Education Center
From Front

Superintendent Kalem Grasham explained that discussions surrounding the project began approximately six weeks before the meeting after concerns were raised about the condition of the gymnasium's interior paint. Those discussions subsequently expanded to include improvements to the lobby and locker removal.

The anticipated cost of the project exceeded the threshold requiring competitive bidding, prompting the district to solicit proposals from contractors. Grasham reported that the district received two bids, with Richmond-based Slater Brothers Enterprise submitting the lowest proposal.

According to the district's recap of proposals received, Circle R Construction, LLC, submitted a bid of $164,345, making the Slater Brothers proposal $49,395 less expensive, representing a cost difference of approximately 30 percent.

The district issued its request for proposals, designated RFP 27-001, on Oct. 13, 2026, with a submission deadline of Nov. 4. The evaluation process assigned a weight of 60 percent to the cost proposal and 40 percent to the technical proposal.

Both contractors submitted the required solicitation response forms, nondiscrimination forms, notarized affidavits and technical responses. However, the district's bid recap indicated that Slater Brothers had not included a certificate of insurance with its submission. Under the solicitation's terms, the contractor has five business days following the contract award to provide the certificate.

District officials recommended awarding the contract to Slater Brothers based on its lower cost and previous work within the school district.

Grasham emphasized that the improvements would be financed through funding secured with the assistance of Kentucky State Rep. David Meade and the School Facilities Construction Commission (SFCC). The superintendent expressed appreciation for Meade's advocacy in Frankfort and his efforts to secure funding for facility maintenance and improvements within the district.

"We are incredibly grateful for David Meade," Grasham said, recognizing the state lawmaker's role in securing resources to maintain district facilities.

Slater Brothers Enterprise was founded in 2021 by brothers Ben and Gareth Slater. According to its proposal, the company employs more than 30 individuals and operates three divisions specializing in general contracting, excavation and utility infrastructure, and general trade services.

The company has previously completed several projects for the Garrard County School District, including painting, restroom partition and accessory renovations, and window removal and replacement.

In its proposal, signed Nov. 3 by company President Ben Slater, the contractor committed to completing the entire scope of work without exceptions or deviations from the district's stated requirements.

John Reisig will serve as project manager, with additional oversight and support provided by Project Executive Logan Watkins and Ben Slater.

The contractor's proposed approach includes conducting a preliminary walkthrough with district representatives and workers to identify scheduling conflicts, upcoming events and other potential concerns before construction begins.

Materials removed during the project will be separated into items suitable for reuse and those requiring disposal. Salvageable materials will either be reinstalled in designated locations or returned to the district for safekeeping.

The company also identified previous renovation projects at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park, Baptist Health Lexington and Barren River Lake State Resort Park as examples of its commercial contracting experience.

During the board's discussion, Chairman Jerry Browning acknowledged the substantial difference between the two bids, with Grasham noting that the recommended proposal was approximately $50,000 less than the competing submission.

Board member Mary Davis made the motion to approve the superintendent's recommendation, with Kenneth Hurt providing the second.

Browning, Davis, Hurt and Ethan Smith voted in favor of the motion. Board member Connie Lamb was absent, resulting in the measure passing by a 4-0 vote.

A specific construction start date or anticipated completion date was not announced during the board's discussion.

The approval authorizes the district to proceed with the planned improvements to the Garrard Education Center, utilizing state-supported funding to address identified facility maintenance needs.

Bankruptcy
From Front

stop collecting from it. A contractor that finished the job and paid its workers can end up paid late, paid only part of what it's owed or not at all, while its own payroll, rent and suppliers still have to be covered.

Personal filings drove the rise, climbing to 49 from 32. The county now has 26.9 personal filings for every 10,000 residents, above the national rate of 17.2. Business filings were about flat, at zero compared with one a year earlier.

Nationally, business bankruptcy filings have more than doubled from their low point four years ago, to 27,054 in the latest 12 months, and are now above their pre-pandemic level. Personal filings are rising too but remain below their pre-pandemic level.

Garrard County bankruptcy filings, 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2026:

• All filings: 49, up from 33 a year earlier

• Personal filings: 49, up from 32 a year earlier

• Business filings: 0, down from 1 a year earlier and down from 2 four years earlier

• Business filings across Kentucky: 166, up from 145 a year earlier

• Business filings nationwide: 27,054, up from 24,039 a year earlier

• All filings nationwide: 621,111, up from 557,376 a year earlier

The analysis uses the federal courts' newest county bankruptcy table, which covers the 12 months ending Sept. 30. Each case is counted in the filer's home county. Business filings include individuals whose debts come mainly from a business.

