

Judge Executive's Report

By George Sparks

October 2026

I attended the Ohio River Way Summit in Ironton, Ohio, with Mr. Ben Collier. We heard from several outstanding speakers and participated in an educational field trip to the Marathon Oil Refinery in Catlettsburg. Ben serves on the ORW Board of Directors, and we both represent Lewis County on the Kentucky Ohio River Regional Recreation Authority (KORRA) Board. I appreciate Ben taking the opportunity to speak at the summit about tourism and the work we have begun here in Lewis County to promote tourism and outdoor recreation.

I attended the BTADD Lewis County Water/Wastewater Ranking Meeting. Representatives from the Lewis County Sanitation District, Electric Plant Board, Garrison Water, and Western Lewis Water were also in attendance. Various projects were discussed and ranked before the meeting adjourned.

I met with HMB Professional Engineers, LLC, and BTADD for a project kickoff and preliminary scoping meeting regarding a riverport project in Lewis County. The meeting was led by Chris Stewart, PE, and Amy Kennedy, both with HMB.

I attended the Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) Summit at Corbin Arena. The summit featured an outstanding lineup of speakers, including Governor Andy Beshear, Senate President Robert Stivers, Congressman Hal Rogers, and geopolitical strategist John Sitilides with Trilogy Advisors, LLC. A legislative panel discussion addressed many of the challenges facing Eastern Kentucky counties. I also attended several breakout sessions that went into further detail on these issues.

We held an employee appreciation picnic lunch on October 12. I want to thank Leslie Collier, Morgan Cooper, Penny Lee, Rose Thoroughman, Randy Thoroughman, Jeff Thoroughman, Bill Tom Stone, Mark McCane with Save A Lot, and several others who helped make this event possible. I am very proud of our county employees, who go above and beyond every day. I am grateful we had the opportunity to show our appreciation by providing them with a great meal on such a beautiful day.

I presided over the October 2026 Lewis County Fiscal Court meeting. The meeting opened with prayer by Pastor Arthur Moore of Southern Manor Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sheriff Bivens. The previous meeting minutes were approved, followed by a response from the public. Rob Kennard praised the court for pursuing Nuclear Ready Certification. Jason York with Kentucky Emergency Management (KYEM) presented me with the KEMA County Judge/Executive of the Year Award. He also presented Emergency Management Director Dennis Brown with a plaque recognizing his accomplishment of becoming a Certified Kentucky Emergency Management Director. Out of 120 counties, Dennis is one of only 30 emergency management directors to complete this program. This is a tremendous accomplishment!

Chelle McElfresh with the ION Center was presented with a proclamation recognizing October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Ben Collier and Morgan Cooper, representing the LC Tourism Advisory Board, presented William Maynard with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work sharing our local history through his Diary of a Lewis County Man 1876 series.

Resolution #26-19, Nuclear Ready Community, was approved by the court. Three proposals recommended by the Opioid Abatement Committee were also presented and approved. Ordinance #26-04, establishing the Lewis County Tourism Commission, passed its first reading. Tim Douglas was reappointed to the Lewis County Sanitation District #1 Board, with his term expiring on June 30, 2029.

Trick-or-Treat was scheduled in coordination with the City of Vanceburg for Saturday, October 31, 2026, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The court approved a $500 contribution to the Buffalo Trace Fire School in Maysville. Several Lewis County volunteer fire departments attend this free fire school each year, and we appreciate the training opportunities it provides.

All departments presented their monthly reports, which were approved by the court. Claims and transfers were also approved. The court entered a brief closed session, and no action was taken. Shane Wallingford spoke in support of the Nuclear Ready Community Certification. The meeting was then adjourned.

We held an E-911 Board meeting in the 911/EMA conference room. The meeting was called to order, and the previous meeting minutes were approved. During old business, we discussed emergency communications among all departments. The repeaters that operate our tornado sirens are being tested and updated. We also discussed wrecker services and how things are going since returning to the boundary-line system. Everything is going well.

EMS is exploring a new radio system to improve communications. We discussed funding for 911 centers across the state as traditional landlines are being replaced by Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) lines, resulting in the loss of some funding. Our next board meeting is planned for early December.

