



THE LARUE COUNTY HERALD NEWS

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Judge Simms denies motion to dismiss

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

LaRue County Circuit Court Judge Charles Simms III has ruled in favor of the petition committee attempting to recall the LaRue County Board of Education's recent property tax levy, denying motions to dismiss the case; however, the litigation is far from over. Originally filed in November 2025 by the petition committee, which is comprised of David Ragland, William "Bill" Manning and Jerry Bird, the litigation challenges LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf's decision that the petition attempting to recall the school board's 2025 property tax levy did not meet statutory standards, causing it to be declared insufficient. Per Metcalf's determination, two pages of the petition contained different headings and verbiage than all the other papers

submitted. Because state law requires all papers of a petition to be substantially uniform in style, Metcalf said she could not by statute certify the petition. Adrienne Southworth, attorney for the petition committee, argues that the difference in headings is a "technical problem" that should not cause the petition as a whole to be rejected, while Tom Claycomb, attorney for the board, contends that the law requires uniformity, without exception. This belief, and the fact that the petition committee admits to not complying with the law, led Claycomb and Metcalf's attorney to file motions to dismiss the case. Simms refused to rule on the motions in December and ordered Metcalf to conduct an official count of the petition signatures before he would do so. She reported on Feb. 2 that the petition had an adequate number of verifiable signatures both with and without the two pages.

Simms filed his ruling denying the motions to dismiss on Monday, Feb. 16. In it, he cited a 2016 Jefferson County Appellate case that states voter tax recall statutes are to be liberally construed. "The appellate court further noted that this doctrine can be traced to 1887 when this state's highest court held that 'strict compliance with election statutes should not be required when it would deprive the citizen of his free suffrage, - the dearest, highest, and most sacred privilege he enjoys,'" he wrote. "It is undisputed that 2 of the 88 pages are not substantially uniform in style, with those containing a different heading and verbiage. However, this Court believes it would be inappropriate to reject the other 86 uniform pages." In light of the doctrine of substantial compliance and the appellate court

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Jones a District 14 Senate candidate

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR



Submitted photo

MALCOLM JONES

Malcolm Jones, a long-time LaRue County resident, is throwing his hat in the ring as a Democratic candidate for the Kentucky State Senate, seeking to represent the 14th District. Born in Charleston, South Carolina but raised in Madisonville, Kentucky, Jones has lived in LaRue County with his family for the past 12 years. He is a retired United States Air Force veteran, having served 20 years before his retirement in 2004. His primary responsibilities during that time included occupational safety and health; environmental, human resource

and program management; curriculum development; and classroom instruction. Jones then transitioned into the corporate sector, where he worked a cumulative 21 years between Boeing Team in St. Louis, SEE JONES/PAGE A4



Photo by Victoria Cox

Rita Williams, second from left, is the recipient of the 2026 Richard Burks Lincoln Heritage Award, which was presented during the annual Abraham Lincoln Birthday Luncheon. She is pictured with her son, Darin Williams, daughter, Dawn Conner, and son-in-law, Kenley Conner.

Williams honored for contributions to community heritage

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

Feb. 12 may not be a national holiday, but its significance as Abraham Lincoln's birthday makes it a local one. This year, during the area's largest celebration - the annual Lincoln Birthday Luncheon - a local woman was honored for her history of contributing to the legacy of LaRue County's heritage. Sponsored by the Lincoln Days Celebration, the Richard Burks Lincoln Heritage Award is presented annually on Lincoln's birthday to a specific individual, group or organization in recognition of significant contributions that have added to the "perpetuation of the ideals and traditions of Abraham Lincoln and the Lincoln Days Celebration." Recipients are selected based on participation in community activities and events and for any other involvement that has promoted public understanding of the relationship between history and community life today. Award recognition may be based on outstanding involvement during the award year alone, or it may be for cumulative efforts over a longer period. The 2026 award was presented to Rita Williams for special efforts given to perpetuate the history of LaRue County and the ideals of Abraham Lincoln. "Our recipient today has a long and impressive history of contributing to the preservation, growth and promotion



Photo by Victoria Cox

Lincoln Days committee members, LaRue County and Hodgenville officials and community members gathered for a wreath-laying ceremony on Lincoln Square in Hodgenville in honor of Abraham Lincoln's 217th birthday on Thursday, Feb. 12. Pictured, back row from left, is William Craddock, Jeff Eckmann, Malcolm Jones, LaRue County Judge Executive Blake Durrett, Lincoln Days President Diana Walters, Stephen Carney, Lincoln Days board member Janice LaFollette and Hodgenville City Councilman Tony Stewart. Front row is Calvin Craddock, Henry Craddock, Josie Craddock and Kendall Craddock.

of our community's heritage," Iris LaRue, a Lincoln Days board member of Director of The Lincoln Museum, said during the award presentation. "She has shared her faith, her many strengths, volunteer time, talent and treasure throughout this county. From giving

her musical talents to church, her energies to girl scouts, 4-H and Teens Who Care, she has led by example." LaRue highlighted Williams' long-time commitment to the community.

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Photo by Victoria Cox

The Hodgenville City Council hosted its first meeting in the new building on Feb. 9. City hall will be closed on Wednesday, Feb. 18 and expects to reopen for business at the new location the following day.

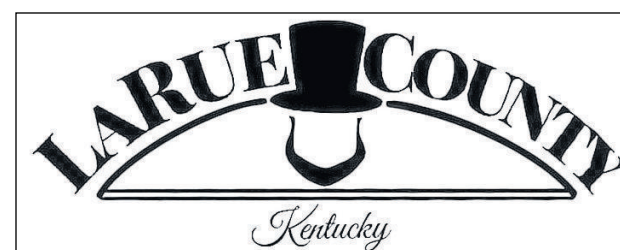
City Hall closed Feb. 18 for move

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

Hodgenville City Hall will be closed this Wednesday, Feb. 18, as staff finalize relocating its headquarters. The organization is expecting to reopen at its new location, 794 Old Elizabethtown Road, the following day. Hosting the city council's first meeting in the new building on Monday, Feb. 9, Hodgenville Mayor Jim Phelps informed council

members that they are in the homestretch for the move. The city's new sign has been installed, minor repairs, such as trim work and painting, are currently underway, and staff have already begun moving some files and other equipment. The last step in the relocation will occur on Feb. 18, when computers and other technology is installed at the new location. This will require the entity to

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Winter weather causes \$80,000+ in damages

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

While the area is glad that the snow and ice that blanketed the Commonwealth for nearly two weeks is gone, LaRue County Road Supervisor David Wood said the county's safe roadways and ability to return to school was only possible with the help of contracted individuals and community members. The local area received an estimated four to six inches of snow and up to a quarter inch of ice. These

accumulations mixed with arctic temperatures as low as 1° F to cause hazardous road conditions. The biggest challenge, county officials said, was not the initial snowfall, but the extended period of freezing temperatures that followed. Daytime melting combined with overnight refreezing led to layers of thick ice forming on roads. These conditions not only made travel unsafe, but also caused traditional snow plows to be unable to break through

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OBITUARIES
Leonard "Speedy" Akerman, 85
Christine Joyce Hazle Leeds, 92

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