



PHOTO BY MADISON NANTZ
Pictured from left are Executive Director Chris Robinson and Commission Chair Phil Smith. Robinson provided updates on the ongoing Fairgrounds project.

City tourism to open new checking account after scam, continues Fairgrounds project

By Madison Nantz
Staff Writer

The London-Laurel County Tourism Commission will open a new checking account after its current one was compromised by a phishing scam involving an intercepted paper check.

“Cumberland Valley caught that, and no funds were lost... but we will be getting a new checking account,” Executive Director Chris Robinson said during the commission’s regular meeting Monday evening.

Robinson noted that the account remains under the care of “Starr, Chase, Lois, and myself,” referring to board members Starr Handy, Chase Carson, and Lois McWhorter. The commission unanimously approved a new signature card to reflect those authorized signers on the replacement account.

In his update on the Fairgrounds project, Robinson said the financing was finalized two weeks ago and the first request from the mortgage has already been made to cover the final payment to HWC. He also provided an update on the insurance process regarding the May 16 tornado, noting that the commission’s adjuster, Collins & Company, recently sent an independent engineer to the site on July 8. Robinson and Laurel County Regional Fairgrounds Manager Christina Sowders met with the engineer multiple times.

The engineer, who also serves as a cost estimator, is comparing the contractor estimates the commission received with his own figures. Once complete, the adjustment company will present a settlement offer to the Kentucky League of Cities, which will then notify the commission. Robinson said they could receive that offer as early as next week, depending on when the report is finalized and submitted.

In the meantime, the commission is continuing preparations for several upcoming events, including the Maddie & Tae concert at the Town Center on August 1, Homecoming festivities on August 8–9, and this year’s final Food Truck Friday on August 15. A homecoming pickleball tournament is also being planned, along with a 3-on-3 basketball tournament scheduled for September 26–27 at Wellness Park.

It was also determined the commission will look into creating a plan for content creation on social media platforms, as well as advertisement at local hotels. Discussion on the matters brought Monday’s meeting to a close.

The Tourism Commission meets on the third Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the lower level of the London Community Center.

County Tourist Commission hears tornado recovery updates, approves Homecoming sponsorship

By Madison Nantz
Staff Writer

Several businesses affected by the May 16 tornado are on the path to recovery, according to a report shared during the London-Laurel County Tourist Commission’s meeting Tuesday, July 15.

London-Laurel County Chamber of Commerce CEO Deanna Hermann attended the meeting to share that the chamber has contacted each affected business and that most are doing well. Among the hardest-hit was Maximus, which had more than 400 employees displaced. However, the company provided laptops and allowed employees to work remotely.

“So we’re very thankful that all 400 are still working,” Hermann said, though she noted plans to rebuild remain uncertain.

Other businesses highlighted included AirEvac, which resumed flights within one to two weeks, and Soelberg, which is now reconsidering rebuilding after initially planning not to.

“They’re so talented and so amazing that we really hope that they’ll rebuild, but we’re really not sure,” Hermann said.

Further, Hermann said Bobo’s Fireworks lost a shed but still operated this season, and Triple Threat Martial Arts is searching for a new location in either London or Corbin. The London-Laurel Economic Development Authority is temporarily located on Fifth Street with plans to rebuild. Hermann added that they have not been able to reach Adventure Pets, a local pet store.

In financial matters, Matt Shackelford with Cloyd and Associates reported a clean audit with no issues related to the commission’s financial statements.

“You’re set at a really good net position, so your overall financial health is in really good shape. That’s a prime indicator,” Shackelford said. “Your net position is over \$5.4 million in cash, and receivables are almost \$3.5.”

Commissioners then approved a \$2,000 sponsorship request for the Laurel County Homecoming, which had previously been tabled. The breakdown includes \$750 for signage, \$750 for social media marketing, and \$500 for radio. The motion was made by Jason Handy and seconded by Mackey Williams.

A \$5,000 sponsorship request for the Southeastern Kentucky Bigfoot Conference, however, was tabled. Executive Director Kim Collier said the request was originally meant for city tourism.

“They’re asking for \$5,000 and that’s a little much for our budget,” Collier commented.

Commissioners went on to approve plans for a new entrance sign and formed a committee to explore options for a digital sign. Committee members include Randy Singh, Jason Handy, Secretary Angelique Hatmaker, and Todd Roberts with London City Tourism.

The meeting closed with commissioners entering executive session to revisit discussion surrounding the feasibility of adding a convention center to the area with no report following.

The London-Laurel County Tourist Commission meets on the third Tuesday of each month at Heritage Hills, located at 472 Falls Street in London. The commission’s next regular meeting will take place August 18 at 12 noon.



