

Giant produce takes center stage at Kentucky championship weigh-off

BY KATY WILBORN
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

HAWESVILLE, Ky. — Pumpkins weighing hundreds of pounds, massive watermelons, towering sunflowers and unusually large vegetables filled the Hancock County Fairgrounds Saturday as growers from across the country gathered for the first Kentucky Bluegrass Championship Weigh-Off.

The Sept. 12 event was organized by the Kentucky Giant Growers Club and club president Nick McCaslin, a Hancock County native who has spent the past seven to eight years immersed in the world of competitive giant produce growing.

The competition offered prize money for giant pumpkins and watermelons while also welcoming entries in a variety of other categories, including gourds, jack-o'-lantern pumpkins, tomatoes, sunflowers and cucumbers.

For McCaslin, bringing the competition to Hancock County was an opportunity to introduce his hometown to a hobby that has become a major part of his life.

McCaslin said the club's previous weigh-off was held at Roberts Family Farm in Brandenburg, Ky., where the event, then known as the Great Pumpkin Pursuit, had been held for many years. As longtime organizers began retiring from competitive growing,



PCN Photo: Katy Wilborn

Retired William Tell Elementary teacher, Pat Jarboe, poses with the elementary school's very own pumpkin.

McCashlin took on a larger role in organizing the event. After several years of making the trip to Brandenburg, he began looking at the possibility of bringing the competition closer to home.

"I saw the opportunity to bring it to Hancock County," McCaslin said. "We had a great venue indoors, and I see a lot of room for growth in Hancock County. Being that I was born and raised here, I would love nothing more than to see all of the people that came from all over the country be able to experience my little slice of heaven."

The move appears to have paid off.

According to McCaslin, growers representing more than 14 states participated in the event, setting what he said was a new record for the largest number of states represented at a single

weigh-off site.

"It was incredible," he said. "It blew me away, really, when I was up on stage and looked across all the fruit."

McCaslin credited local sponsors, the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce, the tourism board and numerous family members and volunteers for helping make the inaugural event possible. He also recognized Hancock County Farm Supply and Gordon Gaynor for their support.

While the enormous produce may look unbelievable to spectators, McCashlin said there is nothing accidental about growing a pumpkin or watermelon to championship size.

Growers begin preparing months before their fruit ever reaches the scale. The process involves careful seed selection, soil and

water testing, plant management and months of attention.

McCaslin compared seed selection to breeding racehorses. Rather than genetic modification, growers rely on generations of selective breeding, choosing seeds from plants that demonstrate desirable characteristics such as size, shape, color and weight.

"Nothing that came to that weigh-off was by accident," he said.

For McCaslin, who specializes in giant watermelons, the process has become highly technical. His greenhouse is automated, allowing him to monitor and control conditions including temperature, humidity and moisture from his phone.

Even with technology and careful preparation, he said growers still need cooperation from Mother Nature and a little luck.

Most importantly, they need commitment.

"You've got to be committed to that fruit for about six months," McCaslin said.

His own journey into competitive growing did not begin with a lifetime of farming or gardening experience. McCaslin was around 26 or 27 when he became interested in the hobby and said he had virtually no gardening experience beforehand.

He attended a weigh-off in Brandenburg as a grower and quickly found himself welcomed into the Ken-

tucky Giant Growers Club.

"I went there, I met everybody, and they said, 'Are you going to come back next year?' I said, 'Well, I hope so.' They said, 'Well, good, you're on the committee,'" McCaslin recalled. "Next thing I know, I'm president."

The hobby soon became a passion.

"My entire life revolves around growing a watermelon," he said. "My work schedule revolves around growing a watermelon. My dinner schedule, my eating schedule, everything that I do from A to Z revolves around growing the watermelon."

Perry County was also represented at Saturday's competition.

Pat Jarboe brought a pumpkin weighing 264.5 pounds, while a pumpkin grown through William Tell Elementary School's STEM program weighed 194.5 pounds.

McCaslin has worked with William Tell students for several years, providing seeds, educational programs and opportunities for students to learn about giant produce growing. Students have also visited his property for field trips and participated in previous weigh-offs.

