



Judge Executive's Report

By George Sparks

January 2026

We started out the New Year running. We have a long list of projects to continue working on and a list of goals to work on as well. I want to take some time to reflect on our current goals and share some progress we have made recently.

After hearing the Governor state that only 21 out of 120 counties were Recovery Ready Communities (RRCs), I put together a team in late 2024 to work toward certification. In 2025, our Lewis County team successfully became the 35th out of 120 counties to become a Certified Recovery Ready Community. Thank you to the dedicated team that made this happen for our community and our citizens.

Several years ago while Judge Ruckel was in office, Lewis County Fiscal Court had a team that worked tirelessly to make Lewis County a Work Ready Community. Due to several factors, we didn't quite meet all the complicated requirements at the time; however, one of my goals is to make Lewis County Work Ready. I have a great team that has agreed to work with me to reach this goal. With the 28 million dollars awarded to us in 2023 for broadband expansion in Lewis County, the new career and technical school, the great work they are doing in the Lewis County School District, the progress being made with Lewis County Adult Education, and a few other factors will all help as we work to reach the goal of becoming a Work Ready County.

We accomplished making Lewis County a Storm Ready County in 2018 while I was EM Director. It was a partnership involving the Fiscal Court, E-911, EMA, KYEM, and the National Weather Service. Today, Lewis County is one of 65 out of 120 counties that are a Storm Ready County.

Another goal we are working toward is making Lewis County cleaner. This goal will take all of us working together to accomplish. Last year, our Solid Waste Coordinator Roger Lewis held a countywide cleanup week. This was the first cleanup event held in many

years. It was very successful, but as you know there is much more to be done. We need everyone to join us in the cleanup efforts. You can start today by having trash pickup or taking it to the Mason County Landfill. We strive to hold another county wide clean up during the first week of June. We also held our tire amnesty program last year. With the grant we received from the state and the partnership of the Lewis County Conservation District, we took nearly 12,000 old tires out of Lewis County. We want to leave Lewis County cleaner than we found it for our future generations!

To start off the meetings of the month, I presided over the January Fiscal Court meeting. The meeting was opened with prayer by Danny Bentley from Quincy Church of Christ, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Guests were welcomed and there was no response from the public. No old business was on the agenda. The court approved the rehire of all county employees with their current positions and pay. Road Supervisor David Goodwin was approved to be rehired with position and pay. Standing order number 26-01 passed and was the preapproval of the recurrent monthly payroll and utility expenses.

The janitorial service agreement at the Justice Center with Della Roberson was approved. The second reading of ordinance #25-04 budget amendment was approved which was related to a 319 Watershed Management Grant and a KACo Insurance Safety Grant. Four resolutions were approved: 1) Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Committee. 2) Local Mitigation Committee. 3) Ky. Mountain Regional Recreation Authority (KMRRA), and 4) Ky. 911 Service Board Grant. Monthly reports were presented from all departments and approved. Claims were presented and approved, and the transfers of the county funds presented to the court.

I attended the Ohio River Way by Zoom. We heard several updates on tourism, outdoor recreation, and history along the Ohio River. We heard about some great

work being done along the river in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. An update was given about the work being done by the Kentucky Ohio River Regional Recreation Authority (KORRA). I recommended that Mr. Ben Collier, who represents Lewis County on the KORRA Board of Directors, be approved by the LCFC to represent Lewis County on the Kentucky Mountain Regional Recreation Authority as well. The Ohio River Way has appointed Ben to serve on their Board of Directors. These connections are all great resources for Lewis County as we work to develop tourism and outdoor recreation.

I attended a Zoom meeting IWorQ with Jason Pineda. IWorQ is a computer software used by local county governments it can be used to track road conditions, road maintenance cost, signage, culverts, and bridge maintenance.

I assisted Solid Waste Coordinator Roger Lewis and the Fiscal Court maintenance crew in cleaning up an illegal dump site in the county. Thank you for your hard work in cleaning up this site!

Held an E911 board meeting at the 911/EMA conference room. During the meeting, Sheriff Johnny Bivens gave the board several updates on projects he and his office are working on. We then discussed radio communications with 911, Fire, rescue, and EMS. EM Director Dennis Brown gave 911 staff updates, overtime, and equipment. Kevin Wells BTADD gave an update on GIS mapping and 911 grants. Towing companies on the E911 list were discussed and the board decided not to add additional companies at this time. The meeting was then adjourned.

A special Fiscal Court meeting was held to approve invoices on 1/20/2026.

Ben Collier attended the KMRRA Kentucky Mountain Regional Recreation Authority board of directors meeting in Knott County on LCFCs behalf. They were very excited for Lewis County to become a member.

