

## HIBBARD

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four-person field for the coroner's office, becoming the individual trusted with the job of handling the county's deceased, including notifying families and looking into causes of death.

Clyde Strunk, who would have been the incumbent, chose instead to run for Pulaski County Judge-Executive; he finished second to incumbent Marshall Todd in Tuesday's county-wide vote. That meant the field for coroner was wide open, and Hibbard found himself up against First District Constable Danny Weddle, local businessman and pastor Mitchell Eggers, and Josh New of Southern Oaks Funeral Home — son of former coroner Richard New.

Tuesday's unofficial results were tight. Hibbard won with 35.79% of the vote (4,702 votes); New was close behind with 30.30% (3,980 votes), and Weddle a razor-thin margin behind that at 29.95% (3,934 votes). Egger was fourth with 521 votes, or 3.97%. All candidates were in the Republican Primary race, but with no Democrat challenger waiting in the fall, the race essentially sealed the overall victory for Hibbard.

But Hibbard, known to many as lead funeral director for Morris & Hislope Funeral Home and Pulaski Funeral Home, was happy to come out on top, however he got there — and to get the opportunity to bring his vision for the coroner's office to fruition.

"I'm excited. ... I guess overjoyed would be a good term," Hibbard told the Commonwealth Journal following Tuesday's Election Day turnout. "I'm certainly appreciative of the citizens of Pulaski County and I feel like they definitely showed me their support."

A native of Shopville and lifelong resident of this area, Hibbard graduated from Pulaski County High School in 2005 and attended Somerset Community College before

getting both his Bachelor's Degree and a Master's in Psychology from what is now Union Commonwealth University, as well as a certificate in Chemical Dependency Counseling. He also achieved Associate in Funeral Service status from the Commonwealth Institute of Houston, Texas, and is a certified medicolegal death investigator and a licensed funeral director and embalmer. He also serves as an adjunct instructor at Somerset Community College, teaching courses in Psychology and Death & Dying.

Despite Hibbard's already busy schedule, once he saw Strunk was going to try to change offices, he felt like the time was right to bring something new to that would-be empty role in county government.

"I've always wanted to be coroner," said Hibbard. "I've always felt like being able to give families peace of mind in knowing the cause of death and being able to investigate a death properly and understand exactly what the dynamic was (is important). I always feel like families are starving for information, and that's something that I want to be able to give them."

Hibbard clarified that he wasn't "saying that the current coroner has done a bad job or is doing a bad job," but in his role as a funeral director, he has seen many times the kinds of questions and heartaches families face when losing a loved one, particularly when the circumstances around the death have an element of unexpectedness or uncertainty to them, and wants to be able to put that experience to use to help all Pulaski County citizens who might need it.

"In the 20 years that I've been serving families throughout Pulaski County in death care, I see families that don't get all the answers or they don't understand how to interpret an autopsy report, or they don't really understand why the coroner got involved, or what the true cause of death was," he

said. "... I feel like I wanted to offer the citizens of Pulaski County more than what I've felt like we've offered in the past."

To that end, Hibbard wants to make community education a key component of his time as coroner — being able to have community outreach opportunities and tell citizens "what the coroner's office does and why we become involved when a death occurs and under what circumstances" — and to work with all the county's various departments to implement training for scenarios involving deaths and expanding education for deputies.

"Education is something that's important to me, and I like being able to educate others," said Hibbard. "I ... often find myself breaking things down and telling people, 'Hey, this is why this happens' or 'This is why this occurred' and then being able to give people answers and even get answers myself."

In particular, Hibbard pointed to the drug abuse problem faced by the community, and would like to work with local schools to provide information on the dangers associated with illegal drug use. "Our youth are going to be our adults of tomorrow, and I'd like to work with the sheriff's department or the city police to be able to bring more education in to our youth."

He also wants to aggressively pursue grant money opportunities, to bring that funding to Pulaski County rather than conceding it to another area.

"I don't want to say that I want to make a bunch of changes to the office because I'm not there, I don't know what changes do need to be made," he said. "I told some of the staff that one of the first things I wanted to do with them was just to sit down and be able to have a roundtable discussions with them and say ... 'Hey, what can we do to make us better?'"

During the race, there was discussion as well — discussion on social media critical



SUBMITTED

Tyler Hibbard will be the next Pulaski County Coroner as of January 2027.

of Hibbard, with questions about his personal life and marital status. Hibbard said he was a little surprised that the race got that heated and went to those kinds of places.

"I'm certain that it did have an effect on the race," said Hibbard of that angle. "I also feel like personal persecution is not acceptable, period, and I have never attacked other people for their beliefs, whether it be religious beliefs, sexual orientation, their personal thoughts or whatever. I was raised not to judge and I was raised to love one another for the person that they are. ... Everybody has a past in some way, and everybody has a future."

