

Garrard CENTRAL RECORD

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Solar Project Sparks Open Meeting Act Violation, Community Division

Court Rescinds Solar Ordinance After Citizen Complaint Exposes Secret Dealings

By Ted Cox
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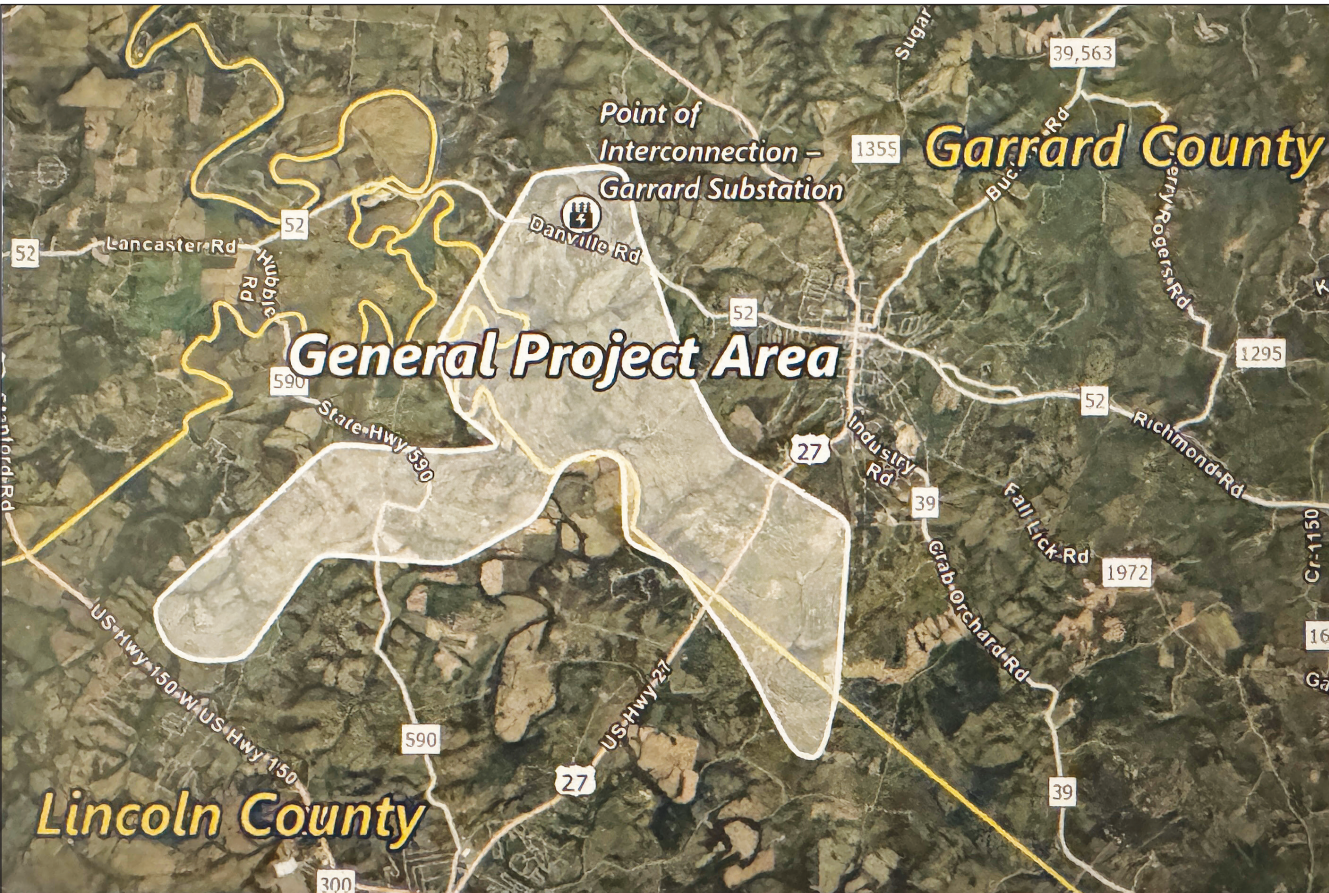
What began as a routine Monday evening fiscal court meeting on June 30, erupted into a nearly three-hour marathon session that laid bare deep divisions within Garrard County over a massive solar energy project and exposed what officials admitted were violations of Kentucky's Open Meeting Act.

