

COMPLAINT

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recently brought against Mayor Randall Weddle. Formerly among those charges was a failure to meet city residency requirements.

However, Foley drew attention to the fact that after she filed an appeal with Acting City Clerk Ashley Taylor on August 10, the council removed that charge from the amended version of the impeachment resolution, which was approved during the council's special-called meeting on August 15.

The Sentinel-Echo contacted Attorney TJ Roberts regarding the removal — as City Council Attorney Conrad Cessna confirmed Roberts is handling the charges — but attempts to reach Roberts for comment were unsuccessful as of press time Tuesday.

An open records request for Foley's appeal was also filed but had not received a response by press time.

Foley's evidence package against Ortega includes a combination of property records, online images and rental listings. Among the materials are Facebook photos from May through August 2025 that appear to show Ortega's family at a residence outside city limits on Afton Lane. Foley compared the images with Google Street View and mapping data, pointing out identifying features such as utility boxes, trees and

surrounding houses.

Foley also provided property records showing Ortega as the owner of a home at 205 East Fifth Street in London, but claimed that the family appeared to be living elsewhere. Screenshots from the Airbnb platform show the Fifth Street home listed as a short-term rental called "The Brick on 5th," with the entire property advertised for guest stays.

The listing described full access to the home, driveway and yard — with reviews from visitors. Foley said she verified the listing on August 16 and noted that shortly after she made her complaint public on social media, the listing was altered to block bookings until November.

Foley emphasized that her actions were not personal, but intended to uphold accountability.

In a statement, she said, "This is not about personal attacks, but about making sure our city leaders follow the same rules we are all required to follow. As citizens, we have a right to expect accountability and transparency in government."

Ortega, in response, acknowledged that his residence was temporarily listed on Airbnb but said the circumstances were tied to family needs.

"As many in our community know, Claytina and I are raising several children, including two infants," Ortega said. "During the summer break, while I was occupied with work and some of

our children were experiencing illness, Claytina's mother generously offered for us to stay with her to help lighten the load. During this time, we did not want to leave our home vacant and incurring costs unnecessarily, so I listed our residence on Airbnb for a couple months to help offset expenses — something that's especially important when providing for five children."

He stressed that the Fifth Street address is his primary and only residence, noting that it is the address where he is registered to vote, pays taxes, holds his driver's license, registers his vehicles and where his children attend the local elementary school.

"To suggest that my temporary absence for family reasons amounts to a violation of residency requirements is without merit," Ortega said, citing KRS 116.035, which defines a person's residence as the place where their habitation is fixed and to which they intend to return when absent.

The statute further notes that residency is not lost by absence if the individual maintains that intent to return.

Ortega added, "That said, I am encouraged to see members of the public taking residency requirements for elected officials seriously. My hope is that this same standard will be applied equally to all elected officers in the City of London. Doing so would help ensure that our government truly serves the best interests of the people."

Obituaries

Verna Getz

Verna "Lois" (Wiggins) Getz, 93 of Rushville, passed away August 11, 2025 at Morristown Manor. She was born May 26, 1932 in Laurel County, KY to the late Earl and Sally (Gill) Wiggins. Lois graduated high school at the age of 16 in Kentucky. She married Nick Getz on May 13, 1950 and he preceded her in death on December 22, 2010. Lois worked at Millers Drive-In for over 16 years and then stayed home with her children. She was a member of Morristown Christian Church and recently attended Rushville Church of Christ. Lois enjoyed spending time with family and working in the yard.

Lois is survived by her son, Greg Getz of Rushville and daughter, Nikki (Jack) Griffin of Indianapolis; brother, Russell (Sue) Wiggins of Ohio and sister, Barbara Thomas of Ohio. She will also be missed by her grandchildren, Brittany (Jason) Brown, David (Nicole) Griffin, Stacia Getz and Anicia (Landon) Fox; great-grandchildren, Griffin Brown, Grayson Brown, Jack Griffin and Bo Griffin.

Lois was preceded in death by her parents, husband, brother, James Wiggins and sister, Faye Elam.



Services will be held Friday, August 15, 2025 at 1 p.m. in Moster Mortuary with Pastor Jim Coyle presiding. Friends are welcome to visit the family from 11AM until the time of service in the mortuary. Burial will be held in Asbury Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to Rushville Church of Christ.