The Kaplan Group is a commercial debt collection agency specializing in recovering un-

Wilderness
From Front

Wilderness Education Project to employ Meg Mills Short and Zack Short through Garrard County Schools as Grants Program Associates. Both individuals will hold classified positions and assist with identifying funding opportunities for educational solutions.

Superintendent Kalem Grasham explained that the school district has maintained a positive working relationship with the Wilderness Education Project over the past several years and that the agreements would provide a financial benefit to the district without requiring it to assume employment-related expenses.

Under the arrangement, both individuals will be considered Garrard County Schools employees but will be released to work for the Wilderness Education Project through the agreements. The nonprofit organization will cover their salaries, fringe benefits and other associated expenses.

Each agreement provides for 180 working days at a daily rate of $232, representing a full-time equivalent position with a salary of $41,760.

According to the contractual documents included in the board's meeting materials, the financial breakdown for each employee is as follows:

• Salary: $41,760.00

• Social Security (FICA): $2,589.12

• Medicare: $605.52

• County Employees Retirement System (CERS): $7,278.77

• Unemployment: $60.00

• Workers' compensation: $79.34

• Total salary and fringe benefits: $52,372.75

• District indirect costs (8%): $4,189.82

• Total agreement: $56,562.57

The combined agreements account for $83,520 in salaries, $21,225.50 in fringe benefits and $8,379.64 in indirect costs payable to Garrard County Schools.

During the meeting, Grasham estimated that approving the agreements would provide approximately $10,000 in financial benefit to the school district while resulting in no additional cost to the district. The written agreements specifically identify a combined $8,379.64 in indirect cost payments.

The Wilderness Education Project, identified in the contractual documents as a Kentucky-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, will also be responsible for expenses associated with the positions, including mileage, hotel accommodations, per diem, copying, equipment and telephone expenses.

Both agreements are effective November 20, 2026, and will remain in place through June 30, 2027. The Wilderness Education Project and the Garrard County Schools superintendent will jointly provide oversight and guidance throughout the contractual period.

Payments from the nonprofit organization to the school district will be made quarterly or on alternative dates mutually determined by both parties. The agreements also provide flexibility to adjust individual financial line items as necessary to accommodate financial needs.

The agreements include termination provisions allowing either organization to terminate its respective contract by providing 30 days' written notice. Additional provisions allow for termination if either party fails to remedy a contractual default or breach within 15 days of receiving written notice.

Following Grasham's recommendation, board member Ethan Smith made a motion to approve both memorandums of agreement, with board member Mary Davis providing the second.

Board Chairman Jerry Browning, Mary Davis, Kenneth Hurt and Ethan Smith voted in favor of the motion.

Parade Info
From Front

visit with Santa Claus following the parade.

Saturday's festivities will begin at 10 a.m. with an open house at Garrard Arts and the Wherritt House. Running until 5 p.m., the open house will feature artist demonstrations, light refreshments and door prizes.

At 2 p.m., the Grand Theatre will offer a free showing of Dr. Seuss' Christmas classic, The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, along with free snacks for moviegoers.

Food trucks will be stationed on the square from 2 to 7 p.m., providing dining options for those attending the celebration throughout the afternoon and evening.

The Garrard County Public Library will host Christmas crafts and letter-writing activities for children from 4 to 5:30 p.m., giving youngsters an opportunity to create holiday keepsakes and write letters to Santa.

A holiday photo opportunity and Santa mailbox will be available from 4 to 5:45 p.m. in the Whitaker Bank quadrant of the square. Additional Christmas crafts will be offered during those same hours at Cornerstone's Auction House.

The FSNB Community Room will feature an Elevated Events photo station and Dynamic Face Painting, while traveling Christmas carolers will provide holiday music throughout the square.

The celebration will culminate with the evening Christmas parade and a visit from Santa Claus, bringing together residents and visitors for a hometown holiday tradition.

With activities scheduled throughout the day, Saturday's celebration offers families an opportunity to enjoy downtown Lancaster, participate in holiday traditions and welcome the Christmas season together.