McCaslin said he hopes those connections encourage a new generation of growers.

For anyone who looked at Saturday's enormous pumpkins, watermelons

and vegetables and wondered whether they could grow one themselves, McCashlin said the club welcomes beginners.

Prospective growers can connect with the Kentucky Giant Growers Club through its Facebook group, where experienced members are willing to offer advice and even provide seeds.

"You should never have to pay for a seed," McCaslin said. "Come get them. They're free. We would love to help you. We want you to come be a part of this."

Beginners can choose what interests them, whether that is a giant pumpkin, watermelon, sunflower, cucumber or another category, and club members can help them get started.

After seeing the response to Hancock County's first championship, McCaslin is already looking ahead to next year.

He acknowledged that the inaugural event set a high bar, but he hopes continued community support, new growers and returning competitors will make the next Kentucky Bluegrass Championship Weigh-Off even bigger.

For McCaslin, that means another year of seeds, soil tests, careful monitoring and countless hours in the greenhouse, all for the chance to see just how big one watermelon can grow.

SENATE

FROM PAGE A6

walking and climbing stairs.

A statement from the Capitol physician that was included with McConnell's July release said that the senator has "experienced several falls through the year" due to his "post-polio condition." The office said his physical therapy was aimed at reducing the risk of him falling again.

"A comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary team determined that he had no fractures, cardiac abnormalities, stroke, tumor, or hemorrhage," the physician's office said.

McConnell was first elected to the Senate in 1984 and was the Republi-

can leader from 2007 until last year, serving as both majority and minority leader during that period.

Toward the end of his time as leader and in the last two years as a rank and file senator, McConnell's health has visibly declined.

He was hospitalized

with a concussion in March 2023 and missed several weeks of work after falling in a Washington

hotel. He twice froze up during news conferences after he returned, staring vacantly ahead before col-

leagues and staff. A year later, he fell and sprained his wrist while walking out of a GOP luncheon.

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LEGAL NOTICE

The Carroll County Board of Elections meeting and voting equipment inspection for the November 3rd, 2026 General Election has been scheduled for September 21st, 2026 at 11:00 am. This will take place at 440 Main Street, Carrollton, KY 41008 on the 2nd floor.

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LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
UNIFIED COURT OF JUSTICE
CARROLL CIRCUIT COURT
Civil Action No. 26-CI-00001

CML TAX LIEN COMPANY, LLC PLAINTIFF
VS. **NOTICE OF COMMISSIONER'S SALE**
Electronically Filed

PARKSIDE DEVELOPMENT CORP. DEFENDANTS
COUNTY OF CARROLL, KENTUCKY

By virtue of a Judgment and Order of Sale entered in the Carroll Circuit Court on the 11th day of August, 2026, I will sell at public auction on the front steps (south door facing Highland Avenue) of the Carroll County Courthouse, 440 Main Street, Carrollton, Kentucky, the property described herein located in Carroll County, Kentucky, on **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026**, at the hour of **9:00 a.m. (EST); 8:00 a.m. (CST)**, and more particularly described as follows:

Property Address: 0 Lock Road, Carrollton, KY 41008
Map ID #: 19-40 & 33

Being a portion of the same property conveyed to John Newcomb and Brenda Newcomb, husband and wife, Stanley Billingsley and Joyce Billingsley, husband and wife, Winston Johnson and Mary Nell Johnson, husband and wife, and Larry Burkhardt and Barbara Burkhardt, husband and wife, from Jack A. Hereford, et al., by Deed dated March 23, 1972, of record in Deed Book 74, Page 180. Also being a portion of the same property conveyed to Parkside Development Company, Inc., a Kentucky Corporation, from Winston Johnson, et al., by Deed dated August 1, 1975, of record in Deed Book 81, Page 28. All documents are found of record in the Office of the Carroll County Court Clerk.

THERE IS NO MOBILE HOME, DOUBLEWIDE AND/OR MANUFACTURED HOME INCLUDED IN THIS SALE.

The amount of money to be raised by this sale is the sum of \$6,232.37, with accrued interest at the statutory rate of 6% per annum from the date of the entry of the Judgment, together with reasonable attorneys fees and court costs.