In an extraordinary opening to the meeting, Judge See **Open Meetings**, A-6

"Every one of us ran on transparency. I made a commitment to everybody in this county, that's what I ran on. I feel [the magistrates] feel the same way. I can reassure you that business will not be done behind closed doors while I sit in this seat. And if it is, I'll walk away... And you've got my word on that."

- Garrard County Judge Executive Chris "Roo" Elleman

Fiscal Court Hears From Community on Solar Project

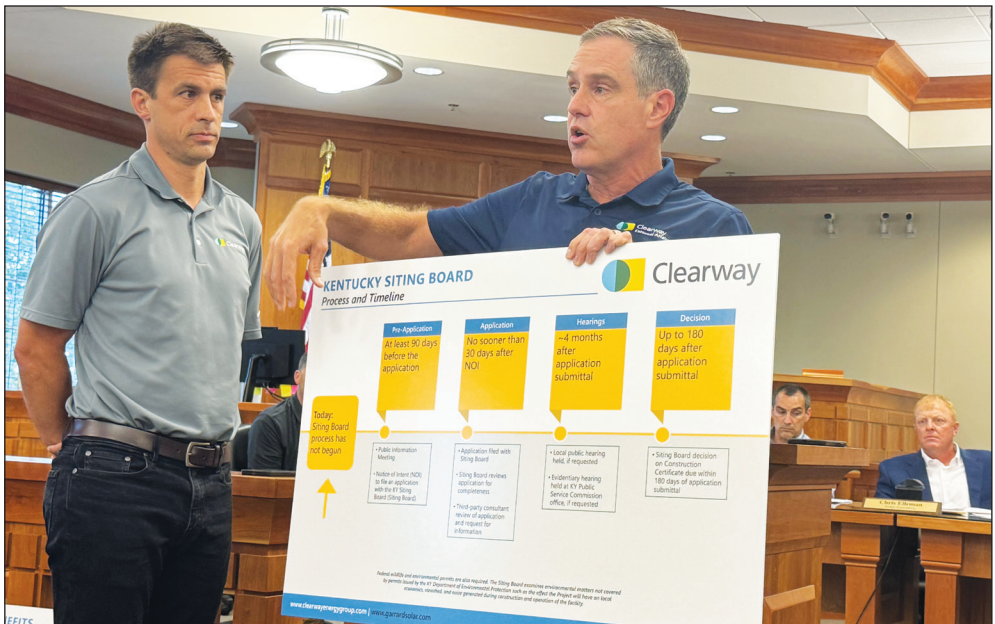


The map above shows the area that will be impacted by the proposed solar project from Clearway Energy in Garrard and Lincoln counties.

By Ted Cox
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Monday evening's fiscal court meeting on June 30, erupted into a nearly three-hour marathon session of comments from community members and stakeholders that brought to light the turmoil within Garrard County over Clearway Energy's ambitious proposal to develop what company officials describe as a 180-megawatt solar installation across 2,500 acres of agricultural land in southern Garrard County - land that company representatives referred to as being in the "honey hole" due to its proximity to existing electrical transmission infrastructure.

Barry Matchett, Head of External Affairs for the See **Solar Debate**, A-6



Clearway Energy representatives Nick Benjamin (left) and Barry Matchett (center) present an informational display about the proposed solar project during Monday's Garrard County Fiscal Court meeting. Judge Executive Chris Elleman (background) looks on with visible skepticism after challenging the developers on financial transparency and prior private discussions. The meeting, which drew sharp public criticism and accusations of backroom dealings, ended with the court rescinding a previously passed ordinance amendment in response to an Open Meetings Act violation.

Clearway Energy Presents Solar Development Plan to the Garrard County School Board

By Ted Cox
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Representatives from Clearway Energy met with the Garrard County Board of Education in a special meeting Tuesday afternoon to outline a proposed renewable energy development that could bring a large-scale solar project to Garrard and neighboring Lincoln counties.

The project, which would be owned and operated by Clearway, is estimated to remain in service for at least 30

years and is expected to generate new economic opportunities, educational partnerships, and long-term tax revenue for the region.

Barry Matchett and Nick Benjamin, executives with Clearway Energy, provided a comprehensive presentation to the board, describing the company's experience in energy production, the scope of the proposed project, and Clearway's commitment to community engagement.

Clearway, a publicly traded energy company (NYSE:

CWEN), was formed through a spinout from NRG Energy, one of the nation's largest carbon producers. Today, Clearway operates a mix of natural gas, wind, solar, and battery storage projects across 32 states. The proposed solar installation in Garrard and Lincoln counties would connect to the existing transmission system located on Danville Road and, according to the developers, could begin construction as early as 2028 or 2029, contingent on permitting and local approvals.

