

Lighting From Front

sources: Kentucky Bond Corp, Whitaker, Farmers National Bank, and First Southern. The project cost was estimated at roughly \$550,000 to \$555,000.

Kentucky Bond Corp’s fixed-rate options were: 3.85% over 10 years, 4.06% over 15 years, and 4.03% over 20 years. Gaffney explained that going with the bond route requires more lead time because Kentucky Bond Corp working through KLC and, historically, attorneys at Densmore pools multiple municipal projects together before sending them out for investor bidding, and only finalizes rates once bonds are sold.

Utilities From Front

dated water meters as quickly as resources allow. He said the city has spent the past several years pursuing grant funding for the project but has been unsuccessful in securing outside financial assistance.

As a result, the mayor said he has asked the Lancaster City Council for permission to solicit bids for the purchase and installation of new cellular water meters throughout the

School Tax Rate From Front

statutory process for adopting the district’s annual tax levy.

The action came during a special called meeting held Aug. 3 at the Garrard Education Center.

The measure passed following a motion by Mr. Ethan Smith and a second by Mr. Kenneth Hurt. The motion was

City Tax Rate From Front

Marshall Norton estimated has held steady for roughly 10 to 12 years.

Mayor Gaffney told the council the city had just received the official rate documentation from the state, which must be finalized and submitted to Garrard County by the middle of September so that tax bills

Denny From Front

“I was 18 years old,” Denny said. “I was actually thinking that I was going to go to college at EKU, and was offered a job, and I decided to take it. I’ve been here ever since.”

Denny credited former Circuit Clerk Jennifer Grubbs with giving her the opportunity to begin her career and said she remains grateful for the chance to have worked under both Grubbs and Hensley.

Over the years, Denny has served in several capacities within the office. She began as a deputy clerk, working the front counter, issuing driver’s licenses when that responsibility was handled locally, and assisting with case processing. She later served as courtroom deputy for District Court before transitioning to the Circuit Criminal Court under Judge Hunter Daugherty. In addition to courtroom duties, Denny has served as the office’s bookkeeper for the past 17 years.

Now, she takes on the office’s top leadership role.

“It’s been a tremendous blessing,” Denny said. “I’m just so thankful for the opportunity.”

As she assumes the position, Denny said Hensley’s example has provided a model she hopes to follow.

“Dana is a fantastic model for what it is to be a true working clerk,” she said. “She worked in here just like all the rest of us, and she was a fantastic leader for our office and a friend. She was somebody you could go to with a work problem or something that wasn’t related to work. She was always there for you and always had your back.”

Denny said she hopes to emulate Hensley’s leadership throughout her own tenure.

“If I do half as good a job as her, I think I’ll be doing all right,” she said.

A lifelong Garrard County resident, Denny said one of the aspects she looks forward to most is continuing to serve the community she has always called home.

“I was born here, grew up here, and I love this community,” she said. “To be able to help the people that I’ve grown up around and know is a wonderful opportunity.”

She said her goal is for the

By contrast, Farmers National Bank, the city’s current banking partner, offered a locally administered loan at 4.75% fixed for the first five years, after which the rate would adjust based on the prime rate, with 4.75% serving as a floor rather than a ceiling. Gaffney noted this route would allow the project to begin significantly sooner since Farmers already holds all the city’s financial information.

Councilman Marshall Norton, who said he has personally opposed the underlying decision to install lights at the ballpark, argued for the fixed-rate bond option purely on financial grounds.

“Looking at the finance end of it, because the council has approved it, I feel like the Kentucky bond would be, as

city. The project is expected to cost between \$600,000 and \$850,000.

According to Gaffney, the replacement project will not result in an additional charge to customers once the meters are installed. He said the city’s water rate structure includes depreciation funding that was intended to help finance necessary infrastructure improvements over time.

Lancaster currently has approximately 1,850 water meters, and the mayor estimated that roughly half of them are

approved by a 4-0 vote, with Dr. Jerry Browning, Mr. Kenneth Hurt, Ms. Mary Davis, and Mr. Ethan Smith voting in favor. Dr. Connie Lamb was absent.

Before the vote, the district released the required public notice outlining the proposed 2027 General Fund tax levy, projected revenues, and the intended use of additional funding.

The proposed General Fund can go out to residents by mid-to-late September, in line with the county’s standard timeline.

The rate sheet presented to the council covered several standard categories, including real property, tangible property, automobiles, and boats. Gaffney recommended the council approve the rates exactly as presented, with no adjustments.

“I don’t recommend any changes to it,” he told the council.

Circuit Clerk’s Office to remain a helpful resource for county residents.

“I truly want to be helpful and available and be a resource for people,” Denny said. “I want people to feel like we truly care about what they need, because we do. I truly want to do my best and be the best that I can for this community.”

Having worked in the office for more than two decades, Denny said she has become familiar with many of the people she serves.

