



SPORTS
SOUTH OLDHAM GIRLS SOCCER
MAKES STATEMENT IN 3-0 WIN
OVER SACRED HEART, PAGE B1

The Oldham Era

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School board plans to raise tax rate without public input

Special meeting set for Sept. 17

BY GRANT GERSTNER
EDITOR

The Oldham County Board of Education set its proposed tax rate for the upcoming tax season at a special-called meeting on Aug. 26, opting for the highest increase permitted under state law without the triggering the public's ability to petition the increase to be put on the ballot.

The board's proposed rate for real estate and personal property is 82 cents per \$100 of assessed value of real estate property — a less than 1% increase from the board's current rate at 81.2 cents per \$100.

The proposed rate was chosen in a 4-1 decision, with Board Member Adam Springer in opposition.

The 82 cent rate is one that is expected to produce 4% more revenue



Photo by Grant Gerstner

Oldham County Board of Education members sit between Superintendent Claudette Herald, at far left, and Director of Finance Kerri Alexander, at far right, during their Aug. 26 special-called meeting where they namely proposed to increase their property tax rate.

than collected last year, plus exonerations — i.e. a slight bump in the tax rate to make up for lost revenue from tax bills that were officially excused, abated, or deemed uncollectible.

If approved, the proposed rate will net the district's general fund as a whole approximately \$800,000 more than if they were to keep the rate the

same as last year.

Additionally, the proposed rate will net the district approximately \$3.2 million more than if they were to adopt the compensating rate — the rate that projects same amount of tax revenue as last year — at 78.8 cents per \$100.

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School board election tangled in lawsuits

BY GRANT GERSTNER
EDITOR

Only one of the three school board seats up for election this year has opposition, and both candidates — incumbent Suzanne Hundley and Christeena Gallahue — are at the center of two different lawsuits against the Oldham County Board of Education.

BOOKKEEPER CLAIMS HUNDLEY CONSPIRED TO FIRE HER AMID INVESTIGATION

Longtime South Oldham Middle School Bookkeeper Tami Day filed suit against the board on Aug. 17, namely claiming that she was pressured to retire after giving investigators information about Hundley's alleged misconduct.

Specifically, Day claims that the district violated both the Kentucky Whistleblower Act and the Kentucky Civil Rights Act.

According to her complaint filed in Oldham Circuit Court, Day was interviewed by the Kentucky Office of Education Accountability — an arm of the Legislative Research Commission

that investigates wrongdoing, waste and mismanagement in Kentucky's public schools — about Hundley at the district's central office on May 7.

When investigator Terri Collins asked Day about Hundley's conduct, Day told her that Hundley — who serves as the President of the SOMS PTO in addition to her elected office on the board — is the sole signatory on the PTO's checks, which does not adhere to "ordinary financial safeguards."

Further, Day told Collins that Accounting Procedures for Kentucky School Activity Funds state that local school board members can only serve on "external support/booster organizations as a general member" and cannot have "check signing authority," according to the complaint.

Day also alleged that Hundley entered SOMS without permission and without signing in, as well as that Hundley did not provide PTO budgets and reports in a timely manner.

SEE **LAWSUITS/PAGE A2**



Photos by Grant Gerstner

Residents stand in their driveway, watching as firefighters work after flames tore through their neighbors' attic on Aug. 25.

House fire in Poplar Hill draws swift response from crews

BY GRANT GERSTNER
EDITOR

Anchorage Middletown Fire & EMS, Pewee Valley Fire Department and South Oldham Fire Department responded to a residential structure fire in the Poplar Hill neighborhood of Crestwood around 6 p.m. Aug. 25.

AMFEMS Public Information Office Sal Melendez told the Era that one resident and a dog were inside the home when the fire was discovered and were able to evacuate unharmed and alert a neighbor, who called 911.

Upon arrival, crews saw flames coming through the roof and immediately began to attack the blaze, which Melendez said was coming from the back of the house.

A total of 32 firefighters on scene were able to prevent the

fire from spreading to neighboring homes and bring it under control in 27 minutes. The last crew did not leave the scene until about 10 p.m., however.

Though the home is not considered a total loss, the damages were extensive, according to Melendez.

"Despite the challenging conditions of hot temperatures and a well-advanced fire, the responding crews did a remarkable job at containing the fire to the building of origin and ensuring it did not spread to neighboring structures," Melendez said.

Throughout the response, crews could be seen spraying the sides of the houses near the fire as a preventative measure.

Melendez also noted that the crews were able to bring the fire



A firefighter carries a family photo out of the Crestwood home that caught fire on Aug. 25.

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La Grange council proposes cut in property taxes

Public hearing, final vote set for Sept. 3

BY GRANT GERSTNER
EDITOR

LA GRANGE — Property tax bills may be lower than expected for La Grange residents this year, as the La Grange City Council proposed an ordinance to cut their rates on Aug. 25.

Though the council held a first reading of their tax rates on Aug. 3, a special-called meeting was held Aug. 25 to conduct a new first reading — this time with both real and personal property tax rates proposed to be lowered to 18.2 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The city's tax rates last year were 19.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value of real property, and 26.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value of personal property. The proposed rates would be a 4.7% and 31.32% decrease, respectively, if approved.

During their meeting earlier this month, it was

originally proposed to adopt the city's compensating rate — a rate that will allow the city to collect approximately the same amount in real property taxes as the year prior without considering potential revenue from any new properties.

The compensating rate for this tax year is 19.7 cents per \$100 of assessed value of real property — a 3.14% increase from last year's rate.

Finance Director Cindy Alvano said that, when considering the increase in property assessments, the proposed 18.2-cent rate will still net the city \$3,934 more than they collected last year, which she said will keep the city within their budget guidelines.

Alvano also explained that the larger cut in the personal property tax rate would only make the city miss out on about \$37,000 in revenue.

"From a revenue perspective, while I don't historically like to recommend reductions in

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