

County office candidates – page 2

Violent, property crime down – page 3

WCHS Cheer places third in state – page 8

Versailles Council considers new addressing rules – page 12

The Woodford Sun

Celebrating 157 years 1869-2026

158th YEAR - No. 2 — 12 Pages

Versailles, Kentucky

January 15, 2026

\$1.00

A banner idea

Raising awareness in Versailles about what local nonprofits do

BY BOB VLACH
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Banners in downtown Versailles are raising awareness about what local nonprofits do and provide to families and other members of the community.

The 26 banners costing about \$100 each were purchased by the nonprofits and will return to downtown Versailles every January, according to McKenna Halderman, the program director for the nonprofit Mentors & Meals.

Halderman said she brought her idea for the banner project to the Woodford County Chamber of Commerce's Nonprofit Roundtable, whose members meet every month to discuss how to better connect with people.

"This group is doing big things in our community," wrote Emily Downey, president of the Woodford County Chamber of Commerce, in an email to the *Sun*. "One outcome was McKenna championing the banners."

Halderman said she approached the City of Versailles, which supported her banner idea.

"Charitable nonprofits fill voids that other organizations, including governments, can't or shouldn't, and enhance a community's quality of life," Versailles Mayor Laura Dake wrote in an email to the *Sun*. "I am so pleased with the downtown banners because they bring attention to the wonderful nonprofits that serve Woodford County in all sorts of ways — addressing food insecurity, transportation needs, children's services, the arts, health issues, education and much more."

Most of the participating nonprofits provided designs for their banners, but Halderman said a couple asked her to do designs for them. So, although "I'm not a graphic designer," she learned a lot while working on the designs with Ruggles



MCKENNA HALDERMAN, the program director for the nonprofit Mentors & Meals, described her banner project idea as an opportunity to raise awareness about the work of local nonprofits. (Photo by Bob VLACH)

Sign. She also embraced a new challenge, and "I'm going to put this on my resume," she said.

"This was a new muscle that I had to stretch ... And there were some growing pains, but I'm proud of them," added Halderman, who has worked with Mentors & Meals in every capacity during its 11-year history, and loves its mission to help middle school students who need mentors and meals.

The program provides free tutoring services and meals for up to 75 students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Services are offered Monday

through Thursday, from 3 to 6 p.m., with high school student-interns serving as mentors and adult volunteers cooking meals, she said.

In her email, Dake said nonprofits employ one in 10 Kentuckians while generating \$27.4 billion in annual expenditures and payroll, according to the Kentucky Nonprofit Network.

She also offered some advice to people living here: "If one of the banners ... catches your eye, consider reaching out if you need the service or if you are interested in volunteering."

Board of Education faces 'hard decisions' to eliminate \$3 million operating deficit

BY BOB VLACH
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

The Woodford County Board of Education (BOE) began the daunting task of cutting \$3 million in operating expenses on Tuesday, Jan. 13. Schools Superintendent Lori Jones shared a bar graph with the BOE to "paint a picture of our current reality" during the work session.

The graph showed the district's fund balance at the start of the school year has been declining over the last three years. The fund balance is projected to drop to \$1,992 million at the end of this school year, which "is the closest we've ever been to that state-mandated 2 percent" minimum balance, Jones said.

If cuts are not made to the operating budget, Jones said the district's fund balance will fall "well below" the 2 percent state-minimum in 2027 and the Kentucky Department of Education will take over financial management of Woodford County Public Schools.

"We have the responsibility to ensure that this school system thrives for our students, for our staff members and for our community," said Jones. "We do have a legacy of excellence, and we are going to ensure a future of opportunities for our students. And so this is a bump in the road, but it is our current reality."

Jones said she is recommending staffing reductions in all departments at Central Office, which will mostly be discussed by the BOE in closed session because they will involve eliminating specific positions. Also, out-of-state travel for Central Office personnel will continue to be restricted to travel that is paid with grant dollars, she said.

Earlier, Jones introduced members of a Budget Committee, which was charged with making recommendations on cuts to the budget that would have the lowest impact on classroom instruction.

"There was no \$3 million line item that we could just cut out (of the budget)," said committee member Joe Belford.

