

Laurel Fiscal Court approves all planning commission re-appointments, agreements

BY MACEE SWAFFORD
STAFF WRITER

LONDON — Laurel County Fiscal Court convened in regular session Thursday, where members approved re-appointments to the Laurel County Planning Commission, an annual affiliation agreement with the London/Laurel Rescue Squad, and a bid award for a vehicle purchase.

Following the call to order, the

court conducted a roll call and approved the minutes from the previous meeting. Communications from David Westerfield, Laurel County Judge Executive, were then read, including a request to re-appoint Butch Cupp and Sallie Davidson to the Laurel County Planning Commission.

With no discussion from the court, the re-appointments were approved unanimously.

The court next considered the annual affiliation agreement between the Laurel County Fiscal Court and the London/Laurel Rescue Squad, which is renewed each year. The agreement was motioned and approved unanimously.

During magistrate reports, Jeff Book expressed appreciation to those who assisted during the recent winter storm.

"The men and women that have battled the storm to keep our roads clean, our citizens safe — just wanted to give them a big thank you for what they've done and the service they give to the county," said Book.

Westerfield echoed those remarks.

"They've done an awesome job. It's been different than a normal snow with all this ice, so I think everybody's done a great job," said

Westerfield.

Under new business, the court considered approval of a bid for a vehicle that had been advertised by the county. The bid was awarded to Tincher Williams and approved unanimously.

The Laurel County Fiscal Court meets on the second Monday and fourth Thursday of each month, weather permitting.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Week four of the 2026 Regular Session

BY SEN. BRANDON STORM
KY-21

Week four of the 2026 Regular Session began with a delay because of severe winter weather that blanketed the Bluegrass over the weekend. Monday's planned proceedings were postponed until Tuesday, Jan. 27, giving state employees, lawmakers and the public a safer route into Frankfort. Many legislators live hours away, since the Kentucky General Assembly is a citizen legislature. I'm grateful to local officials, road crews and first responders whose work ensured the people's business could continue at the Capitol.

By Friday, the General Assembly had reached the one-quarter mark of this year's session. With momentum building around key priorities, we're working diligently to advance meaningful legislation.

Speaking of quarters, there are about 60 billion of them in Kentucky's \$15 billion biennial budget. Last week, the House filed House Bill 500, its initial draft of the spending plan. The bill now begins its path through the legislative process. The Senate will take a disciplined, deliberate ap-



SEN. BRANDON STORM

proach to the proposal, guided by our caucus and the professional budget staff supporting our efforts.

Education remains a top priority in the Senate. Last week, two education-focused bills — Senate Bills (SB) 2 and 4 — were filed. SB 2 aims to ensure fair compensation by prohibiting school district administrators from receiving percentage raises that exceed the average percentage raise awarded to classroom teachers in the same district. SB 4 strengthens school leadership by creating a five-year development program for new principals, to better prepare them without creating additional costs for school districts.

SB 48, legislation I filed to strengthen Kentucky's man-

datory reentry supervision program, passed the Senate Judiciary Committee last week. The bill clarifies eligibility for reentry supervision, reinforces accountability for violations, and ensures supervision conditions are based on risk and public safety considerations. SB 48 is focused on providing structure for appropriate individuals nearing the end of their sentence while maintaining clear safeguards for our communities. This bill will be taken up for a vote on the Senate floor in the coming days.

This past week, the Senate passed SB 17, legislation I sponsored to update Kentucky law governing Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs. The bill modernizes existing statutes by formally recognizing the Kentucky CASA Network, streamlining local board requirements, and making technical updates to improve clarity and consistency across related child welfare laws. These updates help ensure CASA volunteers are well-supported as they advocate for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, or dependency. SB 17 now heads to the House of Repre-

sentatives for consideration.

The following bills also passed in the Senate last week:

SB 181 clarifies Kentucky's student safety law by clearly defining prohibited private electronic communication while allowing appropriate contact such as virtual instruction and parent-included messages. It strengthens parental consent rules, reinforces abuse prevention training, bans non-disclosure agreements tied to misconduct, and ensures investigations continue even if someone resigns.

SJR 23 establishes Kentucky as a "Food is Medicine"

state, directing agencies to advance nutrition-based strategies to prevent and manage chronic disease. It encourages coordination between health systems, agriculture, and community partners to improve long-term health outcomes.

SB 20 updates optional city officer training incentive programs by defining excess credit hours and giving cities greater flexibility to set incentive amounts by ordinance.

SB 68 strengthens safety at the Kentucky Horse Park by clarifying the Horse Park Commission's authority to remove or bar individuals who

pose a risk to guests, staff, or participants. The bill aligns state policy with national sport safety standards and helps ensure the park remains a safe and welcoming destination for visitors.

Looking ahead

As the General Assembly moves into week five, committees will keep reviewing bills and budget discussions will grow more detailed. We remain focused on passing laws that support Kentucky families, protect students,

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AVOID DANGERS AFTER A STORM

STAY SAFE AROUND POWER LINES

- If you see a downed power line, move away from it and anything touching it. Keep a distance of 50 feet, as the ground around the downed power lines may be energized. Assume ALL downed power lines are live.
- If you see someone in direct or indirect contact with a downed line, DO NOT touch him/her. You could become energized as well. Call 911 for assistance.
- Don't step in water near downed lines.
- NEVER attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it using an object such as a broom or stick.
- NEVER drive over a downed power line.
- If your vehicle comes in contact with a downed power line while you're in the vehicle, stay inside the car. Call 911 or honk your horn to get help, but tell those rendering aid to stay away from the vehicle.
- If you must exit the vehicle for life-threatening reasons - jump out and away from it, making sure to land with your feet together and touching. Then, shuffle away with your feet touching until you reach a safe distance. NEVER attempt to get back into a vehicle that is in contact with a power line.



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SCC to host Madisonville Community College's Fixed Wing Pilot Training beginning Feb. 9

SOMERSET COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SOMERSET — Somerset Community College (SCC) is partnering with Madisonville Community College (MCC) to bring MCC's Fixed Wing Flight Training program to SCC's Somerset South Campus beginning Feb. 9.

Through this partnership, students in south-central Kentucky will be able to start Madisonville's professional pilot fixed-wing (airplane) pathway without relocating. The program remains an MCC offering, with instruction delivered on SCC's Somerset South Campus and flight training coordinated through Madisonville's established aviation program.

"This is an exciting new opportunity for students in our region who have dreamed of becoming pilots," said Dr. Castle, President & CEO of Somerset Community College. "By partnering with Madisonville Community College, we're able to bring a high-quality, industry-driven fixed-wing training option closer to home. It's a powerful example of how colleges

within KCTCS can work together to expand access to in-demand careers."

MCC's aviation program was the first flight training program established within the Kentucky Community

and Technical College System (KCTCS). Students in the fixed-wing track progress through ground school and flight labs leading to key

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