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Thomas J. Barr

Easter Egg Hunting Along the River

The city of Shepherdsville, partnering with Journey Christian Church, sponsored an Easter Egg Hunt for the children last Saturday. Over 20,000 eggs were available for hunting. There were other activities, such as the Easter Bunny, games, food and fun for all ages. The hunts were separated into two events, based on age. Watch The Pioneer News over the next few issues for more Easter-related photos, including more from the Shepherdsville event.



Thomas J. Barr

Man sentenced to 20 years in Bullitt case

LOUISVILLE – A Pennsylvania man was sentenced on March 18, 2026, for transportation with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and online enticement of a minor. And the case originated in Bullitt County.

U.S. Attorney Kyle G. Bumgarner of the Western District of Kentucky and Acting Special Agent in Charge Olivia Olson of the FBI Louisville Field Office made the announcement.

Bailey Michael Stouter, 23, was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison, followed by a lifetime term of supervised release, for transportation with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and online enticement of a minor. The Court ordered Stouter to pay \$3,000 in restitution to the victim.

Stouter used a social media application to meet a 14-year-old girl. He arranged to pick the girl up from her home

in Bullitt County, Kentucky, to drive her to Pennsylvania for a sexual encounter. A missing person report was issued for the child. A few days later, Stouter was located with the young girl in Fayetteville, Pa.

Bumgarner stated, "Online predators are a plague. They manipulate, exploit and abuse our children. Law enforcement will leave no stone unturned in searching for these predators. The United States Attorney's Office will aggressively prosecute these deviants! Stouter's deviance cost him 20 years in federal prison and his entire life on supervised release after he completes his 20-year sentence."

There is no parole in the federal system.

This case was investigated by the FBI with assistance from the Bullitt County Sheriff's Office.

Assistant U.S. Attorney

Danielle M. Yannelli prosecuted the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc. For more information about internet safety education, visit www.usdoj.gov/psc and click on the tab "resources."

Graduation dates set for high schools

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SHEPHERDSSVILLE – As long as Mother Nature cooperates, you can start making those graduation plans for the Class of 2026 in Bullitt County.

The Bullitt County School Board tentatively set graduation dates for the three high schools.

Superintendent Dr. Jesse Bacon said each school had the option of graduating at their own facilities or at Broadbent Arena.

North Bullitt High School opted to return its graduation ceremonies to the football stadium. Commencement would be at 7 p.m. on Friday, May 29.

If weather is imminent, the first opportunity

to reschedule the outdoor event would be moved to 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 30.

For the other two schools, construction on physical science field house facilities has dramatically altered parking.

As a result, both Bullitt East and Bullitt Central have opted to return to a familiar place – Broadbent Arena, located at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

Bullitt East would be first on Saturday, May 30, with graduation set for 11 a.m.

Bullitt Central would then honor the Class of 2026 with a 2 p.m. ceremony on Saturday.

Bacon said that the district still has some NTI days that could be used if the need arises. The goal is for the final day of class for students to be no later than May 29.

CON denied; Zoneton to appeal decision

THOMAS J. BARR THE PIONEER NEWS

FRANKFORT – While Bullitt County and several cities have won the first round, Zoneton Fire Protection District is seeking a review on its bid to add an ambulance service for its residents.

A hearing officer for the Cabinet for Health and Family Services disapproved the issuance of a Certificate of Need for the Zoneton Fire Protection District and its Zoneton Improvement Public Properties Corp. on Feb. 19.

The district has asked the Franklin Circuit Court to review that decision and to resume the application process.

Last summer, Zoneton fire officials announced plans to seek state permission to add 2-3 ambulances as part of emergency medical services for those in their district.

Officials cited slow response time for medical emergencies in its district by Bullitt County EMS as a reason for the application.

Several years ago, the Mount Washington Fire Protection District received state approval for adding EMS to its agency.

In the hearing officer's decision, it was stated that the Zoneton application was denied because "if need were to be established, the applicant, Zoneton Fire Department cannot meet the need because it is prohibited from developing and operating the subject services by KRS 75.040(6)."

Under that provision, fire districts not served by an ambulance service could form an EMS.

If the EMS certificate is issued, the district could double its current state limit of 10 cents per \$100 of assessed property. Currently, the district receives around \$4 million in taxes distributed by sheriff Walt Sholar's office after collections are completed.