"Our personal lives are not part of an election," he added. "In an interview process (for a job), we are not allowed as an employer to ask someone if they're married, if they have children. They election process is an interview process for the public to determine who is the best fit for this job, and it should always be held on who holds the best qualifications. And in my opinion, Pulaski County selected me based on my qualifications,

not my personal life."

In the midst of all that, Hibbard found that "there are a lot of kind and caring people in our community that really came to my aid, and that meant more than anyone will ever know." He noted that he's hard numerous people say they voted for him after observing negativity toward him on social media.

"Since I started in my professional career, I have always lived a very public professional life, and I've always lived a very private personal life," he said. "I have not changed who I am as an individual professionally or personally, just to run a race. I have not lied on who I was. I have not answered questions that I did not feel were pertinent to the election process. I have stayed true to the individual that I have been for the last 38 years. My integrity has not been compromised just because of personal attacks, and I've not tried to hide the individual that I am just to win an election. That was not ever on the table."

From a simple numbers standpoint — the number of candidates, and the closeness of the results — Hibbard

was also "very surprised that so many people got into it and it really turned into one of the hottest races."

However, that may be a good thing in the long run. The competitiveness of the race forced Hibbard to get out in the community, meet many new people and make new friends, and in the process, raise the profile of one of the county government's more under-the-radar offices — which will only serve to help Hibbard get a head start on his goal of increasing public knowledge about coroner duties once he takes office in January 2027.

"We're a progressive community, we're growing, and I feel like we need to be able to offer the best to our citizens," said Hibbard. "... The coroner is one of those positions that I think the public doesn't necessarily understand what the coroner does. Nobody wants to deal with the coroner, ever. It's a necessary position. It's a very important position for our county and for the commonwealth of Kentucky, and I feel like it's one those positions that people don't really recognize the importance of until it's needed in their life."

## WILSON

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be harvested.

Make plans to attend a program called Growing & Using Culinary Herbs on June 23 at 6pm. Master Gardener Jo will lead

the program and provide samples.

For more information, contact the Pulaski County Extension Service at 606-679-6361 and request HO-74, Culinary Herbs. Be sure to go to the Pulaski County Cooperative Extension website and see

all upcoming events.

The Lake Cumberland Master Gardeners have pine straw mulch for sale at the Pulaski County Extension office. It is sold in bales for \$8 per bale (50 and over, \$7 per bale). It can be purchased on Fridays from 8:30am to

12pm.

Join us for the Demonstration Garden Field Day on July 17 from 4 to 6pm. Various bed types are on display including Vego, cedar & block, composite boards, and the self-watering bed. You can also see our automatic, drip

irrigation system.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief,

sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

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## LOVETT

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Extension office for more information on saving home energy costs. This Institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### SIMPLE BEAN DIP

1 can 15 ounces size Refried Beans

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon chili powder

1 cap salsa

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Fresh Vegetables for Dipping or Baked Tortilla Chips for Dipping

Mixed Refried Beans with garlic powder and chili powder. Spread on the bottom of a pie plate.

Layer salsa on top of the beans; then top with cheddar cheese.

Cut vegetables into bit sized pieces for dipping.

Divide the dip into ½ cup servings and serve with vegetables and tortilla chips.

Shop our Farmers Market today to get ready for the big Holiday. Woodstock Farmers Market, Somerset Farmers Market, Lakeside Farmers Market, plus all the roadside Markets are open for your business. Get the freshest produce items at

your Farmers Market.

The Pulaski County Extension Office will be closed Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day.

Join us at 11:30 a.m. for

our Calendar Cooking Class. We will be sampling Pasta with Steak and Spinach.

Tuesday, June 2, you can paint an acrylic scene on Wood at the Extension

### PUBLIC NOTICE

An ordinance amending the Pulaski County Budget for Fiscal Year 2025/2026, to include unanticipated receipts from various sources in the amount of \$17,542,605.00 and increasing expenditures in the area of the General, Road, Jail, LGEA, EM, Grant, Fire, Opioid Settlement, 9-1-1, and Clerk Storage Funds will be adopted by the Pulaski County Fiscal Court on May 26, 2026 with Fiscal Court's approval. A copy of the ordinance with full text is available for public inspection at the office of the county judge executive during normal business hours.

## COMMUNITY SALE

Friday and Saturday, May 22 & 23  
8am to 6pm, Sunday May 24 8am to 3pm.  
336 Horizon Hill Dr.  
Furniture, household items, tools,  
building supplies, tables, chairs,  
new Amish style heaters and much more.

at the new Pulaski Extension Office.

Pulaski County Fair will be June 16-20. Find out about all the events on FACEBOOK, Pulaski County Fair.