

# City tourism approves 2026-2027 budget

**BY MACÉE SWAFFORD**  
STAFF WRITER

LONDON – The London Tourism and Convention Commission held a special called meeting Monday afternoon to approve its proposed 2026-2027 operating budget, and approved purchases for the Wilderness Road Event Center.

Prior to taking action on the budget, the commission entered executive session to discuss possible litigation. Upon returning to open session, Commissioner Todd Roberts made a motion authorizing Commission Chairman Phil Smith to work with legal counsel regarding the

litigation. The motion was approved unanimously by commissioners Starr Handy, Lois McWhorter and Todd Roberts. No additional discussion followed.

The proposed budget projects \$6,552,000 in total available resources, including a \$400,000 general fund balance carried forward, \$250,000 in capital reserve, and approximately \$3.85 million in restaurant tax revenue.

Major expenditures include \$1.895 million for fairground operations and improvements, \$1.699 million for Levi Jackson Park, \$1.12 million for tourism and

events, nearly \$800,000 for city parks, and approximately \$241,000 for the community center.

Commissioners also noted that several revenue sources, including anticipated FEMA reimbursements and grant funding, remain estimates until final approval or reimbursement is received.

The 2026-2027 budget was approved unanimously by those commissioners in attendance, Starr Handy, Lois McWhorter, and Todd Roberts.

Following the budget vote, Chairman Phil Smith praised the commission’s investment in the new fairgrounds – the

Wilderness Road Event Center – and said the project will be nearing a significant financial milestone within the following weeks.

“On the fairgrounds project, we’ve created something super, super special – really nice for the community,” said Smith. “The entire commission is very proud to say that within the next 30 to 60 days, we’ll owe nothing to anyone soon on that property.”

Smith also gave credit and thanked local government such as Judge Executive David Westerfield and the fiscal court, London Mayor Randall Weddle and city council, and the public works depart-

ment for contributing and helping out with seeing that the event center gets completed.

The commission also unanimously approved the purchase of specialized arena soil for agricultural event purposes at the fairgrounds. Fairground Director Christina Sowders explained that after consulting with University of Kentucky equine experts, the commission determined a specific blend of sand, clay and silt was needed for equestrian and livestock events.

The commission approved purchasing 125 loads, estimated at approximately

\$100,000, with the Laurel County Tourist Commission agreeing to split the cost.

Commissioners also unanimously approved purchasing corral equipment from Bengel for \$11,010. The purchase includes 70 12-foot corral panels, two pedestrian gates and one large livestock gate.

Although another supplier submitted a lower quote of \$10,528, Smith said that proposal did not include the specialized nine-foot gate required for exhibitors and mounted riders. Commissioners agreed the Bengel proposal better met the facility’s needs while also including free delivery.

## London council gives final approval to budget, Weddle addresses insurance costs

**BY MACÉE SWAFFORD**  
STAFF WRITER

LONDON – The London City Council met in a second special-called session last Wednesday morning to conduct second readings and final approvals of several ordinances relating to the city’s budget, personnel structure, transparency requirements and ethics policies.

Mayor Randall Weddle, Councilmember Kelly Greene Smith and acting City Attorney Eric Edwards were absent from the meeting. City Clerk Ashley Taylor read summaries of each ordinance before council voted.

Council unanimously approved Ordinance 2026-11, which amends the city’s current fiscal year 2025-26 budget to reflect actual revenues and expenditures through the end of June. The ordinance adjusts appropriations across several departments and leaves projected carry-forward balances of approximately \$945,330 in the general fund and \$1.47 million in the garbage fund.

Council then approved Ordinance 2026-12, establishing the city’s budget for fiscal year 2026-27. The budget projects approximately \$15.9 million in general fund revenues, \$5.4 million in garbage fund revenues, \$850,000 in alcohol fund revenues, \$170,000 in municipal aid revenues and \$550,000 in FEMA funding.

Councilmember John Bruner cast the lone dissenting vote on the ordinance, as he had during Tuesday’s first reading.

“There’s been a good deal of talk about this council slashing the public safety portion to the city,” Bruner said at Wednesday’s special meeting. “The fire department last year, it was \$2.5 million. The new year would be \$2,647,000 – actually an increase in the budget.”

Despite explaining the process behind the ordinance, Bruner was still the lone dissenting vote for Ordinance 2026-12 on Wednesday.

The ordinance contains several EMS-related restrictions and conditions tied to certain fire department appropriations. The ordinance states those appropriations are expressly conditioned upon “the surrender of the Certificate of Need to the state not

later than August 1, 2026.” It further requires the city to notify Laurel County 911 by Aug. 1, 2026 “that it shall not be dispatched on an EMS run unless requested to do so by Ambulance, Inc.” or another agency through mutual aid. The ordinance also requires the city to enter into a mutual aid agreement with Ambulance Inc. of Laurel County and discontinue expenditures related to prescription drugs, advanced life support services and a medical director associated with the EMS program.

The EMS provisions generated significant public discussion ahead of the ordinance’s approval. Prior to the meeting, Ambulance Inc. of Laurel County President Karen Jones released a statement responding to speculation surrounding the proposal.

“There have also been suggestions that Ambulance Inc. of Laurel County is responsible for requesting that the CON be withdrawn,” Jones wrote. “I want to be clear that Ambulance Inc. values and respects its longstanding working relationship with the London City Fire Department, and we continue to collaborate in serving our community.”

Jones added that the London City Fire Department “plays an important role in protecting the health and safety of our citizens.”

Social media users also voiced concerns regarding the ordinance. One public post cir-

culated prior to Wednesday’s meeting claimed the ordinance would “force the London City Fire Department to give up its Certificate of Need (CON) OR they WILL lose part of its budget.” Local attorney Brandon West also publicly stated his office would represent first responders “PRO BONO” if adverse action was taken against them and would likewise offer representation to individuals fined by the city’s ethics board for filing what he described as a valid complaint.

