

COMMUNITY

Legislative Update

Richard White

Week in Review: Government contracts, regulations, and cybersecurity

From protecting taxpayer dollars and strengthening cybersecurity to supporting Kentucky businesses and preserving the Commonwealth's musical heritage, lawmakers tackled a wide range of issues during this week's interim committee meetings. Members heard from state agencies, industry representatives, and community organizations as they gathered information and discussed policy considerations ahead of the 2027 Regular Session.

Government Contract Review Committee: Members reviewed contracts from several Kentucky agencies and organizations, questioning how taxpayer dollars would be used to support programs and services across the Commonwealth. The committee heard testimony on contracts to fund veterans service officers, provide legal services for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, and support leadership training for student leaders at Kentucky State University. Members also questioned agency representatives about the purpose, costs, and specific uses of the contracts, emphasizing the importance of oversight and accountability in state spending.

Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee: Lawmakers reviewed regulations related to statewide voter registration, leave for merit and non-merit state employees, Kentucky licensing boards, fish and wildlife, the Kentucky Film Office, parole eligibility, and the Kentucky Family Caregiver Program. The regulations on leave for merit

and non-merit state employees, which would increase the amount of annual leave they can carry forward, prompted questions about the potential costs. All regulations will now move to the committees of jurisdiction.

Information Technology Oversight Committee: Legislators heard from the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, Commonwealth Office of Technology, and Kentucky National Guard about cybersecurity reporting, preparedness, and response. Presentations covered cyberterrorism prevention, agency response roles, and the Cyberbluegrass program, which strengthens coordination among cyber defenders to protect critical infrastructure. The discussion emphasized the importance of interagency collaboration in protecting Kentuckians from cyber threats and crime.

Capital Projects & Bond Oversight Committee: Members reviewed state capital project updates, agency reports, university and school district projects, emergency repairs, and debt issuances. Members also considered infrastructure loans and grants for water and sewer improvements, economic development funding, postsecondary construction plans, and military facility renovations. Additional items included reports on outstanding bonds, asset preservation allocations, and project updates required under the 2026 state budget.

IJC on Economic Development & Workforce Investment: Lawmakers heard from the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council about proposals to eliminate the unemployment insurance waiting period. Lawmakers also discussed a potential path to encourage the transition

to employee ownership when the owners of Kentucky businesses decide to sell their interests in a company.

IJC on Licensing, Occupations, & Administrative Regulations: Members first discussed proposed legislation that would establish a licensing framework for lactation consultants in Kentucky. Members then heard from the Kentucky Hemp Association and Cornbread Hemp about current federal and state laws and regulations governing the hemp industry, as well as proposed licensing and regulatory changes intended to support the industry's growth and competitiveness and protect public health and safety.

IJC on Tourism, Small Business, & Information Technology: Legislators heard a presentation on the Commonwealth Initiative, a program focused on preserving Kentucky's musical heritage through education and community engagement, featuring representatives from the Commonwealth Initiative and Sandy Knipp Legacy of Strings Foundation. The committee also received an agency update from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

Committee meetings will continue next week, with the IJC on Local Government; IJC on State Government; IJC on Health Services; and IJC on Families and Children among those scheduled to meet.

As always, I can be reached anytime through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at Richard.White@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov

Road Dept. and EMS updates highlight Rowan County Fiscal Court Meeting

By Michael A. Clary
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Members of the Rowan County Fiscal Court, along with Judge-Executive Harry T. Clark, met on Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2026, at 8:00am, at the Rowan County Courthouse, for their regularly scheduled monthly meeting, which was broadcast live on the Rowan County Fiscal Court Facebook page.

Judge-Exec. Clark called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance; and roll call with all magistrates present.

The judge spoke about this weekend's MSU Homecoming, the upcoming Harvest Festival, and Congressman Hall Rogers upcoming visit to MSU next week. Judge-Exec. Clark then welcomed guests and signed a proclamation recognizing the third week of October as Kentucky Retired Teachers' Week.

The court approved the minutes from last month's regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2026.

