



THE NEW SCOREBOARD at the Webster County High School football stadium is just one of several projects which were started at the end of the 2025 school year. As the new academic year begins, it was reported at the school board meeting on Monday night that each of those projects is nearing completion.

School District Will Add Autism Unit; Projects Are Nearing Completion

The Webster County Board of Education learned during their meeting Monday night that due to an increased need over the past several years, the district will add an autism unit its growing list of ways to meet student needs. Director of Special Education Services Kim Saalwaechter told the board that “now is the time to open a district autism unit.” That unit will be located at Clay Elementary with up to eight students being placed in the program if they are eligible, Saalwaechter said.

Saalwaechter noted that children who have a doctor’s diagnosis and have been tested and assessed for placement will have transportation to and from the school. In addition to a doctor’s recommendation, potential students will be tested and evaluated by one of the district’s three school psychologists. The program will be taught by a special education teacher already in the school district who will have an assistant in the classroom. The program will require no new hires for the special education department.

The announcement of the new autism unit parallels with Superintendent Aaron Harrell’s update on the district’s opening day that included an emphasis on “Every Student, Every Family, Every Day.” Harrell said the district will continue to focus on all stakeholders having a good working experience with communication with parents, kids and the community at the forefront. All of the board members attended the opening day activities on Monday, a signal that employees and students have the full support of the school system.

In other updates, Harrell and assistant superintendent Greg Bowles reported on a new development at Dixon Elementary gym and the prog-

ress on all the construction and renovation at other school locations. Harrell noted that the 1996 model HVAC unit on the Dixon gym has quit working. He told the board that he received quotes last week and the board has two options—repair the unit at a cost of about \$15,000 or replace the unit for \$43,753. At the end of the meeting the board followed Harrell’s recommendation and opted to replace the unit.

The superintendent also noted the “astronomical number of projects” the district has undertaken this year, but he said the roof work completion and clean up are underway at each site. Damage to the Dixon parking lot by a contract is scheduled for repair, card swipes are working, secure front entrances are completed and school personnel is working with contractors to ensure any issues or damages from those companies are being taken care of. Harrell noted that contractors are working to complete their punch lists as final inspections are done. “It’s been a long time since we’ve had roofs that don’t leak,” Harrell said.

Before Monday’s meeting adjourned, Harrel reported that at the next meeting on August 25, the board will review and recommend the 2025 tax rate.

Board chair Tim McCormick commended Greg Bowles who has spent most of his summer working with contractors and overseeing construction projects for the work he has done. McCormick added, “Everything looks great,” and again thanked everyone for working through the summer.

The next meeting of the Webster County Board of Education is Monday, August 25, at 4:30 at the central office.

WC Fiscal Court *Continued from Page 1*

hearing inferred “there may have been better uses for the money.”

Budget wise, other things of concern and consideration for the county are that despite the fact that grants and other funds are available, the county must pay for projects up front and wait for reimbursement of state and sometimes federal grant funds. Such is the case the recent consolidation of the county 9-1-1 system with Providence. That project required some new equipment and changes to the system that had to be funded locally before the county could receive reimbursements for their costs (\$200,000 per agency). The county also has two bridge projects underway on Derby Mine Road and Slaughters-Elmwood Rd. The costs of those projects exceeds \$150,000 each, but the county must pay the cost of the bridges and installation before the state provides reimbursement.

“I can assure you, we’re (the county) being conservative (with funds). We are doing the best we can with what we have to do,” Henry said.

Richard Leslie then questioned the amount of money county magistrates make, comparing their \$35,000 compensation with that of magistrates in Union and Crittenden counties who he says make much less. While those counties pay magistrates less per person, they have more magistrates than Webster County; thus, the total amount paid in Union County based on numbers cited by Leslie is about \$33,000 more annually for magistrates collectively than Webster County pays. Crittenden County magistrates make \$9432 annually; they, like Union County have six magistrates. Crittenden County’s 2026 budget reflects a total of \$56,250 in magistrate salaries according that county’s treasurer. Magistrates as well as other elected officials throughout the state are eligible to receive incentive pay from the state for completing annual training hours;

in 2024 that about was just over \$5000 annually. Magistrate Tony Felker responded to the questions about salaries noting that magistrates are required to have 40 hours of training a year and part of their salary is compensation for participating in those trainings. Felker then moved the conversation back to the tax rate noting that the 18.8 percent will bring in about \$15,000 more than the previous year; he added that if the county took the four percent increase annually “we would be bringing in more tax money.” Following Felker’s comments, one individual suggested that “Maybe the county should take money from the magistrate’s salaries and give it to Billy (Braden); it would give Billy more operating money.”

At that point, magistrate Chad Townsend asked if anyone in the audience had any opposition to the tax rate, and the hearing, which lasted about 31 minutes, closed.