So the process of making recommendations on what expenses to cut "culminated in a lot of really tough decisions being made," parent and committee member Logan Nance told the BOE.

"We were willing to make the hard decisions, but we wanted to make sure that we kept the kids and their education at the forefront of every decision that was made," added Nance.

Recommended cuts from the committee and Jones include not spending general fund dollars on four interventionists (math/

reading coaches) — one at each elementary school. Interim Chief Operating Officer Josh Rayburn said the district would look for other funding sources to pay for those positions (\$260,000).

But because grant dollars are less available, BOE members voiced concern that the schools will not have the positions if they are not funded by the district. It was also noted by Jones that she and the committee's priority is to not cut those positions if funding becomes available to cover that cost.

Recommendations to increase the student-to-teacher ratio at Woodford County Middle School and Woodford County High School would result in the loss of two teaching positions at WCMS and four at WCHS, Rayburn said. However, Jones emphasized that the proposed student-to-teacher ratio at WCHS (one-to-24) is much lower than the state cap (one-to-31), which would have resulted in the loss of 16 teachers at WCHS.

Other proposed cuts will eliminate a non-instructional work day for teachers, and to reduce the substitute pay (an estimated cost savings of \$200,000) for retired teachers to \$225 a day, which will remain higher than surrounding school districts, Rayburn told the BOE. He also explained that the estimate was based on what the cost for subs has been in recent years.

The number of bus monitors is also being reduced, but fewer positions are being cut than previously discussed by the Budget Committee. Currently, every bus has a monitor, which is significantly more than in other surrounding districts, and that number will be reduced based on the level of need, Jones said.

Other recommended cuts included reducing one custodial position at Huntertown and Southside elementary schools, one custodian at WCMS, and two custodians at WCHS.

In response to the recommended funding cuts at the school level, which BOE member Sherri Springate described as "cutting bone," Rayburn said, "Everything we're doing here is hard."

Later, Springate shared her frustrations with the lack of discussions about district finances during BOE meetings when Danny Adkins was superintendent.

"We should have done better. We should have done our job. We should have provided the oversight," said Springate. "So I think there were a lot of things that we could've done better, but I also think there were some things that the administration did that we just had no idea was going on."

See BOE p. 5

Request to rezone Troy Pike land to build houses voted down

'Too much for right now'

BY BOB VLACH
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

A request to rezone 9.67 acres on Troy Pike to move forward with a plan to construct 25 single-family homes was voted down by the Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning Commission on Jan. 8.

In her motion to deny the zone change from A-1 agricultural to R1-C residential, recently-appointed Commissioner Karen Isberg said the proposed zone change is not consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives, and its land use policies. Additionally, objections raised during the public hearing in December about increasing traffic on Troy Pike and the significant number of residential lots that have already been approved in Versailles and Woodford County were adopted by the commission as additional justification to deny the zone change.

While developer Vision Engineering, LLC (Jihad Hallany) cited a need for this type of housing, the opposition disputed that need, citing the high volume of currently approved residential lots, the motion

recommending denial stated.

Vice Chair Chad Wells, who chaired this month's meeting because of the retirement of former Chair Patty Perry after last month's meeting, said the traffic issues on Troy Pike are not deniable. However, he also noted that this area of Versailles is essentially surrounded by residential properties. Other than the existing MacDouglas Garden Center, he questioned what other type of farming operation could locate on this land.

With so many unknowns about the south end of Versailles and the development occurring on Troy Pike, the traffic issues on the roadway need to be addressed before other development is allowed to move forward in that area of Woodford County, Commissioner Doug Curl said. "It just seems too much for right now, before there's anything done about Troy Pike," he added, acknowledging the state would have to make traffic safety improvements to Troy Pike because it's a state road.

Curl also agreed with Commissioner Tim

See TROY PIKE p. 7

INSIDE...

Calendarp. 5
Church Notesp. 6
Classifiedp. 10

Obituariesp. 6
Public Recordsp. 7
Sportsp. 8, 9



1

See COURT p. 2



AN OVERFLOW CROWD of about 70 people attended the Jan. 12 Woodford County Fiscal Court meeting, which took up, again, the issue of in-family conveyance. (Photo by Scott White)

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

Monday, Jan. 19, Midway Council 5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 20, Versailles Council 5:30 p.m.