EMS Director Levi Hanshaw reports to the court that the ambulance service responded to 573 calls in the month of September. He says that the EMS service has two full-time staff vacancies and that interviews are ongoing, talked about maintenance issues on EC5 and EC8, spoke about service personnel training, and informed the court that the EMS service had received a grant which will be used to purchase equipment.

Road Foreman Justin Caudill reports to the court that mowing season is ongoing, talked about the near completion of the Rock Fork bridge project which has been opened back up to traffic, spoke about ongoing paving and shouldering in the county, mentioned the beginning of bridge work

on Big Brushy, talked to the court about the future removal of another bridge in the county and the installation of a box culvert, and spoke about vehicle maintenance issues at the Road Dept.

County Jailer Wes Coldiron reports to the court that the old chiller at the jail had been replaced with the new chiller and is scheduled to be up and running by Oct. 28th and spoke about some of the inmates going out to work in the city and county, particularly to help with mowing cemeteries, and such.

Environmental Services Director Tyler Brown reports to the court that 166 electrical permits have been filed on the year, so far, and that crews have picked up 4,473 bags of trash along 281 miles of roadways and cleaned up 9 dumpsites on the year so far, as well. He also said the most recent Free Disposal Day at the recycling center was a success, and that there would be a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day at the recycling center on Saturday, Nov. 14, 2026.

Animal Control Officer Kim Adams reports to the court that the recent adoption event, held at Sawstone Brewing Co., was a success, with a few puppies and kittens being adopted.

Under Old Business, the court approved the passing of an ordinance amending the Rowan County Road Schedule, with the addition of a two-way stop at the intersection of Jackson Drive, Copperas Hollow, and Logan Hollow; and approved the passing of a budget amendment, in the amount of \$178,183.00.

Under New Business, the court approved the purchase of a fully equipped 2018 Chevrolet Tahoe for the EMS Director; approved the purchase of a tornado siren control module; and approved the short ap-

pointment of Dr. Anthony Weaver to the Rowan County Health Department Board of Directors.

The court approved an authorization for the County Treasurer to remit payment to Hinkle Contracting, LLC, upon completion of all county blacktopping projects.

The court approved the hiring of Jordan Hedge to the Rowan County Road Department; approved the hiring of Caitlyn Bryant as Executive Secretary; and approved the hiring of Joshua Will to the Rowan County EMS Service.

The court approved the Senior Center CDBG closeout authorizations; approved the Antivirus/Endpoint protection bid; and after discussion, approved the opioid abatement funding request from Fresh Start Foundation.

Before going into closed session, the court the 1st reading of a budget amendment in the amount of \$1,313,728.62; approved the budget transfers; approved the monthly financial statement; approved the quarterly financial statement; approved the Rowan County Sheriff's collection rider bond; approved the County Treasurer surety bond renewal; and approved the consideration of monthly bills.

The meeting then went into closed session.

Upon their return from closed session, court members unanimously voted to authorize County Judge/Executive Harry Clark to enter into an agreement with the City, Whitestone Resources, Main & Wilson, and Perry Historic Buildings for the purchase of the two properties in the amount of \$400,000. According to the unofficial meeting minutes, this payment will terminate all development contracts and agreements. The two properties will be jointly owned by the city and county.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

It was a busy week with a special called Morehead City Council meeting on Friday and again on Monday. Friday's meeting focused on cutting budget items \$900,000 to increase the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) account. The budget began July 1, 2026, and doesn't end until June 30, 2027. Our concern is cutting over \$330,000 from city employees Healthcare. When Councilman Littleton questioned this, Mayor White-Brown said it was from the HRA accounts and employees usually don't spend all their allotment. However, if employees use it all, the next council will need to decide what to do.

When questioned about the reason for moving such large amounts into the Downtown TIF account, the mayor said, the Downtown TIF has nothing to do with the Cattleman's area North Morehead TIF and "Not the downtown Hotel TIF." However, we find the last statement contradictory to the events of Monday's city council meeting. After an executive closed session concerning purchasing real estate, the council voted on the second reading to amend the current budget to lower expenses by \$900,000 and put \$800,000 in the TIF account. Council members Schack, Caudill, Ousley, Kash and Baldwin voted "yes" with Littleton the only "no" vote.