The real estate shall be sold on the terms of ten (10%) percent cash at the time of the sale, except that said deposit shall be waived if the Plaintiff is the successful bidder at the sale, and the balance on a credit of thirty (30) days bearing interest at the rate the judgment bears per annum from date of sale. When the purchase price is paid in full, the deed will be delivered to the purchaser. It is further provided that the property sold includes insurable improvements and the successful bidder at said sale shall, at bidder's own expense, carry fire and extended insurance coverage on said improvements from the date of sale until the purchase price is fully paid, to the extent of the Court appraised value of said improvements or the unpaid balance of the purchase price whichever is less, as a minimum, with a loss payable clause to the Commissioner of the Carroll Circuit Court or the Plaintiff herein. Failure of the purchaser to effect such insurance shall not affect the validity of the sale or the purchaser's liability thereunder, but shall entitle, but not require, the Plaintiff CML Tax Lien Company, LLC, to effect said insurance and furnish the policy or evidence thereof to the Commissioner if it so desires, and the premium thereon or the proper portion thereof shall be charged to the purchaser as purchaser's costs.

The Master Commissioner does not warrant title, and the Purchaser herein buys the property as-is, in all respects, and the aforesaid property shall be sold free and clear of all liens and encumbrances listed in the Complaint, except the following:

- All unpaid state, county and city real estate taxes for the year 2026;
- Easements, restrictions, and stipulations of record;
- Assessments for public improvements levied against the property; and,
- Any facts which a title exam, inspection and/or accurate survey of the property may disclose.

For further information, see the Final Judgment and Order of Sale and pleadings of record in the Office of the Circuit Court of Carroll County.

/s/ Jake A. Thompson
MASTER COMMISSIONER
CARROLL CIRCUIT COURT

LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
UNIFIED COURT OF JUSTICE
CARROLL CIRCUIT COURT
Civil Action No. 26-CI-00082

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION PLAINTIFF
VS. **NOTICE OF COMMISSIONER'S SALE**
Electronically Filed

DONALD DEE BENNETT DEFENDANTS
UNKNOWN DEFENDANT, SPOUSE OF DONALD DEE BENNETT
a/k/a CHRISTOPHER ROBERT BENNETT
UNKNOWN DEFENDANT, SPOUSE OF CHRIS BENNETT,
UNKNOWN DEFENDANTS, WHO ARE THE HEIRS,
DEWISEES OR LEGATEES OF CHRIS BENNETT,
a/k/a CHRISTOPHER ROBERT BENNETT AND THEIR
SPOUSES, AND ANY UNKNOWN PERSON WHO MAY
HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE PROPERTY WHICH IS THE
SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS ACTION

By virtue of a Judgment and Order of Sale entered in the Carroll Circuit Court on the 11th day of August, 2026, I will sell at public auction on the front steps (south door facing Highland Avenue) of the Carroll County Courthouse, 440 Main Street, Carrollton, Kentucky, the property described herein located in Carroll County, Kentucky, on **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026**, at the hour of **9:00 a.m. (EST); 8:00 a.m. (CST)**, and more particularly described as follows:

Property Address: 1492 Zen Forest Road, Turners Station, KY 40075
Map ID #: 26-01-10 thru 20

Being the same property conveyed to Chris Bennett, unmarried, from Delmer Hall and Holly B. Hall, a/k/a Holly Burns Hall, husband and wife, by Deed dated January 18, 2022, of record in Deed Book 222, Page 506, in the Office of the Carroll County Court Clerk.

THERE IS NO MOBILE HOME, DOUBLEWIDE AND/OR MANUFACTURED HOME INCLUDED IN THIS SALE.

The amount of money to be raised by this sale is the sum of \$290,819.42, including accrued interest in the amount of \$23,259.85, as of July 30, 2026, and with interest continuing to accrue from July 30, 2026, at the rate of \$23.20 per day or 3.375% per annum until fully paid, together with advancements for the protection of the property, including taxes and insurance of \$13,654.79, late charges of \$518.84, Inspection fees of \$645.00, Property Preservation of \$1,775.00, reasonable attorneys fees of \$2,950.00 and court costs of \$921.96.