After the announcement that the EMS would be sought, the cities of Hillview, Pioneer Village, Hebron Estates, Hunters Hollow and Fox Chase joined Bullitt County Fiscal Court in filing a protest to the application.

As part of the request by attorney Mark Leach, there were allegations that the county breached its contract with the fire district.

The county paid funds to the fire district from federal ARPA money to help remodel the Brooks firehouse. For other districts, the county had used ARPA money to purchase fire equipment, such as trucks.

As part of the agreement, Zoneton said that county judge Jerry Summers agreed to house an ambulance unit in the firehouse for a term of 20 years. Also, there was an agreement stating the county "shall not withhold support nor contest any application" for a ground ambulance service.

A fact not made public by city officials, the Shepherdsville Fire Department received approval in May 2025 to establish a ground ambulance unit through the CON process. There was no opposition.

Last October, Zoneton filed its CON application stating that response time from Bullitt County EMS had exceeded the 8-minute national average on at least 40 percent of its calls since 2023.

The application argued that part of the issue was staffing numbers at Bullitt County EMS and another part was that the county pulled the unit housed at the Zoneton Station II in Brooks.

The applicants claimed in their appeal that the summary judgment issued by the hearing officer was contrary to law and did not allow due process rights. A hearing was set for March 5-6 and March 10 but the decision was made prior to the proceedings.

It also argued that the county had breached contract agreements with the district.

In the motion to seek the summary judgment to deny the application, attorney Connor E. Sturgill, representing the county and cities, stated that since Bullitt County already operates an ambulance service in the geographical area cited, Zoneton could not seek a license.

He added that the determination of the need for an additional ambulance service is not based on response times in relation to national fire standards. Instead, he said that "there is no dispute that Bullitt County's EMS ambulance service serves the Zoneton Fire Protection District."

No other court dates have been set for the case in Franklin Circuit Court.

Court asks state to lower speed limit on Hwy. 44

THOMAS J. BARR THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSSVILLE – Trying to do its part to help make a major thoroughfare a little safer, Bullitt Fiscal Court members took as much action as it could recently.

The court members voted to ask the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to lower the speed limit on parts of Highway 44.

The resolution requests the state do a traffic study and reduce the current 55 mile per hour speed limit to 45 mph from Sunview Drive to westbound to where that zone ends in Shepherdsville.

Magistrate Brian Bleemel made the request two weeks after a group of residents in the area of Watergate Road came to a fiscal court meeting.

A traffic fatality near the paintball facility under construction led to the public outcry.

Bleemel said there seems to be a wreck in that area daily and lowering the speed could not hurt the situation.

Complaints about the lack of a shoulder and the steep dropoff from the pavement did lead the state to place some material at the end of that portion of Highway 44.

While the lowering of the speed limit would fall into the hands of the state, a prior county request was approved. The state did agree to lower the speed limit from the Salt River Bridge to Highway 245 from 55 to 45 miles per hour.

A similar request was made to lower the speed limit on Buckman Street to 35 miles per hour through the heart of the city. The

county has not heard any word on that request.

Typically, it would be a year before the state would issue a decision.

In a related discussion, Bleemel said he spoke with a state official over what could be done when developments are approved along major roadways.

He would like to see a traffic study and a drainage plan be submitted at the time a rezoning request is made.

County attorney Tammy Baker said that this would have to be done by ordinance, not a resolution.

The planning commission has a committee working on changes to the regulations and Baker said that might be the best place to put any new standards for development.

Bleemel said he wants something done to make developers be held responsible for any conditions placed by the planning commission. It was discussed during the recent Highway 44 situation that there were to be acceleration and deceleration lanes for the paintball facility.

However, without that stipulation being addressed with the state, Bleemel said there is nothing that can be done locally. However, planning administrator Charlie Spalding said previously that he could double check to make sure developers are reaching out to the state highway department.

Bleemel said that construction on any project should not be started until all of the permits are secured.

The next meeting of Bullitt Fiscal Court will be at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 7, at the courthouse. The public is invited to attend.

Mike Rice for Bullitt County Magistrate District 3 Responsible Development and Growth Honest and Open Communication Common Sense Solutions from a Proven Local Entrepreneur Election Day - May 19th, 2026 Paid by Candidate Mike Rice



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