

Petitioners appeal insufficiency decision on LaRue property tax levy

BY VICTORIA COX
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

The committee attempting to recall the LaRue County Board of Education’s recent property tax levy increase has challenged the declaration that the petition was insufficient. Spearheaded by David Ragland, William “Bill” Manning and Jerry Bird, the petition committee turned in more than 1,000 signatures Oct. 20 to LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf. The petition was declared insufficient three days later by Metcalf. In her determination, Metcalf said two of the 88-page document contained “different headings and verbiage than all the other papers of the submitted petition.” On account of KRS 132.017(d)(1) requiring all papers of the petition be “substantially uniform in style,”

Metcalf said the petition could not by statute be declared sufficient. “The committee felt like the large number of people in our community who had signed the petition would like their voice to be heard,” said Ragland, the committee spokesperson. “That’s all we’re asking for – consideration for those taxpayers who would be paying the tax have an opportunity to vote on it.” The declaration was despite the fact that the petition had an adequate number of signatures to recall the tax levy. An appeal to challenge Metcalf’s decision was filed Friday with the LaRue Circuit Court. The civil suit identifies the Plaintiffs/Petitioners as Ragland, Manning and Bird as taxpayers, voters and members of the Petition Committee. They are being represented by Adrienne

Southworth, of Lawrenceburg. “The way the KRS law is written, it is open to some interpretation,” Ragland said. “It reads that the petition [pages] needs to be substantially uniform in size and style, and it seems to the committee that, to throw the whole process out based upon two [pages] that are the same form but there was just a little extra heading on top, is a very extreme reading of the law.” Metcalf, in her official capacity as LaRue County Clerk, is identified as the respondent. As legal representative for the county, LaRue County Attorney John Nicholas will be responsible for responding to the claims brought forth by the petitioners on Metcalf’s behalf. LaRue County Board of Education Chair Farrah Pruitt, on behalf of the board, is identified as the real party in

interest, who has a direct stake in the outcome of the case. In the appeal, Southworth argues that questions affecting the right of taxpayers to petition for recall of taxation must be “construed liberally” and that the difference in headings is a “technical problem” that should not cause the petition as a whole to be rejected. “The legislative intent of KRS 132.017 has never been determined to allow a finding of insufficiency when sufficient numbers of valid signatures are presented, whether extraneous information was included or otherwise,” the court document states. Per state law, LaRue Circuit Court Judge Charles C. Simms III will be limited to deciding the validity of the county clerk’s determination. However, the appeal asks the court to: declare the petition subs-

tantially compliant with state law; declare the two pages in question as severable or that each signature on the pages be stricken; direct Metcalf to certify the remaining signatures to meet the required petition threshold; reverse the Clerk’s determination and remand the certification; and to direct the placement of the recall question on the ballot at the next regular election. It also asks that costs and attorney’s fees be awarded to the petition committee, along with all other relief deemed proper. All individuals named as respondents or as the real party in interest in the lawsuit must now be officially served. The respondent will then have 20 days from the time they are served to file a response to the claims, which will officially begin the proceedings. No further timeline for the court’s

decision has been determined. The timing of the tax rate approval and subsequent petition has caused many unknowns surrounding LaRue County’s 2025 property tax bills. It was announced last week that the mail-out date for the bills would be delayed by two weeks, because all county taxes were frozen during the 10 days given to the petition committee to appeal the decision. According to the LaRue County Sheriff’s Office, county taxpayers can expect the school district’s tax rate of 57.2 cents per \$100 in assessed value that is in question to be on their tax bills. If Metcalf’s declaration of insufficiency is overturned at any point, the school district will be responsible for providing the necessary refunds.

