

DISTRICT

FROM **PAGE A1**

place. The invoice covers the period of Oct. 30, 2024, to present.

The Board suggested all transactions be tabled until the next meeting at which time there should be a fifth member/treasurer appointed.

The Board recommended interested parties submit resumés to Grant County Judge/Executive Chuck Dills by March 28. Dills will then submit his appointment recommendation to the Grant County Fiscal Court on Tuesday, April 1 for approval.

The Board will resume regular activities once a fifth member is approved. This may include a specially called meeting prior to the next regular meeting.

DRY RIDGE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT VS. AMERIPRO PROPOSAL

Originally, a decision was to have been made at this meeting concerning whether to:

- Enter into the Interlocal Agreement with Dry Ridge for Ambulance Service and eventually take over those services from Dry Ridge,
- Enter into an agreement with Ameripro to assume ambulance services in Grant County or
- Develop and maintain county ambulance services

Board Member Ashley Brinker contacted the Mercer County Judge/Executive to discuss Ameripro, which that county has been using for three months.

She said while Grant County is “not in the same position as Mercer County, [AmeriPro] has worked with the community” and “has been good [for the community] and financially good.”

Morgan passed out a document comparing Ameripro and Dry Ridge to members of the Board.

Board member Chad Bedard noted while Ameripro might provide “up front” savings, he worries that a private company might be “difficult” to get rid of should the Board want to take over operations.

Additionally, members noted Dry

Ridge is locally run and manned and Ameripro is not.

It was also stressed by members July 1 is “coming fast” and they need a decision soon.

It was ultimately decided to table the decision until such time as a complete five member Board is in place to make such an important decision.

INSURANCE

Morgan said they will need to purchase insurance, possibly from Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo), including bonding of the chair and treasurer as well as coverage “in case of court and financial” issues.

Further discussion was tabled until the next meeting

MISCELLANEOUS

- Certificate of Need (CON) — it was determined that Dry Ridge owns the Certificate of Need for the county at this time. Until such time as that entity releases it, it is theirs. However, they can sell it.

According to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, “The Kentucky Certificate of Need process prevents the proliferation of health care facilities, health services and major medical equipment that increase the cost of quality health care in the commonwealth.” That cabinet oversees/approves CON.

ATTENDING CITIZEN ADDRESS

- Citizen David Rose addressed the Board questioning data being used to determine which direction the Board should move for ambulance services. He queried about items such as the “five-year history of [ambulance] runs,” list of equipment, verification that equipment listed is equipment existing and in use and encouraging using local versus private providers.
- Whaley suggested, due to difficulty getting everyone together for meetings, using Zoom for some meetings, but it was decided to try to keep meetings in-person. Options included possibly moving the meeting date.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10, at 6 p.m. at the Courthouse. For meeting information, contact Chair Tony Morgan at (859) 992-7081.

ZONING

FROM **PAGE A1**

Mike Hare maintained the proposed amendment does not follow the County’s Comprehensive Plan and that residents of the area, including himself, do not want the zoning to be changed until the plan is changed.

Jim Bailik said “Four years ago, the comprehensive plan for Baton Rouge Road [said the area is not to be] developed until it is widened.” However, zoning was changed and five houses were built on the property. He said they are now asking for zoning changes again. He said the residents want to “defend the livelihood of residences down there” on the KY 22 side of Baton Rouge.

The overall feeling of the residents appeared to be the County is changing zoning requirements for one individual at the expense of the several farming residents living on the road. Apparently, the five residences built on Kevin Taylor’s properties have been Short Term Rentals (STRs) and the other residents fear changing the zoning will allow more STRs.

Kevin Taylor, owner of United Skilled Services, reiterated he is “simply” selling one piece of property that has a house on it to an individual who wishes to live there and the other property is maximizing the road frontage for his property.

The current Comprehensive Plan is dated August 11, 2021. Residents maintained the 2021 change had been

contested and had been overturned by Circuit Court due to changes being inconsistent to the Plan. Residents maintain the Plan has not been changed and the proposed amendments would again violate the Plan. Residents indicated they would, again, take the matter before the courts.

Dills said the plan is being reviewed and updated at this time.

He said he was “going to do something” he seldom does as he moved to table the issue for further review until the next meeting.

Court concurred with his recommendation and tabled the request.

COUNTY CLERK 2024 SETTLEMENT

County Clerk Tabatha Clemons presented the “Final Settlement of Excess Fees 2025” to the Court. After reviewing and balancing costs for the 2024 year, Clemons said she was presenting the Court with a \$49,535.83 check for excess of fees collected for the year.

