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Natural gas line nears operational stage

THOMAS J. BARR

THE PIONEER NEWS

CLERMONT – The long-awaited and legally-debated natural gas line through the heart of Bullitt County is close to becoming operational.

After years of being denied additional natural gas service, the ability of residential, commercial and industrial users to gain access to an alternative source of energy is just around the corner.

"We're pleased we can soon begin providing new and expanded natural gas service for our customers' homes and businesses in Bullitt County," said Tom Rieth, Vice President-Gas Operations for LG&E. "Completing

this significant enhancement project for our natural gas system further reinforces service reliability for customers and supports the growing needs in the region."

The lack of natural gas service has stymied development in the county. Some of the commercial and industrial operations which have opened in the county resorted to large propane tanks to help supply needed service.

Around 10 years ago, officials with the Bullitt County Economic Development Authority approached LG&E officials about a lack of additional natural gas availability.

According to Liz Pratt, senior director of communications and

corporate responsibility for the major utility company, the project to run a major gas line along Cedar Grove Road was approved in 2017 by the Kentucky Public Service Commission.

As the project nears completion, the estimated cost has approached \$95 million. The pipeline runs 12 miles from an existing LG&E line in Mount Washington. It connects to an existing line along Interstate 65 in Shepherdsville.

The new pipeline will enhance reliability for existing customers by creating an additional path for natural gas traveling through the system to the area, reducing the chances of residents and businesses

experiencing an outage, according to Pratt.

In addition, the added capacity the pipeline provides will support continued growth and economic development within the region.

However, the pipeline was not an easy project. Lawsuits were filed by Bernheim Research Forest and Arboretum's foundation and individual residents.

The matter has been tied up in court for several years as plaintiffs argued that the pipeline would adversely affect their property, that the company didn't go through the proper legal hoops and that the gas line was not for the public but for a private entity.

Around a year ago, the final appeals were exhausted and the construction began.

During the litigation, the utility argued that the project was public in nature and that over 600 potential customers were denied service due to the lack of capacity.

Pratt said that once the project got the legal go-ahead, the company started to reach out to those seeking service since 2019.

"We've been coordinating with those individuals to begin their new service requests once the pipeline is fully operational. Starting this month, our process will return back

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Eighties Come Alive

The Bullitt County Chamber of Commerce recently held its annual dinner. And the theme was the '80s. Many of the participants dressed for the times. And some members

earned honors. Dexter Hall stole the show with his Michael Jackson dance steps during the annual dinner. See inside today's edition for the award winners.

Weapons detection machines headed to high schools

THOMAS J. BARR

THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSVILLE –

When high school students attend classes next August, there might be a new step they must complete before entering the building.

The Bullitt County Public School Board approved a request for the district to seek proposals to put weapon detection devices at all three high schools by the start of the 2026-27 academic year.

In making the presentation to the school board, superintendent Dr. Jesse Bacon said that starting at the high schools made sense. Those facilities have the largest student population and host larger public events.

"Prevention before response is critical," said Bacon.

Money has already been appropriated in the current budget for the purchase.

School leaders, including principals, toured other districts where similar systems are already in operation. Bacon said everyone was impressed with the speed in which students enter the buildings each morning.

Under the proposal, Bacon said the AI assisted walk-through machines are much quicker than prior models. There is a bag

screening. And the model being considered is designed for schools, not places such as airports.

Another benefit of the system is that the detection machinery is mobile and can be moved to various locations at the school.

In addition, the machines can detect vape products, which has become a major enforcement issue for school officials.

Bacon said the plan would be to have detention machines set up where buses arrive and another where car riders and walkers arrive.

Any alerts would be quietly sent to the School Resource Officer or trained staff member. They would follow up.

For some, there might be a need to scan a student a second time.

The weapons detection devices would be mobile so that they could be used for larger public events, such as sporting games.

There is minimal disruption to instruction. During the tour of Montgomery County High School, Bacon said all the students were passed through the machines within 20 minutes.

The district has \$1.1 million in the budget to undertake the project.

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O'Bryan's ongoing love for and commitment to OMES students is rewarded

STEPHEN THOMAS

THE PIONEER NEWS

MOUNT WASHINGTON —

There's no better feel than helping children in an environment you were meant to help them in.

Amanda O'Bryan knew she was in the right place when she began her teaching career at Old Mill Elementary.

Now in her 24th year with

OMES, the third grade instructor has been recognized for her devotion to her students and school by receiving the Bullitt County Public Schools Elementary Teacher of the Year Award.

"There were not as many teaching jobs then," O'Bryan recalled. "I applied for positions in five counties. I felt incredibly blessed to be hired under then-principal Rod Firquin, I knew Old Mill was a great school."

The Jefferson County native earned her Bachelor's and Masters degrees at the University of Louisville, as well as an interior design degree through the Louisville Institute of Technology. She

began at OMES in a transition position as an extra reading assistant.

"I wanted to teach younger students," she said. "I now enjoy a little older. I moved up from a first grade teacher to second grade and now third grade. I enjoy teaching a little more content in older grades, and I enjoy watching the students' growth."

The growth of the young minds, along with the enlightenment of first understanding a subject or a topic, is something O'Bryan enjoys about her position.

"I still enjoy the love students give out in the big learning moments," she said.

"They are finding out that they are more interested in a subject and that they're capable of doing this work."

"Mrs. O'Bryan embodies the heart of Old Mill Elementary and what it truly means to serve students and families," said principal Brittany Joiner. "She builds strong, trusting partnerships, sees each child for who they are, and creates a classroom where students feel safe, known, and valued."

During her 24 years with OMES the school has moved forward in many ways, not only within the trappings of a brand new building but

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Stephen Thomas
Old Mill Elementary 3rd-grade teacher Amanda O'Bryan was selected as the Bullitt County Public Schools Elementary Teacher of the Year.

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