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City to pursue incentives for Morris Packaging

BY JANE REID KLEYN
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The City of Lebanon will pursue incentive options for Morris Packaging, a new manufacturing facility under construction on the Bypass.

Morris Packaging is a privately held company owned by former Green Bay Packer Jim Morris and is headquartered in Bloomington, IL. They currently have facilities in Missouri and Minnesota, but Chief Financial Officer Eric Lanz told the Lebanon City Council the new plant in Lebanon will be their largest and most compre-

hensive.

Plans for the new facility include a \$9.2 million press and additional technology. Lanz said between \$17 and \$20 million in equipment has been ordered for the new plant. Although operations will begin with fewer than 50 employees, Lanz said it will increase to employ in the hundreds as operations get underway.

The council voted 4-1 on Monday, July 7, to pursue two incentives for Morris. The first is a \$1,500 occupational tax credit per employee for three years. The second is to seek a Community Development Block Grant. Mayor

Gary Crenshaw said the property where Morris is building will need to be annexed by the city prior to either incentive being available. The state approved a grant of over \$4 million prior to Morris' decision to locate in Lebanon as an incentive to entice the company to locate the new plant here.

The council also received an update on the Lights Over Lebanon fireworks show held Friday, July 4, at Graham Memorial Park. Due to a computer glitch, over eight minutes of the show and some of the grand finale didn't fire. Also, three food trucks and two vendors backed out on the day of the show,

leaving fewer options for those in attendance. The only issue of real concern to the council was the parking, particularly the closed lot at the end of Park Drive. Visitors were unaware the lot was closed until it was too late to turn around. Drivers then had to back down Park Drive until they could safely turn around in a residential driveway.

The council approved a request to hold the show again next year on Saturday, July 4, 2026, but asked that either only half the parking lot be closed or there be signs or people earlier on Park Drive letting drivers know the lot is closed.

Two other items of interest to come before the city council were an application for a new zone to be considered by Planning and Zoning and a change in the agreement with Marion County Fiscal Court to merge the county's rescue squad with the City of Lebanon.

The council voted unanimously to submit an application to Planning and Zoning for two new zone classifications. In an effort to attract more affordable housing to the area, the city is requesting the addition of a zone R1A to allow

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Academic progress discussed at school board meeting

BY DENIS HOUSE
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Members of the Marion County School Board heard the progress the system has made academically and what it still needs to work on at the July 10 meeting.

Dr. David Gibson, Chief Academic and School Support Officer, and Dana Thomas, Instructional Supervisor, gave the presentation.

While most of the news was good, there was one area of concern: ACT scores, which have seen a steady decline over the past two years in the district.

"They (the scores) are down two points across the board, maybe a little bit less," said Gibson. "We've got to get better. We know that."

Gibson noted the district is making changes to try and improve the scores while adding that it does look like this year will be the last the Kentucky Department of Education uses the ACT at the high school level, moving strictly to the SAT.

"The high school has changed their schedule for more instructional time," Gibson said. "They're doing progress monitoring. At least every 10 days, they'll be assessing student performance to see where students are to where they can re-teach if they're not getting the content."

The composite ACT score at Marion County in 2022-23 was 18.1, falling to 17.8 in 2023-24 and 17.4 in 2024-25. Every subject (English, Math, Reading, and Science) saw lower scores.

"We are making changes to address this, but we've got to get better," Gibson said.

At the four elementary schools, Calvary Elementary scores were down a little,



The Marion County School Board listened to an academic presentation by Dana Thomas and Dr. David Gibson at last week's meeting.

but Gibson said it was nothing to worry about. Glasscock Elementary was up a little, but Lebanon Elementary was slightly down in reading (55% to 52%), but saw a significant drop in math (54% to 43%), which Gibson said was concerning. West Marion was up in reading (66% to 71%), but math fell, 66% to 65%.

Gibson said data at the middle school level was "like comparing apples to oranges."

