ECTC to invest $3M grant in skill credential training efforts

BY THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Elizabethtown Community and Technical College has earned a $3 million U.S. Department of Labor grant to develop new credentials that will help more students prepare for high-demand careers in a short amount of time.

The five-year grant will allow ECTC to establish accelerated skills training programs and expand workforce education offerings aligned with regional industry demand, a statement from the college said. Grant funding includes support for new personnel, curriculum development, instructional equipment, student learning resources, recruitment and professional development.

"At ECTC, we want every student to see education as a pathway to greater purpose and opportunity," ECTC Chancellor Dr. Juston Pate said in the news release issued Wednesday. "We pursued this grant because students are more likely to succeed when they can clearly see where they are going and understand the steps it will take to get there. This investment will help us create clear educational pathways and clear career plans that lead to meaningful credentials, jobs and better lives for the students we serve."

The project reflects ECTC's continued focus on connecting education and training with high-demand occupations and workforce needs. ECTC also will look beyond the region for promising practices.

The grant provides funding for project staff, faculty and administrators to visit nationally recognized workforce training programs to study short-term credential models and practices that can inform curriculum development and Workforce Pell implementation at ECTC.

As part of the initiative, ECTC will hire a full-time project manager to lead implementation of the program as well as an administrative assistant.

New training programs resulting from the grant will be announced as soon as they are available. To learn more about ECTC education and training programs, visit elizabethtown.kctcs.edu.

McDougal Lake trails are temporarily closed

BY PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

All trails surrounding McDougal Lake in Hodgenville are closed through modern gun deer hunting season, which continues through Sunday, Nov. 29.

Although there is no hunting allowed on the property, the closure is initiated out of respect to the hunters on lands surrounding the lake and in an abundance of caution for trail user safety.

Individuals utilizing other trails are advised to wear orange.

For questions or more information, call 270-358-3832.



KODEE BRINEGAR/The News-Enterprise

What once was an enclosed area, now is an outdoor promenade at the City Center, formerly Towne Mall off North Dixie Avenue in Elizabethtown. Tim and Teresa Aulbach said they bought the property in 2023 to pour life back into the retail complex which conducted a dedication ceremony Wednesday.

ZONING

FROM **PAGE A1**

almost daily in a corner next to the property.

"We get to home every day to a peaceful, quiet community," Tricia said. "When you start to introduce commercial into this primarily residential area, that's going to impact our livelihood, our quality of life, our cattle. We don't want that."

Referring to the appointed commissioners, Tricia said, "You are the gatekeepers to Hardin County." She said it was the commission's role to make a decision in the best interest of the community surrounding the property.

Amy Logsdon-Risley, who lives nearby, said as a social worker, she inquired if there was a need or a lack of access to food or basic resources in the vicinity. As it is not the case, she said a Dollar General is not warranted for the location.

Logsdon-Risley went on to list nine Dollar General locations within a 10-mile radius.

Eight other people spoke in opposition citing such reasons as traffic and pedestrian safety in an already "dangerous area," the decline of property values, the possibility of attracting criminal activity and a drastic change in the character of the area.

Davenport reminded commissioners that factors such as property value, how many people oppose a request and signatures on a petition are matters to consider as part of comprehensive planning.

"Take the people out of it, take the emotion out of it," Davenport said.

Davenport highlighted a sentence from the comprehensive plan adopted by county government that reads "commercial is envisioned to be on Hodgenville Road" before telling the commissioners, "Your job is to follow the comp plan, and the comp plan says this should be approved."

While the county's planning and development director says there is adequate infrastructure, "The staff finds that the proposal is not compatible in character with the adjoining parcels and also the surrounding area," King said. "Staff recommendation is for denial."

Placed in the hands of the commissioners, Hinton said he has a problem with trucks coming off Lincoln Parkway onto Roundtop Road for access to the property.

"Roundtop cannot handle that," Hinton said.



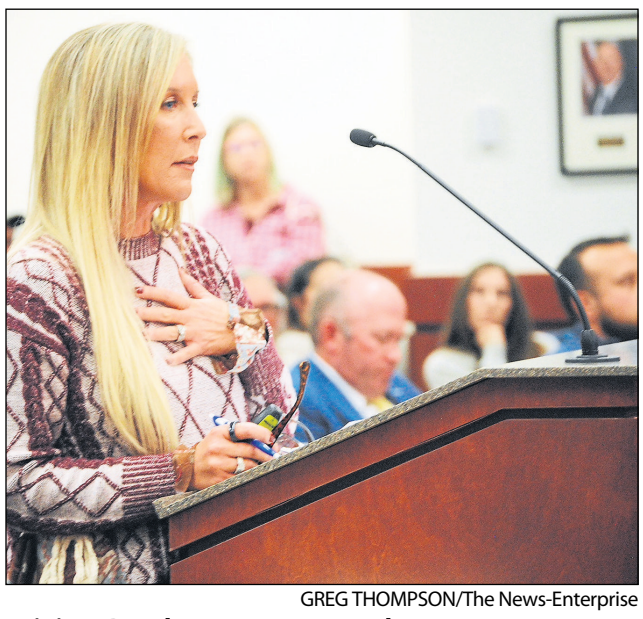
GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

Chris Davenport, attorney for Rafferty Development, which requested a zone amendment from residential to commercial for property at 2305 Hodgenville Road, addresses commissioners at a public hearing Tuesday.



