

Upgrades to water, wastewater systems coming soon

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

The City of Hodgenville is planning to utilize federal funding to improve its water and wastewater systems.

Meeting on Monday, March 9, Mayor Jim Phelps informed the Hodgenville City Council that, after refurbishing the industrial water tower, the city still has approximately \$49,000 left over from the \$415,000 Cleaner Water Program funding. Because the money must be returned if it is not used and it can only be used for projects relating to water, the city will use the remainder of the funds to develop a model of the Hodgenville Water Works water distribution system.

“Basically, they’re going to get everything laid out – all the hydraulics, valves, etc.,” he said. “[We] are also working on the cost of service for us and finding out what our cost of producing water is.”

Phelps also referenced a \$1 million EPA grant the city previously received, stating that they plan to utilize the funding to install sensors throughout the city’s wastewater system to allow for flow monitoring.

“The sensors will be in specific areas that we might identify we have a lot of infiltration – water that’s not supposed to be in our sewer system,” he said. “The south side of town has also had significant development out there, so we want to make sure that our system is handling that.”



Any leftover funding will be used for minor improvements at the wastewater treatment plant.

The council was also informed that the first of the four tornado sirens purchased by the city in 2023 will soon be installed at First Baptist Church. The city will be required to purchase a pole from Nolin RECC, but the company has graciously agreed to donate the labor to mount it. The city will also have to fund the labor to mount the siren. FBC has agreed to pay the electricity bill for the siren.

One of the remaining sirens will be used to replace an old one located on Greensburg Street. Another will be installed on the tower at the county’s maintenance garage. The location of the fourth siren has yet to be determined.

Other information discussed

at the monthly meeting included:

- Approval of an ordinance “creating a franchise for the operation and maintenance of a telecommunications (non-cable) system in Hodgenville, setting forth conditions accompanying the grant of franchise and providing for the regulation and use of said system.” Phelps said the legislation is essentially a house-keeping item the lawyers at Windstream have requested be placed on file. The first reading was conducted on Monday. The second reading and official vote is expected to occur in April.

- Approval to donate \$500 to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of the Heartland, which recruits, trains and supports a network of volunteers who act as advocates for abused and

neglected children under the protection of the LaRue County Family Court system. Executive Director Michelle Kail shared statistical information about the organization’s presence in the local community throughout 2025. More information about the nonprofit can be found on page C2 of today’s edition.

- A resolution detailing the city’s support of Kentucky House Bill 557, which proposes meaningful reforms to address the growing financial burden of jail operations on county governments. Co-sponsored by District 24 Representative Ryan Bivens, the bill would clarify the financial responsibility for the cost of detaining inmates charged with felony offenses, require the Commonwealth to reimburse a county or jail authority for the actual cost of housing state inmates and strengthen jail accountability by requiring inmate programming and daily medical professional presence in the jail.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Council member Steve Johnson proposed the city implement a salary increase for the mayor position. Johnson said the topic had been discussed occasionally over the years, but was never executed; however, he feels doing so is necessary on account of “all the work he does and all the hours he puts in.”

Stating that he appreciates the thought and that doing so is ultimately up to the council, not him, Phelps said he would not recommend it.

“I don’t think we can afford it; we already pay more than cities bigger than our size,” he said. “I would rather see the money put somewhere else.”

Council member Ryan Jeffries stated that he believes the position is likely an underpaid job; however, he urged the council to not make a decision in haste.

“I think if we’re going to do anything, we probably need to look and try to educate ourselves on what other cities comparable to us are [paying],” he said. “I do think Jim’s comments should be [taken into] consideration – he knows our budget almost as well as Rita does; he knows more so than any of us what the job entails and what it is.”

Any changes related to the mayor’s salary would not go into effect until Jan. 1, 2027. If the council decides to move forward with the endeavor, they will be required to do so by May.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Hodgenville Police Chief James Richardson provided the council with an overview of the department’s happenings throughout February, including answering 287 calls for service, issuing 44 citations with 34 arrests and opening 26 case reports. Richardson also reported that he has been working to update the department’s job descriptions and training policies; has cleaned out the evidence locker; is working to finalize HPD’s accreditation; and is considering investing in flock

cameras.

Richardson also reported that the department is currently fully staffed, with a total of 12 employees: 10 full time and one part time officers and a police clerk. While this is good, it was noted that HPD has just enough vehicles, and would not have an extra one were something to happen to a patrol cruiser currently in use. Richardson said he is looking to outfit the department’s vehicle reserved for the police clerk with police equipment, so they have a backup if needed.

Chuck Lee, Hodgenville Fire Chief, reported 10 calls for service in the month of February. This included three activated fire alarms, two elderly assists and one each of a motor vehicle accident, vehicle fire, gas leak, EMS assist and electrical fire. Lee also informed the court that the fire department has received a \$7,000 grant from the state to purchase gear; the city will still be responsible for approximately \$1,200 to completely fund the purchase.

Hodgenville Public Works Director Ed Lane informed the council that the maintenance department has been working to fix minor water leaks and potholes throughout the city. He also reported that construction to replace tiles on Springdale and Orchard Roads was expected to begin Monday, Mar. 16.

The next meeting of the Hodgenville City Council will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 13 at the Hodgenville City Hall.

Study reveals 1 in 4 local children don't have enough to eat

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

One in six residents in LaRue County do not have access to enough food.

