

Remembering past Webster County tornados

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As spring ramps up into full gear, so does the strong storm season. Webster County is no stranger to severe storms, including those that produce devastating tornados. Two of the most notable storms in our county's history included the Jan. 3, 2000, tornado and the April 28, 2002, twister that hit Providence.

The Jan. 3, 2000, tornado that hit Webster County actually started in Crittenden County. Meteorologists later measured it as an EF-3 that produced 160 mile per hour winds. It was a

quarter of a mile wide and tracked up to 15 miles. Starting in Crayne, it followed the Crittenden-Caldwell County line and ended in Diamond. Over 100 homes were damaged or destroyed, as were countless barns and outbuildings.

The cell that produced the tornado here in 2000 also produced several more, with one hitting northwest Tennessee and another that hit Owensboro head on. Storm reports included 750 homes damaged or destroyed and over 20,000 without power. That particular storm system also produced heavy flash flooding around western Kentucky.

This week is also the anniversary of the April 28, 2002, tornado that hit Providence, something that the city remembers all too well. Many families' lives were irrevocably changed in a matter of minutes as a violent twister carved its path through the southern end of the county.

The 2002 tornado was a nighttime scenario, which experts warn are the most dangerous because people are asleep and don't hear sirens or warnings. The twister was also a long-track, fast-moving tornado. A funnel cloud on the ground for a long time often gains intensity, making the impacts even more catas-

trophic.

It would later be classified as an EF-3, originating out of a supercell that began in southeast Missouri. This classification refers to the tornado causing severe damage consistent with 150-206 mile-per-hour winds. It first touched down in Crittenden County like the one two years before it, but it quickly moved into southern Webster County and followed Highway 120 through Providence.

The tornado was 880 feet wide and included a damage path of nine miles, a formidable disaster. A mobile home park off Tower Drive and 10 houses were leveled

in seconds. Over 300 homes were damaged in some way when the storm passed through. Experts estimated the tornado to have caused \$15 million in damage. Additionally, 24 people were injured and hospitalized.

Providence was not the only town impacted by tornadoes in late April 2002. La Plata, Maryland was obliterated by an EF-4 tornado on the same day as the Providence storm. That long-track tornado stayed on the ground for 68 miles and caused over \$100 million dollars in damages. It was exceptionally rare at the time for the Mid-Atlantic region to have such a violent storm.

BOARD

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is losing one position and the high school is losing two.

It is each school's SDBM council that decides how the allocated positions are filled, and then what additional positions they will ask the board for. There was much discussion about that from board members Amanda Coomes and David Asher.

Coomes asked if class sizes could be presented with the additional position request. Harrell said that wasn't a problem, as each principal provided a rationale with each request for an additional position, and that could be included. Asher had questions about how assistant principals could be added to SDBM allocations.

Saalwaechter told him that was part of the process that the board had already acted upon.

Harrell added additional commentary to Saalwaechter's presentation, specifically addressing the assistant principal position at Sebree. This has been a touchstone for Asher in particular. "Problems at Sebree" was Asher's main reason for voting against Harrell.

Harrell stated, "I am not standing in the way of a Sebree assistant principal, and I support it." He added that it was Sebree's SDBM that does the decision making. "Principals and their SDBMs choose how they use their allocations."

Harrell cited dates when Sebree had an assistant principal in the past and when they had vacated the position and changed it to a guidance counselor. He also revisited meeting records citing why he and the board agreed to table moving forward with putting an assistant principal at Sebree this school year.

Coomes added that she felt like the board was in favor of an assistant principal at Sebree, as was Harrell, but she tabled it on Harrell's recommendation. Coomes cited that there was "misinformation that Harrell had supported the position but that the board had not."

There was brief discussion about Sebree employing an assistant principal until 2024, and their SDBM had changed the position to a guidance counselor. There was also an explanation about the difference between an assistant principal and a dean of students, which is what Dixon has. Saalwaechter gave some insight on how position titles change to often account for the lack of certified applicants.

The beginning of the meeting featured the 1WC Employees of the Month and the Student Spotlights. Board members Melony Hobgood and Amanda Coomes presented those awards to Jacob Knight, Misty McVay, Katy Lockheart and Lindsey Branson.

Harrell followed, introducing Austin Duncan and Carson Hayes, WCHS juniors who were selected

to attend the Governor's Scholar program and Commonwealth Honors Academy, respectively, this summer.

Samantha Winebarger was the only person who addressed the board during public comment. First, she thanked the anonymous donor that paid for middle school soccer team's buses this season. She spoke very highly of the teams, expressing the need to "grow and feed the talent" that the young players possess.

She also gave several suggestions to the board regarding their meetings, including adjusting the time so more people could be there and filming meetings so more people could be involved. She mentioned many more "wanted to be active in the situation" and clarified "the situation" as the recent superintendent vote.

Winebarger felt like the decision caused the community and board to lose trust and rapport with one another. She then suggested that the board have a way to process complaints in writing to address issues like other organizations.

"The community is in limbo," Winebarger stated. She asked the board to clarify to the community their "why."

"Why do you want to be on the board? What do you want to achieve? What difference do you want to make?" she asked.

The board didn't offer public answers to Winebarger's questions.

Wilson was under the influence of controlled substances while in physical control of the bus, which was carrying 19 children and three teachers.

Wilson was arrested and lodged in the Webster County Detention Center on charges of: operating a commercial vehicle under the influence of

alcohol/controlled substance; operating under the influence of a controlled substance (aggravating circumstances); and 22 counts wanton endangerment, first degree.

Wilson remains lodged in the Webster County Detention Center on a \$10,000 bond, according to the jail website.

FISCAL

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over \$3.9 million, while the jail is expected to spend approximately \$3 million.

The Local Government Economic Assistance (LGEA) fund covers the coroner's office, local emergency management, animal control, the senior citizens center, Canaan Ridge Park, and a variety of other extraneous items. That fund is expected to spend just under \$3.5 million.

State and federal grants are estimated to bring in over \$7.7 million, and the opioid settlement fund is expected to be paid a little more than \$340,000.

The budget is not final and those totals can change as the fiscal court conducts the work sessions.

The measure must be passed by June 30 at 11:59

p.m.

The court also approved advertising for a public hearing to take suggestions on LGEA and county road aid funding. The hearing is a formality required by state law. The court expects that forum to take place during the May 11 meeting.

The total county road aid fund is just over \$1 million, while the LGEA money totals \$245,900. Those are projections from the Department of Local Government (DLG).

Henry said 3% of the road aid funds will be placed in a state-wide emergency fund. He added that the county has requested money from that fund in the past and had received more than was paid in.

The court also approved advertising for bids for road materials, fuel and oil products. The bids will be due on May 11 at 9 a.m. and will be opened

during that meeting. Henry said he expects those bids to be awarded Tuesday, May 26. The regular Monday meeting was moved due to Memorial Day.

In other business, magistrates approved a \$40,000 transfer from the general fund to the jail fund.

Senior Citizens Center Director Mandy Fambrough said her staff will be taking a group of seniors to a "prom" in Union County on May 4. The group will leave the center at 10:15 a.m. Those wishing to attend must register by calling the center at (270) 639-5394.

There will also be a health fair at the senior center May 7 from 9-11 a.m.

Henry finished by reminding those visiting Canaan Ridge Park that the speed limit throughout the park is 15 miles per hour.

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