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

Hardin County Planning Commission Chairman Mark Hinton listens to testimony regarding a proposed zone amendment on Hodgenville Road during Tuesday's public hearing. The commission later rejected the request.



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

Tricia Brackett presents her argument to commissioners in opposition to a proposed zoning amendment to property at 2305 Hodgenville Road during a hearing Tuesday at the County Government Building.

Adding in the responsibility the commission has regarding community safety, the chairman said he did not favor of amending the zoning.

Commissioner Steve Steck said it didn't matter what type of business might be constructed on the property, whether it be a welding shop, plumbing business or parking lot for tractor-trailers; "I think we need to preserve the character of the rural residential area."

Commissioner Mark Nelson says he is "as pro-business as anyone" but could not support the proposed zoning change due to proximity of the farm as well as the golf course.

Once the vote was taken, the zone change denied, those in attendance burst into applause and celebration.

Rafferty Development has 21 days to file a motion to reverse the commission's decision at which time the proposed zoning change would come before Hardin Fiscal Court for consideration.

Davenport said he will take the commission's decision back to Rafferty Development to see how the company wishes to proceed.

CENTER

FROM **PAGE A1**

relocated to make way for the open-air promenade that transformed the appearance of the property. The center also continues to be home to Spencer's, Shoe Dept. Encore, Bath & Body Works and American Eagle. Since April of 2025, the Malibu Jack's indoor theme park has operated in part of the former Sears store on the property.

At the ceremony Wednesday, Aulbach said talks are near completion for a Burlington location, which he thinks will be in place by June. He also is holding locations for restaurants.

Jana Webb, property manager of City Center, said Wednesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony is a special day for the community and for those who have worked with the Aulbachs to restore the retail destination

"I've had the privilege of working alongside Tim for 33 years. Over the last three decades, helping him juggle all his projects has given me a front-row seat to his passion," Webb said. "I have watched him dream big, work tirelessly and pour his heart into making our community a better place. His vision has never ceased to amaze me. It takes a very special kind of foresight to look at run-down property and see what it could become."

Where some might have turned away Webb said Tim saw potential and followed through.

"Taking on a project of this size is no small feat and seeing what he and Teresa have invested both financially and personally to breathe new life into this space and turn it into a vibrant hub that draws our community together makes me unbelievably proud and I am so grateful for everything they all do," Webb said. "It is an honor to work for a family that cares so deeply about the place we all call home and it is a privilege to help manage a center that will serve our neighbors for years to come."

Elizabethtown Mayor Jeff Gregory was ecstatic about the shopping center being revamped and remodeled.

"This is one of the most important pieces of property in Elizabethtown. Malls are dying all over the country and that included the one that we had here. It was great from the mid-'80s up until several years ago, and it needed a facelift," Gregory said. "Back in 2023, when we also found out that it was going into receivership, we knew the price tag would probably be fairly high. It's not something the city government invests in."

When the property went into receivership in 2023, Gregory said his concerned increased. The mayor said he called Tim Aulbach and asked him if he was keeping up to date with Towne Mall. He said Aulbach promised to call back in a couple weeks and soon the plan was taking shape.

"We're extremely excited about the renovation, the re-envisioning, the reimagining that's gone on, and one of the most important parcels of ground in our community. The city of Elizabethtown is always here to support any private development," the mayor said. "It's a big day and this is going be a great facility for years to come for the city of Elizabethtown."



KODEE BRINEGAR/The News-Enterprise

Brass horses are featured in front of the newly opened City Center retail complex in Elizabethtown as a nod to the Kentucky thoroughbred industry. Owners Tim and Teresa Aulbach said the horses were their oldest daughter's idea.

RADCLIFF

FROM **PAGE A1**

ground and we'll still have crime."

Kevin Russell threw his support behind drone acquisition, but not the DFR. He suggested purchasing a lower-level device that police could deploy.

"If you need a car to get from Point A to Point B, you don't go buy a Ferrari," Russell said. "You can buy a Ford."

Retired former Louisville Metro Police detective Roderick Beasley, a 30-year resident of the city, listened as others encouraged the council to reject the idea. Beasley said even though Radcliff is smaller in comparison to Louisville, the drone is still capable of a quicker response and clearing calls without a patrol officer.

"Helpful intel that is provided … 92% of helpful intel our department received," Beasley said. "One of the key things I always say, 'You can't put a price on safety.' It doesn't matter, I've lived it and I understand it might cost the community something."

Other residents shared their opinions on the DFR as well and stressed their view of more pressing needs such as sidewalks and pothole repair of city streets.

"When Chief (Jeff) Cross rolled this out … in my heart, I thought, we have a lot of needs within our community," Councilwoman Pam DeRoche said. "A lot of unaddressed needs. I have really toiled over this idea."

DeRoche recommended the council table discussion of the DFR until budget discussions begin in March and explore unanswered questions.

Mayor-elect Terry Owens also believed the issue should be tabled until budget discussions next year.

"Right now, it is a toy that could do really good things. It will work, but not right now," Owens said. "Let's table it. We've got plenty of time to make the right decision."

The council voted unanimously to postpone further discussion regarding the drone until next year at which time Owens will be leading the council and two new members – LaQuita Gaskins and Bob Mahanna – will take part in the decision.