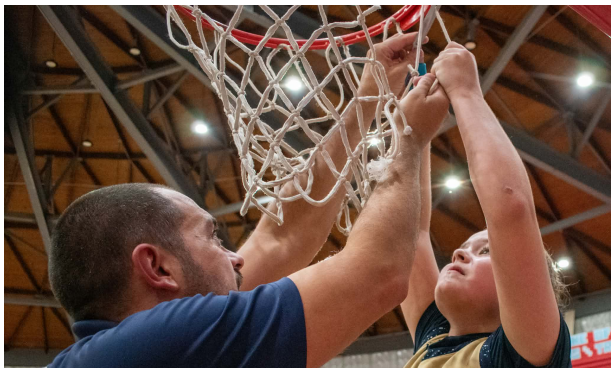




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Harlan Enterprise

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Breaking news at harlanenterprise.net

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7, 2026



JEFF PHILLIPS

Harlan County School Board Chairman Gary Farmer (left) and Superintendent Brett Johnson talked during a recent meeting.

School officials say tax rates the same; records available online

By Jeff Phillips
Harlan County Schoools

Tax bills are in the mail and district officials want to remind taxpayers in the Harlan County Public School District that the school tax rate did not increase; instead it remains at a rate adopted in the 2020-2021 school year when the rate slightly decreased.

The district's rate dropped from 54.9 cents per \$100 of assessed value in the 2019-2020 school year to 54.8 cents in the 2020-2021 school year – a rate that been retained for six years with no increase.

The board voted at a special meeting on Aug. 20 to keep the existing rate of 54.8 cents per \$100 of assessed value for the 2026-2027 school year.

As required by law, the proposed rates were published prior to the board's action,

including on social media and advertised through the legal notices of a local newspaper.

“With the increased costs associated with so many supplies and other expenditures, I am elated the board of education was able to avoid raising taxes again this year,” said Superintendent Brett W. Johnson. “I know this is important to taxpayers as we strive daily to be good stewards of those critical tax dollars. Costs are going up for our families at home and we know we must continue to be good stewards.”

While the district has maintained its current tax rate, increasing costs for supplies, services and other expenditures continue to place pressure on school district budgets across the state and nation.

During the September board

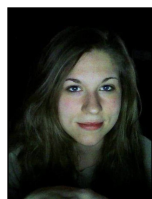
See **SCHOOL**, 3A

Family, friends still looking for answers in death of Massingale

By Brenda Ramsey
Harlan Enterprise

It has been five years since Kayla Massingale's death, but family and friends are no closer to solving the mystery surrounding what happened to her. Hearts are heavy among the members of the “Justice for Kayla” Facebook group, a group made up of over 2,000 family, friends and concerned citizens created to continue investigating the case long after it was closed by officials.

Massingale was a local woman who died under mysterious circumstances. On Aug. 27, 2021, she was found in a creek on a mountain trail with no car, phone or identification and temporarily classified as a Jane Doe. She was alive when



Kayla Massingale

found but badly injured. Massingale was taken by ambulance to Harlan ARH and soon transferred to Hazard ARH due to the severity of her injuries. While at Hazard, the police identified her and notified the family days later. The family said Massingale had visible injuries to her head, face, arms and legs. She had also been diagnosed with COVID-19. She did not wake up after being found on the mountain and died on Sept. 2, 2021, with the official cause classified as COVID-19. The family felt that the case was not

See **FAMILY**, 2A

A scenic trip on U.S. 421



KENTUCKY TRANSPORTATION CABINET

The new section of U.S. 421 over the mountain into Virginia was recently opened to traffic, making travel safer and faster. Only two miles of the project have yet to be completed, and Governor Andy Beshear promised the project would be completed during his campaign eight years ago.



BRENDA RAMSEY

Flooding last week along KY 38 damaged several homes around Ages, Brookside and Coxton.

Cleanup continues after heavy rains lead to mudslide on KY 38

By Brenda Ramsey
Harlan Enterprise

Following heavy rainstorms in the early morning hours of Sept. 22, a mudslide occurred at Wild Cat Hollow Road on KY 38 around Brookside. The house, owned by Phillip Collett, was surrounded by rushing water, mud and trash. The owners were not inside at the time of the slide, but according to neighbors there was a “horrible sound” and when they looked outside they saw that the house

had been surrounded by debris. The damage to the house included ruined ductwork underneath the house, damage to air conditioning units that were covered by water and dislodged gutters that had been recently placed on the house. The owners were able to find a way into the home the following morning and reported that inside the house is undamaged, but that the mud came no more than 6 inches from making its way inside. The house is sitting on a strong

foundation, so no structure issues are suspected.

Land owned by 101 Coal Inc. was reportedly the origin of the slide. It is not reported what caused this specific mudslide. The Enterprise contacted 101 Coal for comment by all available methods but received no response.

Harlan County Judge Executive Dan Mosley has been in the area several times to review the damage.

“We believe there are close

See **CLEANUP**, 2A

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77° | 48°
Sunny

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