Hodgenville to be certified as newest Kentucky trail town

BY PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

Hodgenville will be certified as a Kentucky Trail Town during a ceremony Friday. Trail towns are communities designated as a gateway to outdoor adventure, providing supplies, lodging and services or hiking and other trail users. LaRue County has a plethora of trails available to the public, including at Pearman Forest, which was inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network earlier this year, McDougal Lake, Creekfront Page, the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park and the Hodgenville Elementary School educational trail. “The designation is due to the efforts of The City of Hodgenville, Hodgenville Mayor Jim Phelps, the LaRue County Fiscal Court, LaRue County Judge-Executive Blake Durrett, the Knob Creek Conservancy, numerous volunteers and sponsors, the Hodgenville Tourism Commission and



local businesses working together to develop the trails and the supporting community assets to meet Trail Town guidelines,” said Iris LaRue, Hodgenville Tourism Commission Chairperson. Lindy Casebier, secretary of the Cabinet for Tourism, Arts and Heritage, and Seth Wheat, with the Kentucky

Department of Parks, will present the designation at 2:30 p.m. on Lincoln Square in downtown Hodgenville. A light reception follows at the Lincoln Museum community room. Hodgenville joins neighbor Elizabethtown, Kentucky’s first trail town, with the designation.

Kentucky again leads nation in lung cancer rate, report finds

BY PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

Kentucky continues to face the nation’s highest rate of new lung cancer cases and the second-highest rate of adult smoking, according to the American Lung Association’s 2025 “State of Lung Cancer” report. The report found that while Kentucky remains among the worst states for lung cancer incidence and survival, it has made significant progress in early diagnosis, screening rates and biomarker testing coverage. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths in both Kentucky and the United States. “Kentucky’s history with lung cancer is long and painful, but recent progress gives us hope,” said Shannon Baker, director of advocacy for the American Lung Association in Kentucky, in a news release. “We’re encouraged by above-average screening rates, reductions in new case rates, and the passage of biomarker testing coverage legislation. These gains show that with sustained effort, more Kentuckians’ lives

can be saved.” The report, released Tuesday, ranked Kentucky 51st in the nation for new lung cancer cases, at 84.1 per 100,000 people — a 9% improvement over the past five years. The national rate is 52.8. Kentucky ranked 32nd for survival at 25.5%, reflecting a 32% gain in five years, compared to a national rate of 29.7%. The state ranked 33rd for early diagnosis, with 27.3% of cases detected at an early stage, a 12% improvement over five years. Kentucky also performs above the national average in high-risk screening, ranking 12th with 21.4% of eligible individuals screened. Other rankings include: • 26th for surgery as the first course of treatment (19.4%), slightly below the national rate of 20.7%. • 26th for lack of treatment (20.4%), with a 36% increase in the rate over five years. • 50th for adult smoking, with 17.4% of adults currently smoking compared to 11.4% nationally. • 38th for radon test results, with 36.9% of tests

equal to or above the EPA’s recommended action level. The association praised Kentucky for requiring insurance coverage of comprehensive biomarker testing, which identifies genetic markers that can guide targeted treatments for lung cancer patients. State Rep. Kimberly Poore Moser, chairwoman of the House Health Services Committee, said she plans to request an increase in state tobacco prevention and cessation funding from \$2 million to \$4 million in the upcoming budget. “It is a reasonable increase, and preventing kids from ever starting and helping those who want to quit using nicotine products should be a priority in our budget discussions this year,” Moser said in the release. The American Lung Association joined Moser in urging lawmakers to strengthen tobacco prevention efforts, which it said remains the most effective tool for reducing lung cancer rates. The full report is available at Lung.org/solc, according to the release.

United Way of Central Kentucky distributes \$5K in mini-grants

BY THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

ELIZABETHTOWN - United Way of Central Kentucky recently distributed \$5,000 in mini-grants to two area organizations to pay for impactful community initiatives. These include a \$3,000 donation to the Elizabethtown Police Department designated for victims of crime, along with a \$2,000 donation to Fort Knox Alphas - Omicron Nu

Lambda in support of their Men of the Light Youth Mentorship Program. “Through our Mini Grants program, we’re able to respond directly to needs and ideas that make a real difference in people’s lives,” UWCK president and CEO Christa Shouse said in a news release from the nonprofit organization that serves Hardin, Breckinridge, Grayson, LaRue and Meade counties.