The real estate shall be sold on the terms of ten (10%) percent cash at the time of the sale, except that said deposit shall be waived if the Plaintiff is the successful bidder at the sale, and the balance on a credit of thirty (30) days bearing interest at the rate the judgment bears per annum from date of sale. When the purchase price is paid in full, the deed will be delivered to the purchaser. It is further provided that the property sold includes insurable improvements and the successful bidder at said sale shall, at bidder's own expense, carry fire and extended insurance coverage on said improvements from the date of sale until the purchase price is fully paid, to the extent of the Court appraised value of said improvements or the unpaid balance of the purchase price whichever is less, as a minimum, with a loss payable clause to the Commissioner of the Carroll Circuit Court or the Plaintiff herein. Failure of the purchaser to effect such insurance shall not affect the validity of the sale or the purchaser's liability thereunder, but shall entitle, but not require, the Plaintiff Freedom Mortgage Corporation, to effect said insurance and furnish the policy or evidence thereof to the Commissioner if it so desires, and the premium thereon or the proper portion thereof shall be charged to the purchaser as purchaser's costs.

The Master Commissioner does not warrant title, and the Purchaser herein buys the property as-is, in all respects, and the aforesaid property shall be sold free and clear of all liens and encumbrances listed in the Complaint, except the following:

- All unpaid state, county and city real estate taxes for the year 2026;
- Easements, restrictions, and stipulations of record;
- Assessments for public improvements levied against the property; and,
- Any facts which a title exam, inspection and/or accurate survey of the property may disclose.

For further information, see the Final Judgment and Order of Sale and pleadings of record in the Office of the Circuit Court of Carroll County.

/s/ Jake A. Thompson
MASTER COMMISSIONER
CARROLL CIRCUIT COURT

LEGAL NOTICE

Advertisement for Bids

Sealed Bids for the **"Clay and 11th Street Sidewalk Construction (Item No. 06-3052)"** for the City of Carrollton, Kentucky will be received in the City Clerk's Office, 750 Clay Street, Carrollton, KY 41008 until 10:00 AM (EST)/9:00 AM (CST) on Monday, October 12th, 2026. Bids will be opened on October 12th, 2026, at 10:15 AM (EST)/9:15 AM (CST) at which time they will be publicly read aloud.

The scope of work includes the construction of approximately 2,430 linear feet of new concrete sidewalk and entrances, intersection curb ramps, and drainage.

The Instructions to Bidders, Bid Form, Agreement Forms, Performance and Payment Bonds, Plans, Specifications, and other Contract Documents may be examined at the following locations:

Carrollton City Hall
750 Clay Street
Carrollton, Kentucky 41008
Phone (502)732-7060

Copies of the plans and specifications may be obtained from Lynn Imaging, 328 Old Vine Street, Lexington, Kentucky 40507, phone (859) 255-1021. Plans may be viewed and/or purchased on-line through www.lynnimaging.com. Plan holders will be responsible for all costs associated with obtaining the bid package from Lynn Imaging. Partial sets of documents will not be provided. **Bids will only be accepted from plan holders who have obtained the bid package from Lynn Imaging and are subsequently registered as "official plan holders". Bidders and DBE subcontractors must be prequalified with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and possess a Certificate of Eligibility at the time of the bid opening.** The general contractor must be prequalified by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet in "Grade & Drain", "Bridges", and "Sidewalks". All subcontractors must be prequalified in the work functions they will perform when accepting subcontracts. The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal for the project is **0%**.

A mandatory pre-bid meeting will be held at 9:00 AM (EST)/8:00 AM (CST), on Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at the Carrollton City Hall, 750 Clay Street, Carrollton, Kentucky 41008.

Bid Bond (5%) must be provided with bid.

Bidders are to submit their bid in a sealed envelope; the bidder shall clearly mark the sealed bid with the bid number and description listed above. The City of Carrollton is not responsible for the pre-mature opening of, or the failure to open, a sealed bid not properly addressed or identified. Bidders are invited to be present for the opening of the bids submitted. Honorable Robb Adams, Mayor of Carrollton