do Your Taxes For Free.

Editor's note: AARP TaxAide also will be offering free tax preparation services every Thursday from Feb. 5 to April 9 at Pendleton County Extension Office in Falmouth. See story on Page 12.

Bill would end need for prior authorizations on some treatments

Capitol Update

FRANKFORT — The House Banking and Insurance Committee advanced a bill last Wednesday that would allow certain health care providers to be exempted from the health insurance prior authorization process.

Rep. Kimberly Poore Moser, R-Taylor Mill, is

the primary sponsor of House Bill 176. She told the committee the legislation would establish a framework to allow insurers to dictate the terms of prior authorization exemption for certain providers.

Moser said the current process of health care providers having to seek permission, or prior authorization, from insurers before

providing care is costly and time intensive.

"It is a layer of bureaucracy that we seek to provide relief from for patients and health care providers," Moser said.

Moser said HB 176 is the result of five years of work alongside insurance companies and other stakeholders.

"We are streamlining

the prior authorization process, and we're simply making it easier for Kentuckians to access the care which is prescribed for them from a health provider," she added.

Insurers would not be required to include prescriptions in the prior authorization exemption program, but could opt-in, Moser said. Behavioral health services, however, are included in the definition as a health care provider under the bill.

Moser said the bill would alleviate any dangerous or unnecessary delays in care, while still giving an insurer the ability to set the terms of the exemption program it offers within certain parameters.

Additionally, HB 176 would require the Commissioner of the Department of Insurance to produce an annual report on prior authorizations.

Rep. Chad Aull, D-Lexington, asked Moser if the legislation is like other pro-

grams in other states.

Cory Meadows, the deputy executive vice president of the Kentucky Medical Association, said HB 176 is similar to what other states are doing, and Kentucky's bill would not disrupt current existing programs.

The legislation is also Kentucky-specific, Moser added.

The committee unanimously approved HB 176. The bill will now go before the full House for consideration.

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Correction

In some editions of the Jan. 13 Falmouth Outlook, the ages of two candidates for the Fourth District magistrate were switched.

The listing should have

read:

- Magistrate, District 4**

To replace incumbent Rick Mineer, who chose instead to run for judge executive.

- Jeffrey Scott Aulick, 56, Falmouth
- Steven D. Foster, 65, Falmouth
- Shawn Joseph Moore, 50, Falmouth

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