Among those at the meeting was William Eversole, who carried a "Justice for Doug Harless" sign.

COUNCIL

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you all, that can and want to, to step into the room if you want to sit on the floors, or we are live streaming, so that's something you might want to do also," Greene said. "You're welcome to come in and line the walls or sit in the floor, whatever you want."

City Attorney Larry Bryson reminded the council to remain mindful of public meeting accommodation requirements.

"Madam Chairman, just a point of order — I mentioned to your counsel previously, and I know you addressed, that people can come in and sit in the floor and stuff," said Bryson. "Just be mindful of the requirements of a public meeting and the accommodations that you're supposed to make for a public meeting. I'd be remiss if I did not bring that to your attention."

City Council Attorney Conrad Cessna responded, "Thank you for bringing that to our attention. I think Ms. Greene...made it available to everyone. I appreciate the number of people that are here. They're welcome to come in."

KRS 61.840, regarding conditions for attendance at public meetings, states: "All agencies shall provide meeting room conditions, including adequate space, seating, and acoustics, which insofar as is feasible allow effective public observation of the public meetings."

Among resolutions approved at the meeting was Resolution 2025-06, which amends charges of misconduct the council previously issued against Mayor Weddle.

The original resolution filed by the London City Council outlined around 14 charges against Mayor Weddle alleging improper hiring practices, misuse of authority over the London Housing Authority, and misuse of the police department — among

other claims.

The amended resolution expands the allegations to 15, while also removing the prior charge that Weddle failed to comply with city residency requirements. Baker and Greene declined to comment on the matter at this time, with Bengé commenting, "I didn't know about the amendments until the day before."

Bengé, reiterating he had been on vacation, said he'd rather wait to hear and see matters in an official capacity before commenting further.

As for legal counsel, Cessna directed The Sentinel-Echo to TJ Roberts, another attorney recently retained by council, who had not responded as of press time Tuesday afternoon. The Sentinel-Echo also attempted to contact Ortega, Weaver and Young for comment.

The amended allegations are as follows:

- Hiring and paying persons to positions not established by the City of London or its Council, without fixed compensation (KRS 83A.070(3))
- Paying employees in excess of approved rates or positions and failing to recover unlawful wages
- Removing members of the London Housing Authority without compliance (KRS 80.090)
- Appointing members of the Housing Authority without compliance (KRS 80.030)
- Directing Housing Authority employees to disregard laws/regulations and misusing police presence
- Calling further Housing Authority meetings to harass employees after notice of an improperly constituted board
- Misusing the police department and its resources to create a personal protection detail
- Falsely asserting jurisdiction over contractors and FEMA funds outside city limits
- Using a personal media outlet, Laurel County

News+, to harass a city employee

- Refusing to hold regularly called and scheduled council meetings in March, April, and May 2025 (KRS 61.820 violation)
- Deliberately refusing to publish or delaying the timely publication of duly enacted ordinances (KRS 83A.060)
- Refusing to enforce or comply with the City's Code of Ethics (KRS 83A.130(3) and Ordinance 2023-10)
- Wrongfully filing ethics charges against Council Members Justin Young, Kelly Greene, Anthony Ortega, and Judd Weaver for purposes of harassment
- Illegally signing and executing a \$5,000,000 mortgage for property at 998 Levi Jackson Road, London, KY, without City Council approval
- Improperly impeding or attempting to impede the investigation and disposition of the charges.

Baker moved to approve the resolution, receiving a second from Justin Young. It passed unanimously.

Planning and Zoning Commissioner Sharon Bengé, among other community members, then asked, "What was the resolution?"

"I read it," Greene responded. "I said a resolution issuing amended charges of misconduct in setting a public hearing pursuant to KRS 83A.040."

City Council Attorney Conrad Cessna then asked Acting City Clerk Ashley Taylor, "Ashley, do you want to just make it easier and just read the entire thing? I apologize for that, but just read the entire documentation."

Council Member Anthony Ortega responded, "We can just post it online," to which Cessna replied, "Or we could just read it."

"Alright, I mean, technically by KRS, you don't need to read a resolution," Ortega said.

"Just let her read it," Baker chimed.

Nonetheless, Ortega decided to hand a copy of the

resolution to one of the concerned attendees, and Taylor did not read the resolution aloud.