PHOTO BY MADISON NANTZ
London-Laurel County Chamber of Commerce CEO Deanna Hermann, right, provided updates on tornado-impacted businesses. Pictured to Hermann’s left is Chamber President Donna Gregorich.

Communications Board names new vice chair, approves budget amendment

By Madison Nantz
Staff Writer

In a brief special-called meeting Tuesday, the London-Laurel County Communications Board — also known as the “911 Board” — selected former Laurel County Sheriff’s Major Robbie Grimes as its vice chairman.

The decision came after Laurel County Sheriff’s Detective Sergeant Taylor McDaniel nominated Acting London Police Chief Bobby Day for the role, but Day declined.

“I would say no,” Day said. “I don’t want to be the vice chair.”

Day then nominated Grimes, with a second from London Fire Chief Donnie Hale. The nomination was supported unanimously, making the choice official.

Following the vote, the board approved the signing of its revised bylaws by Board Chair David Williams and Vice Chair Grimes.

“They’re supposed to be

cial-called meeting, then move forward.”

Also during the earlier meeting, the board approved a budget amendment after rising costs in payroll, utilities, and emergency response pushed several line items over budget.

The most significant overage came from payroll, which was \$33,000 above budget. Williams said the increase was due to multiple factors, including four dispatchers attending the academy, the I-75 shooting, severe winter weather, and tornado-related duties.

“We had some bad winter weather that caused overtime, and then just recently, all the tornado duties for dispatch,” Williams said. “That’s the first time we’ve really run over to this extent.”

Additional overages included:

- Utilities: over by \$4,700
- Audit fees: increased to \$5,800
- Legal fees: \$4,800
- CAD system maintenance and repairs: \$18,000

To help cover the additional costs, the board received \$95,000 in increased CMRS (cell phone fee) revenue, \$59,000 in added 911 fee revenue from the Laurel County Fiscal Court, a \$100,000 supplemental contribution from the county, and \$4,100 from the City of London. The amendment was approved unanimously.

Members also voted to continue meeting at the London Community Center as they had that Tuesday, following a previous complaint by City Council Member Anthony Ortega about the board formerly meeting behind locked doors.

The board additionally approved a bylaw amendment to revert to the previous language requiring the annual election of officers in July, which Williams said “keeps things cleaner.” Grimes made the motion, which passed.

Also discussed was an update to the policy manual. Williams noted it had been finalized for about a month and asked members to review it. Director Larry Walls said it had likely been 10 to 12 years since the manual’s last full revision.

Walls also shared that he and Assistant Director Tyler Pearce plan to attend a September conference in Louisville, with registration costing \$325 per person and hotel rooms priced at \$131 per night. The event will include full class access and an equipment exhibit hall.

Additionally, Dispatcher Paul Collins is expected to retire later this summer. Collins, who is moving to Florida, must first complete matters “with Frankfort,” Walls said. The board agreed to begin the hiring process early to find a replacement.

The regular meeting concluded with a motion from Chief Hale to pay the board’s bills, which was approved.



PHOTO BY MADISON NANTZ
Acting London Police Chief Bobby Day, left, was nominated to fill the role of vice chairman. However, Day declined, nominating former Laurel County Sheriff’s Major Robbie Grimes, right, which the board approved.

NOTICE TO LAUREL COUNTY TAXPAYERS

Tony Brown, Laurel County Clerk pursuant to KRS 424.130, announces that the 2024 Delinquent Property Tax Bills (Certificates of Delinquency) will be published in the Sentinel-Echo on Jul. 30, 2025. The list of Certificates of Delinquency is also available for public inspection during the hours of Monday & Thursday 8:00am – 6:00pm, Tue., Wed. & Fri. 8:00am – 4:30pm, at the Laurel County Clerk’s office located at 101 S. Main St. Room 203 London, KY 40741. This list may also be inspected on the Laurel County Clerk website. The Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of the website is: <https://laurelcountyclerk.ky.gov/delinquent-taxes/>.

The tax sale will be held on September 3rd, 2024 beginning at 9:00am. All interested participants must register with the Laurel County Clerk’s office by the close of the business on August 28th, 2025. Please contact the County Clerk’s office if you need additional information about the tax sale registration process, the required registration fee or the deposit amounts that will be needed. Taxpayers can continue to pay their delinquent tax bills to the County Clerks Office anytime prior to the tax sale. **Please Note: All payments must be received in the County Clerk’s office prior to the tax sale date listed in this advertisement. Payments received after the tax sale has been conducted will be returned without exception.** Some delinquencies – although they have been advertised – will be excluded from the tax sale in accordance with the provisions of KRS 134.504(10)(b). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the County Clerk’s office at (606) 864-5158.

Tony Brown, Laurel County Clerk