Also at Monday's meeting, two resolutions passed giving the mayor authority to settle a lawsuit with the hotel developer and to purchase two tracts of property from the same developer. Again, all council members voted "yes" except Littleton who voted "no." Leaving many wondering where the money is coming from to purchase property and settle the lawsuit? Are employees' Healthcare HRA accounts being used to settle this administration's mistake in handling the downtown hotel project?

As you may remember, during Jim Tom Trent's administration, an agreement was signed between the city, county and a developer for a Marriott brand project including a downtown hotel, parking garage and business complex. As part of the agreement, the city transferred ownership of the parking lot on Mainstreet and behind the Conference Center to the developer for a parking garage.

The developer also purchased additional land to build the hotel/business complex. However, Covid happened, slowing things down and a new administration took office. The White-Brown administration did not seem to want the hotel and according to our understanding of court documents, the developer sued the City of Morehead, Rowan County and the TIF Board for breach of contract.

According to PVA records the developer currently owns several parcels of land in downtown Morehead, including the parking lot and properties the mayor was given permission to purchase. PVA records value the two properties located at 121 S. Wilson for \$147,141 and 125 S. Wilson for \$205,470.

Citizens are questioning the details of how this happened and why it changed when the administration changed? The TIF board who made the original decision had very successful people involved that did not make the approval decision lightly. However, we have not seen any documentation as to why the agreement was broken when the administration changed other than personal opinions. It may exist as we are not privy of nonpublic information and have only been able to verify public court documents.

The hotel controversy is divisive with many for the development and many against. However, our concern is not whether the hotel should or should not be built but rather how much this lawsuit will cost the citizens of Morehead? How much will taxpayers have to pay for the White-Brown administration's change? What price will it cost Morehead when trying to recruit future development into the city? Will Morehead be known as difficult and for breaking our agreements when a new administration takes office?

Many are asking, "Why the rush to settle now, before the election and before the new administration takes over?" We did not get answers as public comments were not allowed and shut down by Mayor White-Brown; even threatening to have audience members removed. Leaving us to assume 1.) this administration is rectifying the mistake they made instead of passing it to the next administration or 2.) to keep any possibility of a hotel-business development from happening in the future or 3.) something else?

On November 3, voters will decide who will serve Morehead citizens as the new mayor and 6 council members. We encourage everyone to contact and question the mayoral candidates Jim Tom Trent 606-356-2210, Edna Schack 606-356-3619, Tony Netherly 606-776-5571. As well as the City Council candidates Dean Hardin 859-312-0305, Rodney Hitch 606-691-1190, Mike Kash 606-776-8195, Darrell Littleton 606-207-1392, Billy BG Poe 606-207-6396, Mickey Reffitt 606-776-6219, Michelle Emrick White 606-207-2594. Please contact us if you would like to share your comments and concerns. bel.hitch@roadrunner.com

Belinda Hitch

35 dollars...

What a deal!

That's the price of a season ticket to experience four great concerts by the Cave Run Symphony Orchestra in our new season starting Sunday, Nov. 8, at 3 p.m. at the Morehead Conference Center.

This low price expires at midnight that day so don't delay in ordering your tickets because the price goes up to \$50 the next day, a savings of \$15!

Parents and grandparents, please remember that small children and students at all grade levels are admitted free of charge and that includes college students!

You can buy season tickets online at caverunsymphony.org or at the door or at the Morehead Visitor Center or by sending a check to PO Box 441, Morehead, KY 40351.

We accept cash, checks and credit cards at the door but cash and checks only at the Visitor Center.

Adult tickets are required for the concerts on Nov. 8, Feb. 21, and April 11. The Dec. 5 concert is our Hometown Holiday performance that is free to everyone, thanks to grant support from the city, county, and tourism commission.

For answers to ticket questions, please call our message line at 784-9894 or e-mail us at caverunsymphony@gmail.com.

The Cave Run Symphony...making these hills come alive with music.