

# Whitley County conducts annual K-Count to assess homelessness

BY MACEE SWAFFORD  
Staff Writer

WHITLEY COUNTY — Officials in Whitley County recently conducted the annual “K-Count,” a statewide effort aimed at identifying and counting individuals experiencing homelessness, a process that helps determine how federal housing resources are distributed to communities across Kentucky.

The K-Count is Kentucky’s version of the federally required “point-in-time” count mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The count provides a snapshot of homelessness on a single night and helps guide funding for housing assistance programs.

Whitley County Health Department Director Marcy Rein said the count is an important tool for ensuring rural communities like Whitley County are accurately represented when funding decisions are made.

“K-Count is an annual counting of people experiencing homelessness,” Rein explained. “It’s actually dictated by the federal HUD program, and HUD says that states have to count every two years. Kentucky chooses

to count every year,” said Rein. “Usually it’s the last Wednesday of January, but because of the bad weather they postponed it until the end of February this year.”

Rein said the primary purpose of the count is to help determine where housing and homelessness assistance funding is directed. The Whitley County Health Department began conducting its own count in 2022, after local officials in the county realized homelessness was not being consistently measured.

“We realized in 2022 that no one was really counting in Whitley County,” Rein said. “We worked with our partners and we all agreed that, yeah, we were experiencing homelessness that was potentially not being counted, and we wanted to make sure that we were able to drive resources to the community.”

For the 2026 count, health department staff partnered with local organizations to identify individuals who met the federal definition of homelessness. The process began in Corbin during a dinner service hosted by the White Flag Ministry, where volunteers inter-

viewed attendees to determine whether they qualified to be counted.

The White Flag Ministry in Corbin provides a warm meal for those in need from Monday-Friday at 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Information on shelter nights, and when they occur, can be found on the ministry’s Facebook page.

After the dinner service concluded, teams spread out across the county to locate individuals staying in places not intended for human habitation.

“When dinner was over, we split up into two teams. One team took the north half of Whitley County and the other team took the south half,” Rein said.

During the outreach, staff located individuals in several areas including parts of Corbin and near the Kentucky-Tennessee state line.

The health department staff encountered 20 individuals who met the criteria to be counted during the outreach portion of the effort. That number does not include individuals who may have been staying in shelters, which report their own numbers separately. For the K-Count specifically, it represents only a snapshot

of homelessness at a specific moment.

“This is a point in time,” she said. “We know that different times of the year we experience ebbs and flows. Weather and all those things have a lot to do with it.”

Once local counts are completed, the information is submitted to the state, which verifies and compiles the data before releasing official totals later in the year.

While the count focuses on Whitley County, Rein noted that homelessness often crosses county lines, particularly in areas like Corbin where services and shelters are located in neighboring counties.

For those experiencing homelessness locally, Rein said several organizations provide support and resources.

White Flag Ministry serves meals during the winter months and also provides access to case management services through RRJ Solutions, allowing individuals to connect with housing assistance and other support programs.

Emergency Christian Ministries in Williamsburg also offers beds and assistance for individuals working to overcome bar-

riers such as transportation challenges, criminal history or substance abuse.

Rein said the health department often serves as a connection point for individuals seeking help.

“The health department doesn’t provide all the services, but we try to know where in the community those services might be available,” she said. “Even if someone says, ‘I don’t even know what I need,’ we can help guide them and get them in a direction to get started.”

Rein also highlighted resources available for children experiencing housing instability through local schools.

The federal McKinney-Vento program provides assistance to students experiencing homeless-

ness or unstable housing situations, helping ensure children can continue attending school and accessing needed services.

“Schools have what’s called McKinney-Vento, and it’s very specifically for kids experiencing homelessness or housing instability,” Rein said. “They just want to help families get what they need so that kids can get to school.”

Rein said the most important message for families facing housing instability is to seek assistance when they need it, and to never be afraid to ask for help.