Lewis County Extension District Board and Council

held their meetings at the extension office in Vanceburg this month. Chairman Mike Setters opened the meeting, followed with me swearing in new board member David Reis. Officers were elected by the board. Mike Setters was elected chair, Ammon Cooper co-chair, Ryan Plank treasurer, and David Reis secretary. The past minutes and financial reports were presented and approved. CEA Christa O'Cull gave updates in a flooring project and presented quarterly financial reports. Post-

ing position for 4-H Agent was approved by the board. CEA Kennedy gave updates on Camp and Field Day. The board approved funds for both events. The Extension Council met and Dwight Malone was appointed as chair and David Reis cochair. CEA Christa O'Cull and Kennedy submitted reports and updated the Council.

Next on the schedule was the BTADD Judges meeting with Executive Director Kevin Cornette, Finance Committee, and Full Board of Directors Meeting. All were held on the 20th. The meeting was called to order and Steven Pederson led the board in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance by Judge McNeill. Steve Miller was welcomed to the board as a Fleming County member. Special guests were Mike Jackson with the Small Business Development Center and David Gross with the Area Health Education Center. Both guests gave a presentation. Steven Culp gave the FY25 Audit report which was outstanding. Steven also presented the financial report. Two board members appointed were Ron Rice for Mason County and Steven Pederson for Lewis County.

Kristie Dodge presented the resolution for application for regional brownfields grants. Angie Cain from DLG gave an update to the board followed by Craig Shockley of Congressman Andy Barr's office. Executive Director Kevin Cornette gave a legislative update report. I thanked the BTADD staff for the great work they are doing in this region and the Board of Directors for their

dedication and service. Vanceburg Lewis County Planning Commission Board of Directors Meeting. BTADD Jamison French, Kristie Dodge, and Kevin Cornette attended the meeting to go over the survey results related to the Comprehensive Plan. We had great discussions related to economic development, infrastructure, tourism, quality of life and several other topics. Around 175 people took the survey and were very interested in sharing their ideas and thoughts.

Enbridge Pipeline held a safety training in Grayson, KY. This coordinated response exercise was well attended by Lewis County First Responders. Topics addressed during the exercise were: pipelines in our community, emergency response, product characteristics, what to do if a leak occurs, damage prevention, and pipeline markers. I have regularly attended these exercises since 2017 and recommend the training to anyone who is near the pipeline or is a first responder.

Attended a conference call with Mayor Billman, EM Director Dennis Brown, LC Schools Superintendent Jeff Aulick, and Magistrate Woody Underwood to discuss the upcoming weather.

We started planning and preparing for the winter storm on the week of the 20th. Knowing this storm was going to be a challenge with heavy snow and possible ice. There was more ice than we expected which made the snow very dense. It is very heavy and hard to push or scrape off the road.

Adding in the extreme cold has made clearing roads, driveways, and parking lots a much slower and more difficult task.

I want to thank David Goodwin and his crew, Devin Smith and the state road crew, the sheriff's and police departments, E-911 Dispatchers, fire and rescue departments, EMS, Emergency Management Director Dennis Brown, and all our county workers for all they do day in and day out taking care of our people. I have heard so many great stories about our citizens who have checked on neighbors,

cleaned driveways for free, delivered food, picked up medicine, helped fix a water line, and too many other good deeds to list. I want to say thank you so much. Also, I want to thank the Vanceburg and Black Oak Fire Departments for opening warming centers during the extremely cold days. They are very much appreciated for all they do.

I attended the Hospice of Hope Board of Directors meeting by Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Hutchings.

The past minutes and the financial reports were presented and approved. The committee assignments were approved. Sarah Shepherd gave the board updates of care programs and shared plans to begin advanced cardiac care program in late February 2026. Executive Director Shawn Flaugher updated the board on several topics before the meeting was adjourned.

I attended a Teams meeting with BTADD to discuss the ARC grant application to do several studies, engineering / architectural design for a riverport in Lewis County. There is still a lot of work to be done, but we are hoping to be awarded the ARC grant with matching funds from the KY GRANT Program. I appreciate the hard work of BTADD and all of our partners in our mission to build a riverport here in our county.

We were awarded a \$38,000 grant for our 911 center in 2025. The 911 center dispatcher stations 1 and 2 had new computers installed, new phones installed, and new servers. Contractors used for this grant were AK Associates and Solacom.

Our goal for this year is to apply for a grant to purchase a new recorder for the center. KY 911 Services grant.

Several of the scheduled meetings I was planning to attend were cancelled or rescheduled for a later date due to the winter storm of January 24-28. I am sure that February will be just as jam-packed as the months prior. I am blessed and humbled to be able to work each day to help Lewis County move toward its bright future!

County Officials Present Monthly Reports

By Dennis Brown

Lewis County officials presented their monthly reports during the January meeting of Lewis County Fiscal Court.

Sheriff Johnny Bivens filed his department activities from December 8, 2025 through January 12, 2026.