She also noted items needing attention at the Clerk’s Office:

- Concrete railing
- Glass doors at the entrance sticking
- Downstairs carpeting and tile
- Lighting replacement
- Mandatory maintenance electrical for the second quarter will cost \$8,000
- Outdoor awning outside doors

NORTHERN KENTUCKY AREA DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Corey Eimer, associate director of local govern-

ment services, addressed the Council. His visit was part of a strategic plan for the senior leadership team of NKADD to “get back out into the communities, in post-Covid, to reengage cities and county leadership teams” and to explain the NKYADD role for the area.

The divisions of NKADD are:

- Aging and Disability Services help people determine if they are being scammed or not and offers information on assistance.
- Community Development and Planning assists with grants, etc.
- Drug Control Policy points individuals and families dealing with drug issues in the right direction for help.
- Financial Compliance and Management Compliance
- Local Government Services provides grant assistance, help with job searches and economic development guidance
- Workforce Development

During the Citizens Address segment, Tony Morgan, chair of the Grant County Special Ambulance Taxing Board, reminded the Court of the need for a fifth member/treasurer to be appointed to that body. Resumes are to be submitted to Dills’ office by March 28 and Dills will bring a recommendation to the Board at the next meeting.

The next scheduled meeting of the Grant County Fiscal Court will be Tuesday, April 1 at 6 p.m. at the Courthouse, 101 North Main Street Williamstown. For more information, call (859) 823-7561.

SHOWDOWN

FROM **PAGE A1**

“I want to apologize to you for this. I do take ownership of this, because ultimately this falls back on me”

He continued, saying he “had no idea what was happening.” He said anytime he asked the clerk for confirmation that a bill had been paid or paperwork submitted, he was assured by the clerk it had been taken care of, and he stated he believed her.

Christopher went on to explain that the situation was all the more devastating because he had known Cummins for many years and considered her a friend, “someone whose family helped me through one of the darkest and most difficult times in my life.”

He did not have all the “pieces to the puzzle” as he tried to figure out “inconsistencies” noticed by himself and city superintendents, but, he pointed out, there were some who did know something was amiss who should have alerted him to trouble.

He said that at the last council meeting Councilmember Kim Crupper acknowledged he had known “for some time” that Cummins had not been submitting legal notices for publication in the newspaper as required.

In addition, Christopher said that despite “working closely with the local branch manager [of Forcht Bank] it was never brought to my attention that the city once had overdrafted [or] had failures to make regularly scheduled payments....”

He went on to say that once he was made aware of the financial issues and brought it to Council’s attention, “...it was also Councilor Crupper again who stated to the council that he had been aware of this issue for months.”

After again taking ownership of the problem, Christopher added, “That being said, someone who knowingly withholds information-especially in regard to mismanagement of your taxpayer dollars-should also be held responsible for not either informing myself, a member of the city council or the city attorney sooner.”

He also said that city council members all had the same financial statements he saw, and not one “noticed the inconsistencies that the superintendents and myself kept catching

and asking about.”

He said the Council had asked for a financial action plan, and he was happy to provide one but asked for support in enacting it.

“It is no secret that city council opposes every single suggestion I have continued to make Do you have any idea how hard it is to do my job when you all collectively are breathing down my neck and demanding I do things your way?”

After speaking of his love for Williamstown and his decision to run for mayor after watching what he called a 30-year “decline,” he announced that Council would be going into closed session “with the purpose of asking me to resign. Upon my willingness to decline their request for my resignation, the city council will come out of executive session, and formally level charges against me for the purposes of removing me from my status as mayor.”

Before finally getting to his financial action plan, Christopher spoke of the difficulties and humiliation to which he and his family have been subjected. He said, “I am still being sued individually for my willingness to stand up and protect our amazing city and its citizens, and not at the expense of you, the taxpayers.”

FINANCIAL ACTION PLAN

- An immediate forensic audit must take place, as recommended by the Kentucky State Police and the state attorney general’s office.
- All banking assets should be transferred from Forcht Bank to Heritage Bank due to Forcht’s failure to disclose to Christopher ongoing problems with accounts and loan payments.

Heritage Bank’s Williamstown branch manager Kristie Willoby will, he said “... personally call me nonstop until I am made aware of whatever situation may arise.”

- The city should move to make more positions salaried, to help eliminate many overtime problems.
- Hiring part time staff for the clerk’s office as well as for the water, sewer and street departments would, he said, “eliminate 90% of the current overtime issue.” It would also save the city money on insurance, retirement and other benefits.
- Upon completion of the forensic audit and the move

to Heritage Bank, Christopher said the next move would be creating a financial assessment plan with Paul Maddox, who conducted the city’s 2023-2024 audit.