"But the apples are honey crisp, not meaty delicious," Gibson said. At Lebanon Middle, reading went from 29% to 48%, and math from 28% to 38%, but this was just for eighth grade. At Marion Middle, reading went from 45% to 51%, and math 42% to 51%.

Gibson said he was excited about this because it wouldn't have been shocking to have seen some hiccups.

"We are working to access algebra at the middle school level to strengthen math instruction," Thomas said.

The two then talked about Non-Traditional Instruction. In 2023-24, the district had nine NTI days with a student participation rate of 83.7% and a total teacher participation rate of 95.6%.

"We also decided to make

changes to our current NTI," Thomas said. "Beginning next year, teachers will be meeting with students virtually on NTI days. Kindergarten through third grade will have packets sent home but there will be opportunities to meet either individually with teachers or first thing in the morning to kind of get everything done with their assignments. At the middle and high school level, NTI is going to very much mirror a continuation of learning and what they are doing at school."

STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

The school board recognized several students for recent accomplishments.

Members of the Marion County Track and Field team who participated at the state meet were honored, including Grace Mattingly, won placed first in the region in the 100 meters hurdles and eighth in the state meet, long jump (fourth at region, ND at state), and triple jump (third in region, 12th in state). The girls' 4x100 relay team of Grace Mattingly, Tahlia Hall, Makenzie Greene, and Dashiah Francisco (sixth at region, 19th at state) and 4x200 relay (Tahlia Hall, Ariyana Spalding, Brooke

Kelty, and Dashiah Francisco (sixth at region) were also honored.

Students from Calvary Elementary School who participated in the state STLP awards were also honored. Georgetown Robotics, consisting of Caroline Terrell, Colton Spalding, Liam Hardin, Bo Hutchins, and Cole Rakes, took first place for the fourth year in a row, while Barrett Violette placed second in Digital Photography CDA.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Chris Brady gave his monthly report, in which he noted that three teachers, Erin Benton, Sterling Newton, and Kevin Rafferty, have completed graduate mathematics courses during the spring so they could teach dual-credit courses at the high school.

"Being a former math teacher myself, I'm pretty excited about this," Brady said. "We'll be offering courses like trigonometry as a dual-credit for the upcoming year. What an awesome opportunity our students will have."

Brady also noted work is underway on the new,

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Cissell sentenced to 33 years, Reed gets 28 years

BY DENIS HOUSE
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The couple charged with multiple sex-related counts against minors both entered pleas of guilty on July 7.

Jeremy Scott Cissell, 44, of Springfield, and Megan Michelle Reed, 39, of Lebanon, appeared in Marion Circuit Court Division 1. After being sworn in, both entered a plea of guilty "freely, knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily" in front of Judge Todd Spalding.

Spalding set the final sentencing date for Sept. 18 at 9:00 a.m.

Cissell received 20 years on the charge of first-degree sodomy, victim 12 years of age, 10 years for first-degree



Jeremy Scott Cissell
Megan Michelle Reed

sodomy, and three years for first-degree sexual abuse, for a total of 33 years. He also had 14 charges amended to misdemeanor charges of second-degree sexual abuse, for which he received 12 months on each count. All the misdemeanor charges will run concurrent with the felony charges.

Spalding also ruled that

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Allen indicted for criminal abuse, exploitation

BY DENIS HOUSE
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A Lebanon man was indicted by the July session of the Marion County Grand Jury on four charges stemming from an investigation by the Lebanon Police Department.

Dallas Wayne Allen, 44, of 309 Boldrick Avenue, was indicted for first-degree criminal abuse (a Class C felony), exploitation of adults, serious physical/mental injury (a

Class C felony), and two counts of first-degree wanton endangerment (a Class D felony).

The grand jury charged that these events happened on or about Feb. 27, 2025, through May 2, 2025, when Allen, in a continuing course of conduct, no less than two times, intentionally abused another person, causing serious physical injury or causes torture, cruel confinement



Dallas Wayne Allen

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