“Working here for the past 24 years, you get pretty familiar with people in the community,” she said. “It’s nice to be able to know a majority of the people that come in.”

Away from the office, Denny said her family has been the foundation of her success. She credited her parents, John and Beverly Land, for instilling the values of hard work, honesty and dedication.

“I think I have the best parents,” she said. “They raised me in a good Christian home and taught me what it is to be a hard worker, to be honest, and to do your very best at whatever you’re trying to accomplish.”

She also expressed appreciation for the support of her husband of 21 years and their daughter.

“I truly couldn’t do any of this without their love and support,” Denny said.

Denny also thanked Judge Daugherty for his confidence and support throughout the appointment process, as well as the staff members in the Circuit Clerk’s Office.

“They’ve always been the best,” she said. “It’s truly a one-of-a-kind office environment, and I just feel blessed to be able to work with them every day.”

Although she has been appointed to the position already, Denny will be on the ballot in November to fill the remainder of Hensley’s term, through December of 2029. However, she faces no opposition in the upcoming election.

“I’m nervous and I’m excited,” she said. “I truly want to do my best and be somebody that the community is proud to call their Circuit Clerk. I want to do my best to represent the community well, my family well, and I’m truly thankful and grateful for this opportunity and for everybody’s support.”

far as the interest rates go, and everything, would be the best option going forward.”

He elaborated later, “The bond rate is a fixed interest rate, whereas others are variable. It could be 4.75, but in five to ten years, it could be 6, 7, 8 percent. So I’m for a fixed rate.”

Councilwoman Michelle Ballew asked about the 20-year rate specifically. Gaffney said the difference between 15 and 20 years worked out to roughly \$9,000 less per year in payments. Gaffney ultimately recommended the 15-year term at 4.06%, noting the ballpark lighting equipment itself comes with a 25-year parts-and-labor warranty, making the extra cost savings of a 20-year loan less necessary given the equipment would outlast even that term.

failing and must now be read manually. He said malfunctioning meters do not record higher water usage but instead tend to underreport consumption by slowing down.

Once the new meters are installed, customers will have access to an online portal that will allow them to monitor their daily water usage. Gaffney said the technology is intended to provide greater transparency and help customers better understand their consumption.

To provide an example, the mayor said his own household

tax rate of 61.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value for both real and personal property is lower than the 2026 rates of 62.5 cents on real property and 64 cents on personal property. Despite the reduction in tax rates, the district projects an increase in General Fund revenue due to growth in Garrard County’s property tax base.

According to the published notice, the district collected \$7,507,736.18 from the 2026 General Fund tax levy. Under the proposed 2027 rates, General Fund revenue is projected to total \$8,270,702.19, an increase of \$762,966.01 over the previous fiscal year. The district estimates that \$983,231.43 of the total revenue will come from new property and personal property.

The notice also identifies the 2027 compensating tax rate as



On Tuesday morning, current Circuit Court Clerk Bethany Denny filed to put her name on the ballot for special election in November to fill the remaining 3-year term of former Circuit Court Clerk Dana Hensley. She is the only eligible candidate to file for the position having been the only person to test and pass before the deadline in Garrard County and will have no opposition in the November election. Pictured following her filing are (left to right) Garrard County Clerk Kevin Montgomery, former Garrard County Circuit Clerk Dana Hensley, newly sworn-in Garrard County Circuit Clerk Bethany Denny, and Denny’s parents, John and Beverly Land.

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Garrard County High School Athletes of the Year

Multi-Sport



Hunter Caldwell
Soccer/Basketball



Braylei Wade
Basketball/Softball

Hunter Caldwell appeared in all 15 of Garrard County’s soccer matches during the fall, providing the team with a dependable senior presence throughout the season. He followed that campaign with an outstanding basketball season, playing in 30 of the Golden Lions’ 31 games. Caldwell finished second on the team in scoring with 356 points, averaging 11.9 points per game. He made 113 of 229 field-goal attempts for an efficient 49.3% shooting percentage.

Braylei Wade played in 29 basketball games, scoring 83 points and collecting 62 rebounds. She also appeared in all 31 softball games, recording 19 hits, 15 runs, five RBIs and 11 walks. Her participation in 60 games and regular roles in both sports give her a strong multi-sport résumé.

“I think 15 is a pretty good number,” he said.

Councilman Micah Wade said he would have preferred “the shortest term of everything” but deferred to staying within the amount already budgeted for annual payments, which Gaffney confirmed had been budgeted at roughly \$2,075 to \$2,080 per month on a 10-year basis, though the final recommendation moved to the longer 15-year term. Wade recused himself from voting on the matter as an employee of First Southern National Bank.

Ballew also raised the idea, first discussed early in the ballpark lighting planning process, of soliciting donations toward the project. Gaffney confirmed that even with financing secured, the city can still accept

of five received a utility bill totaling \$170 for the month after using nearly 5,900 gallons of water.