The resolution schedules a public hearing for Sept. 5 at 9 a.m. at the Laurel County Courthouse's Fiscal Court room, where the council will consider whether to remove Weddle from office under KRS 83A.040(9).

Resolution 2025-07 orders the City Clerk, Mayor, Finance Director, Chief of Police, and Human Resources Director to provide sworn statements and specific documents to the council. The requests include explanations and records on matters such as pay rates, housing authority membership, police protection details for the mayor, and directives regarding city meetings, ordinances and contracts.

The resolution also seeks information related to the \$5 million mortgage, FEMA funds, ethics complaints filed against council members, and communications concerning the London Housing Authority.

Greene read, "That is a resolution investigating aspects of the City of London, Kentucky, and directing statements to be made under oath and information and documents to be submitted to the City Council by the City Clerk, the Mayor, Finance Director, Chief of Police, and Human Resource Director."

Ortega moved to approve Resolution 2025-07, with a second from Weaver. The measure passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned following a motion from Ortega, seconded by Weaver. Audience members then shouted and booed council members as they made their exit through a side door, escorted by London Police officers.

While Mayor Weddle was not in attendance, he did later offer comment, stating, "I'm appalled but not surprised that council refused to follow state laws today [by] not allowing members of the public to enter that room and [giving] them adequate space to attend, and refusing to read the resolution."

Eleanor Mills

Eleanor Gray Mills, age 88, of London, Kentucky, passed away on Thursday, August 14, 2025.

She leaves behind four children, Kathy Fields of London, KY, Margaret Merida of Flat Lick, KY, Lula Neeley & husband Mark of West Virginia, Caelin Hunt & husband Khristian of Florida; four siblings, Tommy Gray & fiancé Sandra Otten of Melford, OH, Rosetta Merida & husband James of Flat Lick, KY, Hazel Brown of Girdler, KY, Bobby Gray & wife Rita of Bimble, KY; seven grandchildren, Bobby Mills Jr., Denny Mills, Jason Mills, Mike Swafford, David Clint Merida, Sammie Jo Eldon, Earl Dean Stegall; 11 great-grandchildren, Cassidy Ray Mills, Jace Mills, Caelin Noel Hunt, Sidney Rhian Swafford, Bentley Cobb, Brady Cobb, Emma Kay Cobb, Oakley Eldon, Anna Beth Merida, Colton Merida, Kylie Ann Marie Merida; one great-great granddaughter, Delilah Hunt; plus a host of other family and friends to cherish her memory.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Enos Mills; her parents, Whitney & Ethel Lawson Gray; by her son, Bobby Ray Mills; her sons-in-law, Rick Fields, David Merida; and by eight siblings, Benny Gray, Elsie Marion, Orangie Gray, Jewell Carter, Dorothy Foster, Lula Foster, Dallas Gray, Frances Gray.

A funeral service honoring Eleanor Gray Mills was held on Sunday, August 17, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. in the chapel of House-Rawlings Funeral Home with Rick Thomas officiating. Interment followed at the Nan Riley Cemetery in Fount, Kentucky. The family has entrusted House-Rawlings Funeral Home with the arrangements.



Man receives probation after pleading guilty to amended rape charge

By Janie Slaven
Editor

A local man was sentenced last week in connection to a rape case from 2020.

Joseph Michael Johnson, 24, of London, appeared in Laurel Circuit Court last Wednesday after pleading guilty in June to third-degree rape. He was sentenced to five years probation and must register as a sex offender for 20 years.

A Laurel County grand jury named Johnson in February 2024 in a two-count indictment charging him with first-degree rape as well as endangering the welfare of a minor. The indictment stated that Johnson had sexual intercourse with a 15-year-old on April 11, 2020, then left the victim "in the woods (alone) in the middle of the night."

The endangerment charge was dismissed in exchange for Johnson's guilty plea.

Johnson's case was prosecuted by Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Brandon Jones. He was defended by public defender Emily Croucher.

CHARGES

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ative Tommy Houston, Deputy Jared Hale, Dep. Robert Smith and Dep. Justin Lew-

is. As a result of the altercation, she was charged with both first- and fourth-degree assault and lodged in the Laurel County Correctional Center, from which she has since been released.

Rich was arraigned in Laurel District Court Monday morning. With a not guilty plea entered on her behalf, she has been scheduled for a preliminary hearing next Tuesday.

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