The court then moved into the business session, approving transfers, purchase orders, and claims before approving personnel matters. A raise for Jonathan Peavey who works at the senior center was approved for a raise, and Benjamin Chandler, a jail employee was moved from part-time to fulltime. Samantha Aguliar was hired as a park employee and Joseph Hopkins, Jr and Jerry Whitsell were approved as full-time road department employees.

Additional tax business also came before the court for approval. Magistrates approved the suggested rates for four taxing districts: Extension Service-.058 for real property, .064 for tangible property and .064 for inventory. Health district rates for 2025 are .05 for both real and tangible property. Library rates are set at 8.6 for real property and 9.0 for tangible property. The Ambulance District rate will be 6.4 for real property, and 8.9 for both tangible and inventory. Later in the meeting, the

court also approved the 18.8 rate. The school district is expected to submit their tax rate in early September.

Other business to come before the court was the appointment of Nan Laughary and Judy Clayton to the county library board of trustees. Each will serve a four year term.

The court tabled taking action on a road use and maintenance agreement for the Corinth Church Road solar project. According to attorney Clint Prow, there are still some changes he would like to see made to the document. Prow also said since the project impacts both Webster and Hopkins counties he would like for the project agreements to be the same for both counties.

A resolution urging Mitch McConnell, Rand Paul and James Comer to support an increase in black lung benefits for present and former coal miners was approved by the court following the reading of the complete resolution.

Magistrates also approved the FY 2025 Annual Financial Statement, and the Sheriff’s settlement for 2024 tangible property and real estate subject to audit. According to records submitted to the court 2024 property taxes were distributed to the following: State of Kentucky - \$707,933.83; Webster County - \$1,057,084.84; Webster County Public Schools - \$3,201,872.56; Webster County Library - \$494,805.28; Webster County Health Department - \$281,149.30; Webster County Extension Services - \$332,996.25; Ambulance Service - \$321,173.11. Distributions for ditch taxes and the Tradewater River were also listed. Each of the taxing districts are listed on individual tax bills so taxpayers may see exactly where their county tax dollars are distributed.

The next meeting of the Webster County Fiscal Court is scheduled for Monday, August 25, at 9:00 a.m.

Agricultural Cost-Share Programs Available For Webster County Producers, Youth

**By Vicki Shadrick
Extension Agent
for Agriculture
and Natural Resources**

The Green River Area Beef Improvement Group, a volunteer-led, non-profit organization, administers the County Agriculture Investment (CAIP) and Youth Agricultural Incentive (YAIP) Programs in Daviess, McLean, Webster, Hopkins, and Henderson Counties. The Webster County Agriculture Development council has been allocated \$20,700 for CAIP and \$10,000 specifically for our Youth Agricultural Incentive Program. This year marks a milestone for all of Kentucky with 25 years of cost-share funding programs which have helped farms improve and diversify.

Eligible items should be purchased between December 3, 2024, and

November 30, 2025. All receipts, completed project pictures, proof of residency (utility bill), and copies of cancelled checks or credit card statements, as well as GRABIG funding request documentation, must be postmarked on or before November 30. A website discussing eligible items can be found at <https://www.kyagr.com/agpolicy/2025-Program-Guidelines-and-Aplications.html>. Only one application per home mailing address and USDA farm identification number is allowed. For more information contact Vicki Shadrick at the Webster County Extension Office.

House Bill 611 became law during the 2000 General Assembly. The purpose was to distribute 50 percent of the state monies received from a Master

Settlement Agreement between the major cigarette manufacturers and Kentucky for the general purpose of agricultural development in the Commonwealth. The goal for these funds was to financially support innovative ideas for projects that could increase net farm income and agriculture across the state by stimulating markets for Kentucky farmers who previously relied on tobacco income. It was intended to encourage producers to find new ways to add value to Kentucky agricultural products and explore new opportunities for Kentucky farms. It has been a huge success and is the envy of the rest of the country. Only Kentucky and a couple of other states set some of these funds aside for agricultural development.

Another unique as-

pect of the agricultural development fund has been the educational contribution provided through the Cooperative Extension Service and Kentucky Beef Network. All agricultural development fund recipients have attended one or more education seminars, increasing their farming knowledge. Great strides have been made in the quality and yield of livestock and crop enterprises from the investment and education applied to the enterprises for which our farmers received cost share.

In addition to the agricultural development cost share, some of the master settlement agreement funds are provided to the Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation. The mission of KAFC is

to strengthen Kentucky agriculture by providing access to low-interest loan programs through joint partnerships with local lending institutions. KAFC finances beginning farmers, farm families, and agribusinesses with capital to establish, maintain, or expand their agricultural operation.

For more informa-

tion, or to request a CAIP application, call the Extension Office at 270-639-9011 or email me at vicki.shadrick@uky.edu

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