

-JAIL CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

come as Kentucky lawmakers consider changes to how jail costs are divided between state and county government.

“Jails are necessary and they provide jobs for our people, but financially they are a burden on county finances,” McGehee said. “The state needs to step up and provide funding that would make jails self-sufficient.”

McGehee said a substantial part of the county’s responsibility begins before a defendant is convicted. During that period, he said, the county must pay for housing, food and medical care, sometimes for months while a case moves through the courts.

“We have to house, feed, and provide medical care,” McGehee said. “That is a huge loss to the county.”

When an inmate becomes eligible for state reimbursement following conviction, McGehee said the payment still falls well below the county’s actual expenses. He estimated the daily cost at approximately \$60 per inmate, compared with roughly \$35 in state reimbursement.

Those estimates represent a gap of about \$25 per day for each inmate receiving the state payment.

“Generally it’s over \$1 million annually we subsidize the jail with tax dollars from the General Fund of the county,” McGehee said.

The financial responsibility also extends beyond inmate care. McGehee said the jail requires continuing investment in repairs, equipment replacement and maintenance as the building ages.

“I have a maintenance person that is needed there constantly,” he said.

Statewide funding debate

Similar concerns are driving discussions in Frankfort about Kentucky’s county jail system.

Rep. Michael Meredith, R-Edmonson County, and Kentucky Association of Counties Executive Director Jim Henderson appeared before the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary on Oct. 1 to discuss House Bill 557, a comprehensive jail funding proposal Meredith introduced during the 2026 legislative session.

According to KACo’s account of the meeting, Kentucky counties contribute roughly \$170 million in local

general fund money toward jail operations, a 76% increase over six years.

KACo reported a state inmate reimbursement rate of \$35.34 per day. Its analysis placed average daily incarceration costs at \$63.44 per inmate, excluding Fayette and Jefferson counties.

Those statewide figures reflect the same imbalance McGehee described in Muhlenberg County: State payments cover only part of the expense, leaving county government to make up the difference.

Meredith’s proposal would address several aspects of jail funding, including financial assistance for regional jail construction and conversion, state contracts for county jail space, reimbursement for certain detention costs before conviction and greater state responsibility for inmate health services.

According to KACo, the proposal carried an estimated fiscal impact of \$200 million and did not receive a committee hearing during the 2026 legislative session despite support from dozens of co-sponsors.

The October interim discussion gave lawmakers an opportunity to examine the proposal ahead of the 2027 session. It did not establish a new funding system.

“As we go forward on this, though, I think we need to have a more comprehensive approach,” Meredith said.

Retirement benefits add another concern

McGehee said the funding debate should also include retirement benefits for jail deputies, whose work can require dealing with violent individuals.

He supports providing hazardous-duty retirement benefits but said the additional expense puts that coverage beyond the county’s financial reach under the current funding arrangement.

McGehee estimated that the retirement system requires contributions for hazardous-duty coverage at roughly twice the level of regular coverage. He said inadequate jail funding makes that added cost difficult for counties to afford.

For Muhlenberg County, McGehee’s concerns encompass daily inmate care, the upkeep of the jail and benefits for the people working inside it. He said greater state support is needed to meet those obligations and reduce the jail’s continuing reliance on local tax dollars.



▲ PHOTO | SUBMITTED
Charles Martin, right, is being sworn in as a Major in the US Army in Fort Leavenworth, KS, on Friday, October 2. Lt. Col. Tim Devine, swore Martin in.

Martin promoted to Major, US Army

Charles Martin of Central City was officially promoted to Major, US Army, on October 1, 2026. The pinning took place on October 2, at Fort Leavenworth, KS, home of the US Army Command and General Staff College (commonly referred to as the War College), which Martin is attending. When Martin completes his studies in June of 2027, he will have earned a Master’s degree.

Martin, a 2009 graduate of MNHS and a 2014 ROTC graduate from WKU, will be posted in Germany after he completes his courses.



▲ PHOTO | SUBMITTED
Major Charles Martin stands at attention as his wife (US Army Captain) Tiffany Martin pins his Major's bars on his jacket.



▲ PHOTO | SUBMITTED
Major Charles Martin stands at attention as his wife (US Army Captain) Tiffany Martin pins his Major's bars on his jacket.

-HALLOWEEN CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

odors, disembodied voices and reported apparitions. Now, the historic downtown building is home to Sinister on Center, an immersive Halloween attraction that combines the property’s mysterious past with elaborate effects and staged scares.

Located at 102 Center St., Sinister on Center transforms Wheeldon Manor into a sprawling haunted attraction each October. Co-founder Jason Dillahay said the attraction opened Oct. 2 and began the season with a record-setting opening weekend.

The project grew from an idea by Dillahay’s friend and fellow haunt enthusiast, Brent James. Dillahay calls James his “brother from another mother,” best friend, haunt lover and the person behind some of their most effective scares.

What began as James’s idea has become a production that changes continually, with new effects, shifting scenes and ambitious additions designed to surprise returning guests.

“It’s never the same,” Dillahay said.

Among the attraction’s features are numerous laser effects and an indoor swamp, which Dillahay said he is especially excited for visitors to experience.

“The biggest surprise is people not expecting much and getting much, much more,” he said.



His advice is to expect an experience scarier than anticipated.

A historic building with a mysterious past

Wheeldon Manor is a multilevel property encompassing more than 23,000 square feet in downtown Central City. It’s unusual shape and location near a railroad track and flowing creek add to its atmosphere.

The building’s history reaches back to the 1900’s, during the region’s mining

and railroad eras. Historical accounts describe past uses including a hotel, boarding house, apartments, retail businesses, an armory and a car dealership.

Tenants, visitors and paranormal investigators have reported footsteps, unusual odors, disembodied voices, apparitions, electronic voice phenomena, or EVPs, and photographic evidence.

Keith Fournier,

of Night Stalkers Paranormal Research has called Wheeldon Manor a paranormal investigator’s dream, citing the amount of evidence reportedly captured in a short time. Paranormal investigators associated with Night Stalkers Paranormal Research, Phyllis Bingham and her team, psychic medium Cassidy Gray, Western Kentucky Paranormal, and Barry Gaunt —

HALLOWEEN
CONTINUED ON PAGE FOUR

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VISIT US ONLINE
www.ky-leadernews.com

PUBLISHER - Jeff Jobe
jobe@jobeinc.com

STAFF

ADVERTISING - Sarah Cronin
CIRCULATION - Lisa Sullivan
GENERAL MANAGER - Audra Nelson

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