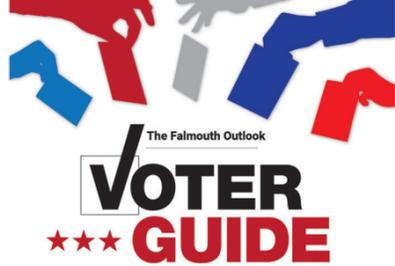


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TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026
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Falmouth

OUTLOOK

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Fire fight continues County and city debate merger

By Jim Thaxton

FALMOUTH — They talked, argued and finally agreed to table the discussion to explore further details on a possible merger of city and county fire departments into a fire district.

Many people expressed surprise that Mayor Sabrina Hazen, who agreed during a March 14 town hall to set up a meeting between the Falmouth City Council and Pendleton County Fiscal Court, was able to bring the two governmental organizations together three days later on St. Patrick's Day, March 17.

Four tables pulled together in the Fiscal Court Room with chairs circling them formed an

oval circle that placed both government bodies in a position of equality. At two points in the oval, magistrates sat next to council members.

County Judge Executive David Fields and Hazen sat directly across from each other.

As the clock moved closer to the announced 6 p.m. starting time, the room filled with fire personnel from Pendleton County Fire Department, Northern Pendleton County Fire Department and Falmouth Fire Department.

Sheriff's deputies mingled among the firefighters, citizens and a handful of candidates for political office.

Fields called the Fiscal Court to order, followed

by Hazen calling the City Council to order.

Hazen briefly explained the city's concept of a possible merger that would keep the firehouse, leadership and volunteers along with equipment in the city. She insisted that no qualified volunteer be turned away.

Current policy prevents any volunteer of PCFD from also being a member of other volunteer fire departments.

Magistrate Josh Plummer began the conversation raising the question of cost sharing between the county and city. The mayor agreed that would have to be worked out within a merger agreement sharing some of the possible city obligations.

County, Page 2

City volunteers vote to quit if county takes over

By Jim Thaxton

FALMOUTH — With the issue of a possible merger of city and county fire departments still being hot, Falmouth City Hall was filled to near capacity when Mayor Sabrina Hazen called the March 19 City Council meeting to order.

It was five days after a town hall meeting on the issue and two days after City Council met with Pendleton County Fiscal Court to talk about how a merger might work.

Northern Pendleton County Assistant Fire Chief Patrick Krogman addressed City Council

to plead with the council members to talk with him before making any decision that would close the Falmouth Fire Department.

The mayor interjected, stating that she didn't think it was in the best interest of the citizens to reduce fire protection in the county or throughout the county. She referenced the vote that Falmouth Fire Chief John Fields took of his department to determine who would stay if the city's fire department merged with the county, and said it would be detrimental to the entire county to lose 20 volunteers.

Councilwoman Joyce Carson, playing the devil's advocate, said, "It won't cost the city anything to go with the county. What do you see as the cost of the merger?"

Krogman replied, "Let me be frank with you, it will cost lives."

The mayor reviewed the recent history of how this all came about, touching on the budgetary issues.

Councilwoman Amanda Moore reminded Council that the initial proposal from Pendleton County Fiscal Court in early 2025 was clearly viewed as a takeover.

City, Page 2

Pink cheetah



Two local residents brought home honors this month from Cavalcade of Customs in Cincinnati. Haven Murphy, 8, of Foster, earned a third-place plaque for pink cheetah print JR dragster. Haven also spent time interacting with kids throughout the show and allowing them to sit in her car. Dustin Walton of Falmouth won Best Paint in Class and an award for the Top 100 in Show for his custom-built 2000 Isuzu Hombre known as "2faced."

Rick Mineer, Pendleton County Fiscal Court Magistrate Rick Mineer, left, Paragon co-owners Bryan and Jason Meuhlenkamp, and Tami Vater, Pendleton County Economic and Tourism Development director, celebrate Paragon's recognition.



Paragon named finalist for REDI Cincinnati growth award

FALMOUTH — Paragon Metal Fabricators, one of Pendleton County's newest manufacturers, was recognized as a finalist for the 2025 Jame Wuenker Growth Award by REDI Cincinnati at its annual meeting on March 19.

Out of 51 projects submitted, 17 were selected as finalists, placing Paragon among the region's most notable growth projects. These projects represented more than 2,700 new jobs and \$461 million in capital

investment, highlighting the strength and momentum of economic development across the greater Cincinnati region.

Paragon Metal Fabricators, a second-generation, family-owned sheet metal fabricator serving customers across the United States, began operations at the former Hammer Strength/Life Fitness in June 2025.

Since opening, the company has rehired 14 former Hammer Strength employees, helping retain skilled workers following

the plant's closure in early 2025.

With more than \$6.2 million invested in the Falmouth location, Paragon's long-term goal is to create 40 jobs while continuing to expand the company's footprint in the fabrication industry.

Paragon's decision to locate in Pendleton County came after a strong collaborative effort by local and state partners to support displaced workers and position the community for another manufacturing employer.

Pasta & Sauce

THE GATHERING WING

SIMPLY HELPING THOSE IN NEED

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