I attended the BTADD Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting with Lewis County and the City of Vanceburg, held at the 911 Center. Kaleigh Zeigler opened the meeting. We discussed project prioritization and timeline development, reviewed maps and the planning process to date, and participated in an open discussion.

I met with Shera Moulton with the Central Kentucky Blood Center at the Black Oak Volunteer Fire Department to coordinate a blood drive for our November 5 Health and Career Fair. This was our third year hosting the career fair, our second year hosting the health fair, and our first year adding a blood drive. We were pleased with the turnout for this event and want to thank everyone who attended and helped make it successful.

I attended a Hospice of Hope Executive Board meeting via Zoom. It was a brief meeting, and the next meeting is planned for December.

I met with Kenny Ruckel and a group of individuals to discuss the future of Lewis County Shooting Sports. Kenny and the shooting sports team have accomplished some incredible things in just a few short years. I, along with many others, am excited to see the new property in Tollesboro developed and to watch this program continue to grow.

I attended the Salvation Army meeting at the Health Department. Chairperson Anita Bertram called the meeting to order, followed by prayer from Bill Tom Stone. Tammy Brown provided a report on the assistance given during the previous three months. Dennis Brown presented the treasurer's report, and both reports were approved. We discussed the upcoming Red Kettle Campaign and began planning recruitment efforts to find volunteers to ring the bells. The meeting was then adjourned.

I visited Vanceburg Hills Nursing Home, Coroplast, Superior Composites, the City of Vanceburg, the Lewis County Extension Office, and the Lewis County Health Department to invite them to participate in our Career/Health Fair and Blood Drive. The event was scheduled for November 5, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at the Black Oak Volunteer Fire Department.

I attended the Governor's Conference on Energy and the Environment in Lexington, along with Ben Collier and several members of the BTADD staff. Ben was one of five panelists who discussed outdoor recreation as a catalyst for economic development and environmental improvements. He did an outstanding job sharing some of Lewis County's history and explaining how we plan to use our history, the Ohio River, Kinniconick Creek, trails, and other local assets to attract visitors to Vanceburg and Lewis County.

We also saw many other great presentations, including one on nuclear power featuring Kenya Stump, Director of Kentucky Energy Policy; Sean Schaub, Executive Director of the Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority; and Kentucky Senator Danny Carroll.

I joined a Teams meeting with Lewis County EMS, LCEMA, several members of the LCEMS Board of Directors, Kristin King, Coordinator with the Kentucky Department for Public Health, and Joey Riddle with the Team Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. We discussed the Crisis to Care Connection grant program and several potential funding opportunities that Lewis County EMS could pursue to strengthen emergency medical services in our county. Two opportunities discussed included developing a comprehensive training program and establishing a paramedicine program.

I attended the BTADD Executive and Full Board of Directors meetings. New Chairperson Rebecca McGinnis called the Executive Board meeting to order. The previous meeting minutes, along with the Executive Director's time and travel sheets, were approved. The board also approved the AI policy and holiday schedule. Kevin Cornette provided updates on health insurance and personnel matters. The next Executive Board meeting is scheduled for November 10 at a remote location to discuss employee compensation and evaluations.

The full Board of Directors meeting was also called to order by Rebecca McGinnis, followed by prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, and approval of the previous meeting minutes. A presentation was given regarding Brownfield cleanup grants. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) updates were discussed and approved. Cain Hughes presented the financial report, which was approved. Updated bank signatures were also approved.

We received updates from Frankfort and Washington from Larry Foxworthy of KACo and Jack Cain of the Department for Local Government (DLG). Department staff reports were presented, and three Intergovernmental Reviews were approved. Executive Director Kevin Cornette gave his report, followed by remarks from Chairperson Rebecca McGinnis. The meeting was then adjourned.

I also attended the Governor's Energy Conference in Lexington. Mr. Ben Collier participated in a panel discussion about tourism and outdoor recreation in Lewis County. We also heard presentations covering environmental issues, housing, data centers, and nuclear energy. It was a very informative conference.