The project would involve approximately 20 participating landowners, with Clearway stating all leases are voluntary. The company estimates that during construction, more than 500 temporary jobs would be created, with seven permanent full-time positions expected during operations—roles offering compensation well above the county's median household income.

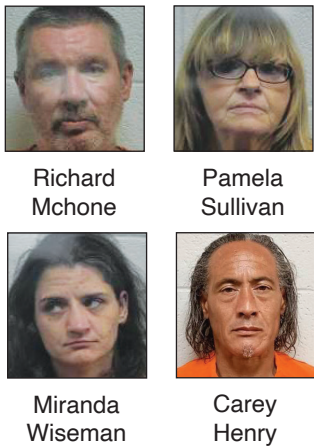
A major focus of the meeting was Clearway's approach to community integration, See **School Board**, A-7

Meth Trafficking Ring Dismantled Following Months-Long Investigation

By Ted Cox
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A coordinated investigation by the Garrard County Sheriff's Department has resulted in the arrest of four individuals connected to a small-scale methamphetamine trafficking operation operating within the county. The arrests followed the execution of multiple search warrants on June 25, 2025, culminating in a significant disruption of

See **Meth Busts**, A-10



Former Church Leaders Cited for Trespassing in Ongoing Church Dispute

By Ted Cox
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Two individuals previously removed from leadership positions at a local Pentecostal church were cited for criminal trespassing during a Sunday

service this past weekend, according to citations issued by the Garrard County Sheriff's Department and confirmed in an interview with Sheriff Willie Skeens.

Uniform citations obtained See **Church Mutiny**, A-12

Vehicle, Two Adults & Four Children Struck By Lightning

By Ted Cox
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A rare incident unfolded near Shell Greenhouses last Friday, shaking up what otherwise might have been a normal

afternoon. Sheriff Willie Skeens recounts an extraordinary event where a family's car was struck by lightning while driving along Route 52, causing significant damage but fortunately leaving

See **Lightning**, A-10

Woman Arrested in Garrard County for Allegedly Throwing Machete at Vehicle

By Ted Cox
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A woman identified as Lauren Gesme was arrested on June 29, 2025, by the Garrard County Sheriff's Department following an incident involving a machete and a reported altercation at a residence on Calico Road in Lancaster.

According to a uniform cita-

tion filed by the sheriff's office, deputies were dispatched at approximately 4:24 p.m. to 1796 Calico Road in response to a report of a woman throwing a machete at a vehicle.

See **Machete**, A-10



Lancaster Extends Bid Deadline for Sale of City Hall Property

By Ted Cox
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The City of Lancaster has extended the deadline for submitting sealed bids on the sale of a key municipal property currently housing City

Hall. Originally set for July 3, 2025, the new deadline is now Friday, July 11, 2025, at 4:00 p.m., as announced by Mayor Michael Gaffney in a public post.

The property in question, See **City Hall**, A-12

City Opens Applications for Parks & Recreation Director Position

By Ted Cox
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The City of Lancaster is actively seeking qualified candidates for the position of Parks & Recreation Director,

with applications being accepted from June 23 through July 7, 2025. This recruitment effort aims to fill a key leadership role responsible for overseeing and enhancing

See **Parks Director**, A-12

Garrard County Fair Announces Full Schedule of Events for July 2025

By Ted Cox
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The Garrard County Fair is set to return this summer with a full week of entertainment, contests, and community gatherings from July 8 through July 12, 2025, at the Garrard County Fairgrounds. Pre-fair events begin as early as July 3, offering a broad slate of activ-

ities leading into the official fair week, which includes Fox Creek Amusements, livestock shows, motorsports, pageants, and more.

The festivities commence Thursday, July 3, with a horse show at 7:00 p.m. Admission for this event is free. On Friday, July 4, fireworks sponsored by the Garrard Fiscal

See **Fair Schedule**, A-12

Roberts Honored as 27th Eagle Scout from Troop 180 at Lancaster Ceremony

By Ted Cox
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On Saturday, June 21, 2025, family, friends, and community members gathered at Lancaster Methodist Church to celebrate the accomplishments of Danny Roberts, who was formally recognized during an Eagle Scout Court of Honor. Roberts, a member of Scouts BSA Troop 180, was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout, becoming the 27th

See **Eagle Scout**, A-12



Eagle Scout Danny Roberts