

# County seeks \$19.5M to expand flood buyout

BY ROGER SMITH  
MOUNTAIN CITIZEN

INEZ — Martin County is seeking nearly \$19.5 million in additional federal funding to expand its flood-buyout program, potentially adding a Newberry

Lane property omitted from the original list and five or six other properties. The Martin County Fiscal Court approved an amendment to the U.S. Department of Agriculture grant during its July meeting and authorized Judge/

Executive Lon Lafferty to sign the necessary documents.

Lafferty drafted a letter to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service requesting \$19,504,885, including \$18,285,830 in financial assistance and \$1,219,055 in technical assistance.

The county expects funding to remain after completing planned property acquisitions at Newberry Lane and Beatrice Loop, Lafferty said.

He said the amendment could allow the county to purchase Jane Fields' property at Newberry Lane, which was "kind of left off the first list."

Magistrate Cody Slone said Fields had contacted him and that he had advocated for the county to include her property.

"Jane would be taken care of and additional properties, maybe five or six more," Lafferty said.

The court also voted to advertise for demolition and restoration bids for properties acquired through the flood-buyout program.

Bid packets are available at the Martin County Judge's Office, 42 E. Main St., Inez, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Sealed bids will be accepted through 4 p.m. Aug. 19 and opened during the fiscal court's Aug. 20 meeting.

## Road resurfacing

Three county roads qualified for resurfacing through the state's Local Assistance Road Program.

The Kentucky General Assembly authorized up to \$272,000 for the projects:

- \$132,000 for approximately 1.963 miles of Evans Hill Road, from KY 3407 to KY 292

- \$70,000 for approximately 0.387 mile of Carter Branch, from KY 908 to the end of county maintenance

- \$70,000 for approximately 0.779 mile of Church Fork, from Calf Creek to the end of county maintenance

The fiscal court authorized Lafferty to execute a memorandum of agreement with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's Department of Highways accepting the funding.

"Those roads are in terrible shape," Lafferty said.

## Library budget

Magistrates accepted the Martin County Public Library's \$496,475 budget for fiscal year 2027.

The budget eliminates positions and benefits and sharply reduces funding for books, public programs and other services.

A separate story in this edition examines the reductions.

Lafferty also praised new Martin County Community Center director Kenzie Pemberton and the operation of the movie theater.

"She has really injected a lot of life into the community center," Lafferty said. "I'm very proud of what she has already done. The movie theater is just doing fantastic right now; it's knocking it out of the park. I was up there one evening at 5:30 and you

couldn't get into the parking lot."

Deputy Judge Carolea Mills said Justin Maynard has managed the theater this summer.

"He's doing a fantastic job," Mills said.

## Development funding applications

The court approved filing applications for nearly \$1.8 million from the Kentucky Local Government Economic Development Fund. Officials said the applications would cover two years.

The requests include:

- \$150,000 for park and community facilities improvements
- \$1,332,013 for Martin County Government Center payments
- \$75,000 for the Economic Development Authority director's salary
- \$75,000 for a Martin County grant writer
- \$150,000 for a downtown development project

Magistrates also approved office lease renewals in the Historical Courthouse for Partners for Rural Impact at \$750 per month and Savion at \$1,000 per month.

The court opened a single bid of \$500 per month from Mike Adkins to lease the JB Triplett Building. Adkins requested three months without rent while he completes work on the building.

Magistrates accepted the bid but tabled approval of the lease to allow the county attorney to work out the details.

## Radio grant and annual settlement

The court authorized Lafferty and Martin County 911 Director Nick Endicott to sign documents for a \$119,000 Homeland Security grant to upgrade radio consoles.

Endicott applied for the grant in the spring.

"Looks like we've been awarded," Endicott said. "We'll have some contracts and stuff that we'll have to go through."

Magistrates also approved the treasurer's annual settlement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026.

The report shows the

county received \$11.67 million, spent \$10.93 million and ended the year with \$6.47 million across all funds.

## Slone raises bridge concerns

Slone asked the court to pursue funding for several infrastructure projects, including the long-delayed Rockcastle Creek Pedway Project in Inez.

The proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge and walkway would connect Old Route 3 and Boardwalk Street by crossing Rockcastle Creek near Skeeze Ward Manor. The project originated in 2009 but has never been completed.

A separate story in this edition examines efforts to revive the project.

Slone also called for the removal of the former low-water bridge on KY 292 at Calf Creek.

"It's blocking the river," Slone said. "And it's dangerous. It's in the river there in the curve at Calf Creek. We need to acquire that property and get that out of the river somehow."

Slone said the site could provide public fishing and river access, which he said is lacking between Warfield and Louisa. He also said the obstruction creates a dangerous situation for kayakers traveling the Tug River.

"A very dangerous spot," he said.

Lafferty called the condition of the bridge "disgraceful."

"That bridge needs to come out of the Tug River," Lafferty said.

Slone said he has also spoken with state legislators about replacing the KY 40 bridge over Rockcastle Creek in Inez.

"It is not ADA compliant," he said. "The sidewalks stick up quite a bit higher than the road."

Mills said she would ask the state to inspect the bridge.

"It needs to be repaired," she said.

Slone also asked the county to seek emergency funding for bridges at Brandon's Place, Little Mudlick and Abbs Lane.

District 2 Magistrate Kermit Howell expressed his appreciation for the response to the recent entrapment of two individuals in an abandoned underground coal mine on Long Branch in Lovely.

District 5 Magistrate Ronald Workman said he was impressed with the work on the Himler exhibit in Warfield.

District 3 Magistrate Tracy Spence said weeds need to be cut in his district.



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