Christopher said the current \$15 million debt is the maximum amount the city can handle, according to Maddox. Beyond that, the debt payment would be unaffordable and taxes would need to be increased.

The problem then becomes making sure city departments all have the necessary funds for equipment or software in need of replacement or repair without taking on additional debt. Christopher detailed a plan, which he “tried to institute this year” to have superintendents be frugal in order to put the saved funds into a CD at the end of the fiscal year to cover future expenses for any department.

Christopher noted Council had expressed displeasure but asked for time to “assess things with each department head around April, May and June to see what is best for that individual department.”

- Christopher said he had successfully applied for and received grants in the past but needs the support of the Council.

He singled out the \$10,000 Interact for Health grant, which funded the revival of Marigold Day, saying councilmembers questioned how the grant money was spent. Mentioning complaints about festival t-shirts that were given away, he indicated having trouble explaining to Council that grant money can only be used for what it is allocated for.

“It’s not like I can just take moneys allocated for Castle Knoll water lines and magically move them over to fund Conrad Lane now can I?”

He also mentioned the eight-year project to improve sidewalks via a grant that has been extended three times with no actual work begun. Significant funds have already been spent on the project, he said, but Council recently indicated it does not want to proceed for financial reasons.

Christopher objected to this, saying “What message does that send to our citizens? Your walkability is something we don’t care about or consider relevant at this time? What message does that send to the state? ‘Hey State, or, well, Commonwealth! Thanks for contributing a hug chunk of

money to bring our city sidewalks up to ADA standards, but ya know what, we don’t want to do this any more.”

- Leading into the next action in his financial plan, better financial tracking systems, he said the city’s debt took years to accumulate. It “is the result of a lot of mismanaged funds long before my taking office.”

He then brought up his authorization of a loan for purchase of two police cars despite the city’s safety fee arrangement with the Ark Encounter. The arrangement provides “a nominal 50 cent tax on all vehicles that enter the Ark, which is solely intended to be used for the purposes of police and fire safety.

Christopher said the money is only to be used for police and fire; any leftover money should carryover at year’s end, remaining in those departments. Despite this, the two departments are left to wonder where all the money from previous years went. “The money is not and has not ever properly been accounted for,” he stated.

He said that in his first year as mayor he wanted to adopt a system for improved transparency and accountability but Link asked that the change not be made in her last year as clerk and he agreed not to burden her with learning a new system.

Once Cummins took over, Christopher said Lisa Clifton was tasked with looking into a new system but whenever he asked about it “the clerk would point out how lazy Mrs. Lisa is and not doing her job properly. Only recently, when I asked Mrs. Lisa, did I find out she was told to put the matter on hold until a later time.”

He wants to pursue implementing software to better track departmental spending in real time to make sure an accurate accounting is made of all clerk’s office business.

- Finally, he proposed a tourism tax to help the city fund infrastructure improvements like sidewalks and streets. The tax would not be at the expense of citizens, he clarified.

At the conclusion of his presentation, the mayor requested he and the Council put aside their differences with him “and stand not in opposition with me but in unity with me in what is best for our community, so that together we may make this city a bet-

ter place for generations to come.”

After a motion was made by Councilmember John Coleman to put the letter in the minutes, Councilmember Dave Henson responded to the mayor’s plan, saying it contains no timeline for completion of the various recommendations or metric for accountability. “What does success look like?”

Council then approved a motion to go into closed session, with all voting “yes” except Coleman. After clarification that the mayor could indeed be present, Council went into closed session for a couple of hours.

Upon coming out of closed session and reconvening the meeting, the mayor announced he would typically say there had been no votes or actions taken, but he said, “I have no idea what happened in executive session.”

Henson made a motion to table agenda item 11, the discussion of charges against Christopher. The motion was approved.

Henson then made a motion to hire Luke Morgan as Council’s attorney to investigate the conduct of the mayor in office and to authorize Crupper to sign the contract. This passed as well.

OTHER ACTIONS

- Council received one bid for trimming Williamstown Cemetery this year. Adam Griesinger’s bid, in the amount of \$1,874.75, was unanimously approved.
- Christopher informed Council that a \$100,000 matching grant is available that could help with Webb Park improvements, including resurfacing the tennis courts, fencing and sidewalk work. If awarded, the funds would be matched by the \$100,000 due the city from Norfolk Southern Railway from the tear down of the Cherry Grove Road bridge.

Henson said that the Aug. 5, 2024, meeting minutes indicate Christopher was already looking at three grants for the park and wondered why nothing had been done.

Christopher said upon looking at those grants they were for equipment like playground slides, not for the work that needs to be done.

The next scheduled meeting of the Williamstown City Council is Monday, April 7 at 6 p.m. at the City Building, 400 North Main Street, Williamstown.