These statistics, derived from Feeding America’s most recent *Map the Meal Gap* report, reveal that food insecurity for members of the local community is a significant problem, and one that is continuing to rise.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time, Feeding America states, but may reflect a household’s need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or



File photo

Volunteers for the Shepherd’s Pie Food Pantry, Regina Hornback, left, and Susie Skaggs, fill bags full of food to distribute to the community.

medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

According to the 2025 report, 17.5% of LaRue Countians lack access to adequate food; this is equal to 2,630 individuals, or one in six residents, and is 3.2% higher than the national average. The deficit is even higher for local youth, with food insecurity affecting 800 children, equal to 23.4% or nearly one in four kids. These numbers

demonstrate an increase of the local food insecurity rate by 130 individuals and 70 children over the past year, and by 600 individuals and 210 children over the past four years.

Of those who have been identified as food insecure, 32% of individuals and 41% of children are not eligible for major federal nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC. Feeding America

believes that the quantity of households that experience food insecurity but do not qualify for SNAP “further underscores the importance of charitable food assistance.” Additionally, because everyone who qualifies for SNAP is not enrolled, the data highlights the need to both protect and strengthen federal nutrition programs and increase enrollment.

The study also identifies an annual budget shortfall for the county. Defined as the total annualized additional dollar amount that food-insecure individuals report needing, on average, to purchase just enough food to meet their food needs, the data states an additional \$1,663,000 each year is needed to eliminate food insecurity locally.

FEEDING AMERICA, KENTUCKY’S HEARTLAND

Feeding America, Kentucky’s Heartland (FAKH) is a nonprofit organization located in Elizabethtown that is dedicated to fighting hunger in central and western Kentucky by collecting and distributing food to communities in need.

Despite facing reductions

in funding and resources, FAKH said it and its agency partners in LaRue County remain committed to addressing the rising levels of food insecurity in the community.

“Through government commodities, donations and food purchases, FAKH invested nearly \$744,000 in LaRue County during the last fiscal year,” a release by FAKH states. “Partnering with four area agency partners, FAKH distributed nearly 421,000 pounds of food, enough to provide nearly 351,000 meals to individuals and families in need.”

LOCAL RESOURCES

There are many avenues that residents of Hodgenville and LaRue County who are experiencing food insecurity can utilize, including:

- LaRue County Community Action – a food giveaway is held on the third Wednesday of the month from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the LaRue County Parks & Recreation, 200 City Park, Hodgenville; proof of income is not required to participate.

- The Hope Food Pantry – Hodgenville United Methodist Church, located at 825 Tonieville Road, Hod-

genville, hosts a monthly food giveaway on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. and from 5 to 6 p.m.; proof of address and monthly income are required to participate, call 270-735-6334 for more information.

- The Shepherd’s Pie Food Pantry – Magnolia Cumberland Presbyterian Church, located at 235 Old L & N Turnpike, Magnolia, has a giveaway at 3 p.m. every Tuesday; clients who wish to participate must call 270-324-3472 to register and document their financial need prior to receiving food.

- LaRue County Senior Citizens Center – The senior center is located at 112 N. Walters Ave., Hodgenville and caters to those 60 and older. Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. The center is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday to Friday and can be contacted at 270-358-4235.

To learn more about FAKH or to support the organization’s mission to ensure no one goes hungry, visit feedingamericaky.org.

Vine Grove bridge closed due to deterioration

BY KODEE BRINEGAR
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

An aged bridge along Otter Creek Road in Vine Grove is closed to all pedestrian and vehicle traffic because of its deteriorated condition.

“The existing bridge consists of steel pipe that serves as both the beams and pier support system. The steel pipes are hollow and have deterioration,” Vine Grove City Engineer Bob Woosley said. “The concrete deck is undersized based on today’s standards and the rebar within the deck is exposed and deteriorating.”

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet performed an inspection approximately two weeks ago to add this bridge to its inventory to help the city become eligible for grant funding. Inspector immediately concluded the bridge needed to be closed because its load rating was reduced, Woosley said.

Vine Grove Mayor Pam Ogden confirmed that an independent structural engineer came out Sunday

and said the bridge, which is one of the longest in the city, had to be rebuilt entirely.

“We’re applying for funding right now but a lot of the grants are for 2027,” Ogden said. “I’m hoping we can get the bridge started in 2027. That’s my goal.”

Ogden said the cost to replace the bridge is estimated at \$1.5 million, which is not in the Vine Grove municipal budget.

“We are looking at all avenues to secure grant dollars,” Woosley said. “Those options include both state and federal funding programs. Securing grant dollars is an extremely competitive process.”

Many people who use Otter Creek Bridge are affected by the bridge’s closure, Ogden said, including The Landings subdivision and residents along St. Andrews Drive and Otter Creek Road.

“You can go around to get to the same place but it just takes a few more minutes longer,” Ogden said.

Ogden is asking for all residents to have patience

as the city works to get the bridge reopened as soon as possible.

“I did not realize the shape that the bridge was in. I don’t think our engineer even realized the shape the bridge was in until we actually were notified by the state,” Ogden said. “To me, safety is my main priority. I know it’s inconvenient, and I do apologize for that.”

In addition to the Otter Creek Bridge, Woosley said Creekvale Bridge and St. Andrews Bridge also needs repair work.

LAND OF LINCOLN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
April 2026 Agenda
Notice of Public Hearing
Thursday, April 2nd, 2026 • 7:00 p.m.
209 West High St. Hodgenville, Ky.

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Approval of Minutes
IV. Business

1. RZ 26-01) Dianna Gozzard is requesting that a tract containing .023 acres, located at 1379 Dangerfield Rd. be rezoned from A1 to R1A to correct an encroachment problem.
2. Coyote Run Subdivision Final Plat.

Other Business:
Discuss nominations for open position.
Discuss Bylaw changes.
Administrative:

1. Administrators Report
2. Approval of Bills
3. Legal
4. Adjournment

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