• Citations 9

• Subpoenas Served 6

• Domestic Related Calls 56

• Civil Summons Served 45

• Arrests 12

• Cases Open For Investigation 6

• Accident Investigations 11

• Criminal Summons 6

• Prisoners Transp. to Secure Facility 0 miles

• Juveniles Transported 225 miles

• DVOs and EPOs 5

• Court Security Hours 662.5

• Prescription Deliveries 1

• Auto Inspections 63

• Funeral Escorts 7

• Concealed Carry Permits 24

• Miscellaneous 42

• Taxes Collected: Property \$532,240.43

Franchise \$366,772.14

Total \$899,012.57

Stolen property recovered: SO-25-056 Honda 250

\$4,000.00

Total recovered \$4,000.00

911 Coordinator Pam Jordan submitted a monthly report for the Lewis County E-911 Dispatch Center.

The center received the following calls for service in December:

• Sheriff 228

Road Supervisor David Goodwin submitted his road maintenance report for the month.

Goodwin said 355.88 tons of gravel and stone and 365.05 tons of salt had been hauled by the county.

Roads and ways: Old

Mowed/Brush/Trees: Old Trace, Laurel, Rock Run, Lower Kinney, Firebrick, Quicks Run, River Rd., Rock Creek, Vance's Creek, and Swearingen Br.

Signs Made/Repaired: Skidmore (Stop Sign) and Slate Point (Dead End)

Roadways Repaired: Shoulder: Garrad and Lower Kinney

Pipe Installed/Repaired: Clark's 4 McCleese x2

Roadways Graveled/Repaired: Garrad x2, Thourp Ridge, River Rd. x3, Lower Kinney, East Fork Rd., South Bane, and Glen Hill Springs.

Blacktop/Gravel Patching:

Solid Waste Coordinator Roger Lewis gave his report:

• Performed all regular coordinator duties.

• Sent out letters, received several phone calls and completed several site visits concerning complaints and nuisances.

• Still taking in recycled material.

• We are still picking up cardboard from most of businesses in Vanceburg and in the county.

• Pickers have picked 35.6 miles of road and have collected 215 bags of trash and 2 tires.

• Roads that have been picked are Rt. 8, Rt. 9, Rt.

3037, Ribolt, Pine Valley, Lions Lane, Dudley Ave, and Rock Run Rd.

• I have inspected the work that the pickers have done and they're doing a good job.

Animal Control Officer reported 22 picked up; none dropped off; 7 rescued; none reclaimed; \$400 donation; 4 adoptions (\$500); zero tags; zero euthanized; zero quarantined; 5 calls received.

Fleming County Fiscal Court was billed \$4,340. Forty-four dogs remained at the shelter at the end of the month.

Emergency Management Director Dennis Brown gave his report. The Lewis County Alert System continued to gain followers.

It was activated 13 times in December to notify residents of winter weather advisories, snow emergencies, and delayed openings.

The alert system allows notifications to our residents through texts, email, voice (telephone), Twitter, and the Smart 911 App.

Targeted alerts can notify small groups (specific county offices/groups/employees).

Lewis County Alerts has more than 5,600 subscribers.

• Worked with Vanceburg Fire on the smoke alarm partnership with Red Cross to provide units to area residents. Will continue working with all departments making this program available countywide.

• Pursuing grant for locator/tracker devices for residents who may wander (Alzheimer's/dementia).

• Pursuing grant for water

rescue kits/medic kits for first responders.

• Pursuing grant funding for EMS communications equipment upgrade.

• Completed necessary paperwork with KYEM as required.

• Participated in continuing education for EMA.

• Participated in continuing training for Red Cross Volunteer position.

• Planning CERT/preparedness trainings for local school/student groups.

• Participated in county-wide test of outdoor sirens. (December 4, 2025)

• Attended a PIO Zoom session on social media messaging. (December 10)

• Working with Solacom/AK Associates in preparation of Hardware Refresh. UPS Equipment installation was completed in October.

• Completed Ops Section Chief Training in Morehead. (December 2-5)

• Completed Situation Team Leader training in Frankfort (December 15-19)

• Working to complete new siren activation links in conjunction with switch from analog to digital on countywide channel.

• Assisted family with obtaining Red Cross assistance following house fire. (December 29)

• Maintaining EM office hours Mon - Fri.

• Working to complete required Access Control List for CJIS.

• Working to complete a Crisis Communications Plan to enhance the Emergency Operations Plan.

• Working with Tolles-

boro Fire to improve communication link between Dispatch and Tollesboro Fire's radio repeater and outdoor warning siren. (Siren tech also involved in project)

• Working with Christian Appalachian Project to restore Operation Sharing Program in the county.

• Participated in Kentucky Qualification System - PIO certification training.

• Created newspaper, radio, and social media PSA distribution for severe weather and winter preparedness.

• Working with AK and Windstream to restore 911 telephone service multiple times.

• Assisted LCSO, Vanceburg PD, and KSP with traffic control and scene photography for various incidents.

• Telephone conference with Area Director Jason York to discuss training and reporting practices.

County Treasurer Penny Lee reported the total of all county funds for the month of December had a beginning balance of \$3,884,313.28 and an ending balance of \$3,597,319.70. Receipts for the month totaled