To contact the Whitley County Health Department for more information and resources, they can be reached at (606) 549-3380.

## COUNCIL

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by tenants. One property owner raised concerns about the legal risk landlords could face if they attempted to evict tenants based on an arrest that did not ultimately result in a conviction.

“I can’t evict somebody for something and then (they) be found not guilty, and then I’ll be liable for the eviction. So who’s gonna pay that cost for the eviction when somebody gets arrested, but don’t get sentenced to anything,” a concerned property owner in the audience questioned. “So am I, as a landlord, held responsible for that? Because I’m going to be sued. I can tell you that right now. I’ll be sued if I evict them and they are found innocent.”

Mayor David Thompson and members of the council acknowledged the concerns and attempted to clarify how the ordinance would function. One point of confusion involved how violations would be counted if different tenants at the same property were involved in separate incidents. Thompson explained that violations would not accumulate against a property owner if multiple tenants were evicted for the same type

of offense.

“We’re not doing it to cost the landlord \$2,500. We have some from Corbin and some from other counties that own properties,” said Thompson. “A letter would be delivered to the landlord but most likely if it’s somebody local, a police officer will bring it by so it’s legal.”

Thompson also noted that the ordinance had been reviewed by the Kentucky League of Cities, which he said did not identify any issues with the proposal.

Council members were also asked whether similar ordinances were being used in other nearby communities. Thompson said he had shared the ordinance with two neighboring cities, but that neither had adopted it.

Some citizens expressed support for addressing criminal activity but questioned whether placing penalties on landlords was the appropriate approach.

“I don’t want drug dealers in my city. I don’t want people who have terroristic threatening or threatening behaviors, but you all know as well as I do — there are people who have domestic situations, people who get depressed and do something stupid,” said a citizen. “They go get drunk, they go take a drug and

God forbid that happens, but it does happen. Good people do stupid stuff.”

The same speaker added that if the city intends to combat drug activity and criminal behavior, those efforts should be directed at the individuals committing the crimes rather than property owners.

Following discussion and public comment, the council voted to table the second reading of the ordinance in order to review the proposal further.

According to a report from the *Mountain Advocate*, Thompson later confirmed the day after the meeting that the ordinance would be permanently tabled following public criticism and opposition from members of the community.

Several other items of business were addressed by the Barbourville City Council during the meeting, including action on ordinances, appointments and equipment requests.

Council members conducted the second reading of Ordinance No. 2026-1, which adopts a supplemental update to the City of Barbourville’s Code of Ordinances.

In other action, the council approved Resolution No. 2026-2 authorizing the mayor to submit an application for a Kentucky Office

of Homeland Security grant. If awarded, the funding would be used by the Barbourville Police Department to purchase new tasers.

Council members approved a request from the Barbourville Police Department to declare several vehicles as surplus property. The vehicles — three Chevrolet Tahoes and two Dodge Durangos — will be made available for sale to other government agencies.

A bid for the vehicles were approved by the council, with Boughtman Auto Group submitting the only bid of \$116,913 for the three Chevrolet Tahoes, while the two Dodge Durangos received bids of \$42,898 each.

Additionally, the council also approved the reappointment of J.M. Hall and Joann Maybrier to the Barbourville Code Enforcement Board. Their new terms will run through Jan. 8, 2029.



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## PUBLIC NOTICES 3.12.2026

**The Sixth Circuit Judicial Council received applications from people interested in appointment to the bankruptcy judge position**

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGESHIP EASTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY AT LEXINGTON

Bell Dames, Ellen Arvin Kennedy, Megan R. Seliber, and David J. Treacy.

Full public notice is available at [www.ca6.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca6.uscourts.gov). Any person may now submit written comments for consideration by the Judicial Council and the Court of Appeals. Public comments must be received by March 30, 2026. Please contact Marc Theriault, Circuit Executive, (513) 564-7200 for further information.