The budget ordinance also references rising insurance costs. The discussion comes after the City of London received a Notice of Conditional Renewal from Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services (KLCIS), dated April 7, warning that the city’s liability, property and workers’ compensation coverage could be subject to premium increases of 25 percent or more, reduced coverage limits and increased deductibles due to “unfavorable loss results.”

Council members stated that they did not receive the notice until a couple of days prior to Tuesday’s special called meeting.

In response, Weddle said increased litigation against the city contributed to higher insurance costs.

“The reality is simple: when the same small group of individuals continues filing lawsuit after lawsuit against

the city, the insurance company sees that as increased risk,” Weddle said. “When risk goes up, premiums go up.” He continued by stating that the rise was not caused by “everyday citizens or by some citywide problem,” but instead was the “direct result of repeated legal actions and ongoing turmoil created by the same circle of people.”

Weddle added that the increase is “not necessarily permanent,” and that the city remains “financially secure and in good shape.”

“It has been a coordinated effort that has cost the city

financially, and unfortunately the taxpayers are the ones who end up feeling it,” Weddle stated. “My focus remains on protecting the city, protecting taxpayer dollars, and moving London forward.”

Council also approved Ordinance 2026-13, establishing a new pay and classification plan for city employees and non-elected officers. The ordinance sets staffing levels across city departments, establishes compensation schedules and continues certain employee benefit provisions.

Additionally, council approved Ordinance 2026-14,

which expands the city’s transparency requirements by requiring the publication of the previous five years of audits and special audits on the city’s website.

The final ordinance approved, Ordinance 2026-15, amends the city’s ethics ordinance by expanding disclosure requirements, revising nepotism provisions, modifying complaint procedures and establishing civil penalties for violations.

The full ordinances can be read on the City of London’s website under the ordinance directory tab.

## PUBLIC NOTICES

7.1.2026

### Ordinance amending the Laurel County budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 was adopted by the Laurel County Fiscal Court

An ordinance amending the Laurel County budget for fiscal year 2025-2026, to include unanticipated receipts from Fed DKPI, State Grants, reimbursements in the amount of \$1,484,715.85 and increase expenditures in the area of contingent appropriations was adopted

by the Laurel County Fiscal Court on June 25, 2026. A copy of the adopted ordinance with full text is available for public inspection at the office of the County Judge Executive during normal business hours.

### Notice is hereby given that Dr. Sara Eldridge of Kentucky Eye Institute, is leaving the practice located at 130 Thompson Poynter Rd, London, KY 40701

Notice is hereby given that Dr. Sara Eldridge of Kentucky Eye Institute, is leaving the practice located at 130 Thompson Poynter Rd, London, KY 40741. All patients may retrieve their medical records from Kentucky Eye Institute located at 130 Thompson Poynter Rd, London, KY 40741 or by calling 606-878-2012. Dr. Eldridge’s last

day at the practice will be August 21, 2026. It is important for existing patients to schedule an appointment within the next 30 days either with one of Kentucky Eye Institute’s doctors or an outside eyecare doctor to ensure they are receiving ongoing care.

### Laurel County Sheriff’s office is now accepting vehicle bids for 2026

\*1-White 2026 Chevrolet Tahoe 4WD9C1  
-No Spot Light  
-V8  
-Extra Key Fobs  
-Cloth Front Seats  
-Vinyl Rear Seat  
-No 3rd Row Seats  
9C1 (PPV) - 250 AMP H.O. alternator, electrical power, and vehicle signals connections located @ center front floor. Heavy Duty police rated suspension and police brakes

Sealed bids will be accepted from July 1, 2026 through July 10, 2026 and should be mailed to:  
Laurel County Sheriff’s Office  
Attn: Bids  
1380 KY-192 E.  
London, KY 40741  
If you have any questions please contact the Laurel County Sheriff’s Office at (606)864-6600. The Sheriff’s Office reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids.

### London Utility Commission is offering for sale, by sealed bids One 2026 Peterbilt Dump Truck

The London Utility Commission (LUC) is offering for sale, by sealed bids, the following surplus equipment:

1. One (1) 2026 Peterbilt, Model 567, Dump Truck. Vin# 1NCPX4TX6TD771691

The equipment will be sold to the highest bidder, pending the reserve price is met, on a strictly “as-is” basis. No mechanical condition and no warranty is expressed or implied. Buyer will be responsible for paying any applicable transfer fees and/or taxes. All appropriate transfers must be completed and payment received by LUC prior to bidder obtaining the equipment. Payment for the equipment must be by cashier’s check. Sealed bids will be accepted until 2:00 p.m., Friday July

10, 2026. Winning bidder must arrange pick up of equipment by no later than 4:00 p.m., Friday, July 17, 2026. Pick up must be scheduled by contacting Superintendent Zach Creech at 606-864-2103. Appointments can be made to inspect the equipment by calling the business office at 606-864-2103. All sealed bids must be clearly identified on the exterior of the envelope with the words “Sealed Bid – Surplus Equipment.” Sealed bids can be delivered to the business office at 801 N. Main Street, London, KY 40741. Bids may also be mailed to P.O. Box 918, London, KY 40743. LUC reserves the right to reject any and/or all bids.

## HELP WANTED Legal Secretary

Williams and Towe Law Group currently has a job opening for a Legal Secretary.

Must have strong organizational and communication skills. Experience with the Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Word, Outlook). Must maintain a courteous and professional demeanor at all times.

Pay is based on experience.

Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Please send resumes to  
sonya@wftlaw.com