I attended and spoke at the Lewis County Republican candidate forum. I was given one minute to speak and took the opportunity to thank the good people of Lewis County for allowing me to serve another term. Several other candidates also spoke during the event. Thank you to the Republican Party and Chairman Ben Collier for organizing the event.

The announcement of the Prosperity One Nuclear Project in Lewis County gained a lot of attention throughout our county and beyond. Some people were excited about the announcement, while others had reservations about nuclear energy. There is still much work to be done before an actual project can move forward. This project has the potential to create an enormous number of high-quality jobs in our county and region. I look forward to learning as much as possible about the project with you, working with the Nuclear Company staff in whatever capacity I can, and helping our community navigate this opportunity.

I attended the BTADD Transportation Meeting in Maysville. Chairman Matt Wallingford called the meeting to order, followed by approval of the previous meeting minutes. The goals and objectives were discussed and approved without changes. The bylaws were also discussed and approved without changes. Highway Districts #6 and #9 provided updates on projects in their respective areas. The meeting was then adjourned.

I attended a community CPR training hosted by the Black Oak Fire Department. Mark Riley, Michael Byble with Lewis County EMS, and Assistant Director/Paramedic Colton McCann with Fleming County EMS provided the training. Thank you all for offering this training to our community!

I attended Riffel's Camp & Float Adventures' First Annual Halloween Candy Drop. Wow, what a crowd! This was a wonderful, well-planned event, and everyone had a great time. Thank you to Riffel's for hosting this event for our community!

I attended the Trinity Fish and Game Club's annual Halloween Social. As usual, there was plenty of great food and a great turnout. Thank you to President Marty Wright and Secretary Marie Applegate for organizing another successful event.

I attended Comprehend Inc.'s annual dinner and banquet. Several employees were recognized with gifts in honor of their 5, 10, and 20 years of service. It was a great opportunity for board members to interact with employees and thank them for their work throughout the region. New board members Kavin Cartmell and Ancil Lewis were introduced and welcomed.

We also recognized Chairperson Rebecca Cartmell and Board Member Earl Bush, who will be retiring from the board. Congratulations to Marty Voiers, the incoming board chair! A special thank-you to Chairperson Rebecca Cartmell, Interim CEO Natalie McLeskey, and HR Coordinator Crystal Bickley for their work and dedication.

I attended the LVCAP monthly Board of Directors meeting at the Robertson County Senior Center. I called the meeting to order, followed by prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. The previous meeting minutes were approved. The financial report was presented and approved, and Kenny Walters provided program reports.

The board discussed and updated the mission statement. Organizational monitoring standards and the Board Vendor Disclosure Statement were also approved. Due to several board members being absent, the board postponed the election of officers. I agreed to continue serving as chairman for another month. The meeting was then adjourned.

I traveled to Firebrick to check on the South Shore Lewis County Water Project. Great progress has been made, thanks to the hard work and cooperation of a long list of partners. I want to thank Chad Clark and Utility & Environmental Concepts for the outstanding work they have done and continue to do on this important project.

While in the area, I also visited Nelson Brothers Inc. We met with Plant Manager Ben Mitchell and Joey McCann, who gave us a tour of the facility. We discussed how things were going. We are thankful to have Nelson Brothers in Lewis County.

Treasurer Penny Lee and I met with Steven Hamilton, Nicholas County Judge/Executive, and several Nicholas County magistrates to discuss animal shelters. We covered a number of topics related to shelter operations and services. I also took them to visit our animal shelter and introduced them to Animal Control Officer Markus Rayburn.

Finance Officer Morgan Cooper and I visited Central Elementary School to pass out candy during its annual Halloween parade. Thank you for inviting us and for giving us the opportunity to hand out candy to all your wonderful students!

October brought some beautiful weather, and the month was packed with events, meetings, and training opportunities. I am proud of the progress being made throughout Lewis County and grateful for everyone who continues to work hard to make our community a better place.

I look forward to even more progress in November as we continue working together and begin gearing up for the holiday season. It will be here before we know it!