“These projects reflect the heart of our mission: connecting resources to local solutions that strengthen families and create a more supportive community for everyone.” The donation to EPD will support crime victims in Elizabethtown with emergency needs such as food, shelter, personal care items, clothing, transportation assistance and animal boarding. The donation to the Men of the

Light Youth Mentorship Program will provide support for the program to continue empowering young men to develop strong character, pursue academic excellence and build the confidence needed to become future community leaders. The Mini Grants program provides resources for community projects and initiatives that fall outside the organization’s traditional funding structure, a news release said. The

mini grant process allows local nonprofits and school districts to request support for small projects on an as-needed basis. Over the years, the program has paid for a variety of initiatives and projects, such as Helping Hand of Hope’s Affordable Christmas Program, the Salvation Army Angel Tree Program and sensory playground equipment in LaRue County.

11 dead after engine fell off UPS plane that crashed and exploded

BY BRUCE SCHREINER, HALLIE GOLDEN AND DYLAN LOVAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A UPS cargo plane’s left wing caught fire and an engine fell off just before it crashed and exploded after takeoff in Kentucky, a federal official said Wednesday, offering the first investigative details about a disaster that killed at least 11 people, including a child. First responders, meanwhile, searched for more victims, a day after the crash at UPS Worldport, the company’s global aviation hub in Louisville, though Gov. Andy Beshear said finding survivors seemed unlikely. The inferno consumed the enormous aircraft and spread to nearby businesses. After being cleared for takeoff, a large fire developed in the left wing, said Todd Inman, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board, which is leading the investigation. The plane gained enough altitude to clear the fence at the end of the runway before crashing just outside Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport, Inman told reporters. Airport security video “shows the left engine



Brad Harvey via AP

This photo provided by Brad Harvey shows thick, black smoke rising after reports of a plane crash near Louisville International Airport on Tuesday in Louisville, Ky. detaching from the wing and data recorder were during the takeoff roll,” he said. The cockpit voice recorder

“There are a lot of different parts of this airplane in a lot of different places,” he said, describing a debris field that stretched for half a mile. **A CHAIN REACTION** The plane with three people aboard crashed about 5:15 p.m. Tuesday as it was departing for Honolulu from UPS Worldport at the Louisville airport. The crash had a ripple effect, striking and causing smaller explosions at Kentucky Petroleum Recycling and hitting an auto salvage yard, Grade A Auto Parts. Beshear said the child who died was with a parent at the parts business. Beshear earlier said it was a “blessing” that the plane did not hit a nearby Ford Motor factory or the convention center. U.S. Rep. Morgan McGarvey, D-Ky., praised firefighters who rushed headfirst to the disaster scene, describing it as “hotter than hell and raining down oil.” Some people who heard the boom, saw the smoke and smelled burning fuel were still stunned a day later. “I didn’t know if we were getting attacked. I didn’t know what was going on,” said

Summer Dickerson, who works nearby. **THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS IS UNCLEAR** Beshear predicted that the death toll would rise, saying authorities were looking for a “handful of other people” but “we do not expect to find anyone else alive.” Mark Little, chief of the Okolona Fire District in Louisville, said debris would have to be moved and searched, adding: “It will take us quite a while.” University of Louisville Hospital said two people were in critical condition in the burn unit. Eighteen people were treated and discharged at that hospital or other health care centers. The airport is 7 miles from downtown Louisville, close to the Indiana state line, residential areas, a water park and museums. The airport resumed operations on Wednesday, with at least one runway open. Beshear said he did not know the status of the three UPS crew members aboard the McDonnell Douglas MD-11 made in 1991. It was not clear if they were being counted among the dead.

‘WE ALL KNOW SOMEBODY WHO WORKS AT UPS’ UPS said it was “terribly saddened.” The Louisville package handling facility is the company’s largest. The hub employs more than 20,000 people in the region, handles 300 flights daily and sorts more than 400,000 packages an hour. “We all know somebody who works at UPS,” Louisville Metro Council member Betsy Ruhe said. The governor said The Team Kentucky Emergency Relief Fund, typically used to help people in natural disasters, is accepting donations to help with funeral expenses and other hardships. “In Kentucky, we grieve together and we support one another,” Beshear said. **HOPING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING LOVED ONES** Eric Richardson stood outside a police training academy, where people gathered waiting for word of their missing loved ones Tuesday night. He said his girlfriend, who had been at a friend recycling business near the explosion, wasn’t answering her phone. Her phone’s live location said she was still there.