Gaffney also noted that both water and trash rates increased following action approved by the Lancaster City Council in 2025.

The mayor attributed much of the need for higher water rates to the city’s \$18 million water treatment plant, which began operating in late 2021 or early 2022. He said the facility had been approved by previous administrations, but utility rates

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Gaffney agreed, “Probably 10 to 12 years.”

Approving the rates requires two separate readings before final adoption under standard city ordinance procedure. Gaffney noted this requirement is part of the reason the council will likely need to schedule a special, or “called,” meeting sometime in the next two to three weeks, before the end of August, to handle the second reading and keep the city on

private donations, which would simply be applied to reduce the city’s annual payment obligation; for example, a \$15,000 donation could reduce an annual payment from roughly \$54,000 to \$39,000. Ballew also asked whether Garrard County might contribute financially, given that a majority of ballpark users are believed to come from outside city limits. Gaffney said informal conversations have touched on the subject but nothing formal has been proposed; he noted the county already contributes roughly \$30,000 annually toward the park despite the property being entirely city-owned and maintained.

The council approved a single motion authorizing the 15-year term through Kentucky Bond Corp and grant-

were not adjusted over time to account for the project’s operating costs, inflation and other rising expenses.

According to Gaffney, when he took office in 2023, the city’s water utility was already operating at a financial loss because rates had not kept pace with increasing costs. He said his administration sought two separate rate studies through the City Council in an effort to establish rates that would keep the utility financially sustainable.

While acknowledging that higher utility bills create finan-

58.6 cents per \$100 of assessed value on both real and personal property. That rate would generate an estimated \$7,932,293.76, representing substantially the same revenue as the previous year’s levy, excluding revenue generated from new property.

District officials stated in the notice that the additional revenue above the amount received during fiscal year 2026 is expected to be used for instruc-

schedule to meet the county’s mid-September submission deadline.

He indicated that same called meeting could also be used to address other pending items, including next steps on the city’s stalled City Hall relocation situation.

Councilman Marshall Norton made the motion to approve the rates as presented, constituting the first of the two required readings. The motion

ing Gaffney authority to work with Kentucky Bond Corp and Densmore’s attorneys to draft the necessary financing ordinance, which will require two readings before final adoption.

City Attorney Jonathan Baker confirmed the motion’s language covered approving the lender, rate, and term while authorizing the mayor to proceed.

On the roll call vote, Councilman Marshall Norton clarified his position for the record.

“I want to make it clear that I voted ‘no’ on the lights, but I’m voting yes on the finance because the council has already approved the lights.”

The motion carried.

cial challenges for many residents, Gaffney said rising costs have affected a wide range of household expenses, including electricity, natural gas and groceries.

The mayor said decisions to increase utility rates are not made lightly and encouraged customers who believe they have been billed incorrectly to contact the city’s water office.

He said any verified billing errors would be corrected after review.

tional services.

The approved motion authorizes publication of the tax levy advertisement as required by Kentucky law.

The published notice states that the proposed tax rate is not subject to recall under KRS 132.017 and that publication of the advertisement and its contents is mandated by the Kentucky General Assembly.

was seconded and passed without opposition, following one of the shorter and less contested exchanges of the evening.

The tax rate approval came near the end of a lengthy new-business agenda that also included discussion of ballpark lighting financing, a citywide water meter replacement bid opening, and the upcoming city-wide yard sale, among other items.



SPORTS SCHEDULE

Week Of August 6th - 13th, 2026

GIRL'S GOLF			
Aug. 10	Peninsula		5:00 p.m.
Aug. 17	Mercer @ Brightleaf		4:30 p.m.
BOY'S GOLF			
Aug. 6	Boyle & East Jessamine (Old Bridge)		5:00 p.m.
Aug. 10	Casey County (Hickory Hill Country Club)		5:00 p.m.
Aug. 11	Southwestern Pulaski (General Burnside Island State Park)		5:00 p.m.
Aug. 13	Casey County (Old Bridge)		5:00 p.m.
GIRL'S SOCCER			
Aug. 13	Wayne County	H	6:30 p.m.
Aug. 15	Russell County	H	12:00 noon
BOY'S SOCCER			
Aug. 11	East Jessamine	H	8:00 p.m.
Aug. 13	Mercer County	A	7:30 p.m.
Aug. 15	Estill County	A	6:00 p.m.
GIRL'S VOLLEYBALL			
Aug. 11	Mercer County	A	7:30 p.m.
Aug. 13	Burgin High School	H	6:00 p.m.
Aug. 17	Casey County	H	7:00 p.m.
FOOTBALL			
Aug. 21	Madison Southern High School @ Lincoln Co. High School	A	6:00 p.m.
Death Valley Bowl			



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