

SEBREE BANNER



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ALYSSA CARTWRIGHT WAS crowned Webster County's 2027 Distinguished Young Woman during the annual program last Saturday. See additional photos from the program in this week's paper.



KATIE LACKEY AND Wes Alexander were crowned queen and king at homecoming ceremonies held at Webster County High School last Friday night.

OEA Releases Second WCBOE Investigation Report

The Office of Education Accountability (OEA) has completed its second investigation of the Webster County Board of Education after receiving allegations of wrongdoing in the district. The report, released Friday, September 25, is in response to WCBOE members' alleged violations of education statutes and regulations, specifically Kentucky's open meetings law.

According to the report, OEA staff visited the district and in-

terviewed board members Amanda Coomes, Melony Hobgood and David Asher and other relevant district personnel on June 4, 2026, regarding an allegation that the board members discussed public business with district staff outside a formal meeting, violating the Kentucky Open Meetings Law.

The final investigative report notes that OEA received a complaint alleging that Coomes, Hobgood and Asher met with district

administrators after the May 26, 2026, regular board meeting discussing personnel positions, salary schedules and the district budget in what is described as an impromptu gathering of principals and other district personnel in the board conference room where the board meeting had been held. The report says the informal meeting was prompted by a desire to discuss the board's decision during the regular meeting against approving extra (per-

sonnel) positions requested by principals. Two of those positions were not vacant as they were held through annual contracts that required approval each year. A Providence Elementary School assistant principal position was not approved for renewal although it had been approved each of the last three years.

During the board meeting when approval of the position was recommended, that motion failed. The request for additional positions failed on motion by Coomes and a second by Venita Murphy with one ye and four nay votes.

The OEA report says much of the follow-up meeting centered around how the lack of approval would impact the individuals who currently held the positions and what actions could be taken to ensure they would not leave the district before the board could address the requested positions with the new superintendent. The discussion included details about

the years of service and the potential loss of health insurance benefits for the individual who served as assistant principal as well as suggestions regarding how to financially retain this person if the board didn't approve the position at a later meeting. The conversation also included principal options about which schools had a greater need for the requested additional positions.

OEA's report says multiple interviewees stated that there was mention of a quorum being present or the meeting being "illegal." Mrs. Coomes stated she made a lighthearted comment about having a quorum as she was leaving. District administrators participating in the conversation did not request involvement by Mr. Asher, Mrs. Coomes or Mrs. Hobgood, the report says.

Based on Kentucky Revised Statutes 61.800-61.850 which provide open meeting laws for the state, a meeting is defined as

"gatherings of every kind, including video, teleconferences, regardless of where the meeting is held, and whether regular of special and informational or casual gatherings held in anticipation of or in conjunction with a regular or special meeting. The WCSB policy 01.42 defines regular meetings as all meetings of a quorum of the members of the board at which any public business is discussed or at which any action is taken by the agency. Public business is the discussion of the various alternatives to a given issue about which the board has had the option to take action.

While no action was taken by the board members present at the impromptu meeting after the May 26, regular board meeting, the discussion revolved around the options available to support principals until the board had the opportunity to revisit the additional positions that were not yet approved but had been

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Sebree City Council Sets 2026 Tax Rate

The Sebree City Council met in a called session on Monday, September 28 with Mayor Billy Smith presiding and four council members in attendance. Also present were City Clerk Mary Meredith and City Attorney Will Cox.

Council members Perry Culberston and Jana Forker were not present for the meeting.

In a session that lasted about 20 minutes, council members passed second reading of the 2026 tax rate ordinance and held first reading of an ordinance that would require individuals and organizations to obtain a permit before a fund-raising event could be held on the street within the city limits of Sebree.

At their regular meeting on September 21, the council had first reading of the 2026 tax rate ordinance. At that meeting, members discussed accepting the compensating rate plus four percent. That action would have required the city to hold a public meeting to obtain comments from citizens concerning the rate.

On Monday night, the city attorney explained that because the property assessment within the city has increased there is no need to take the four percent. The ordinance was amended to set the 2026 for real property at 0.2950 cents per \$100.00 of assessed valuation. The 2026 rate for personal property is set at 0.4020 cents per \$100.00 of assessed valuation.

On a motion by council member Jim Williams and a second by council member Kathy Edwards, the council voted to adopt the 2026 tax rate ordinance on a 3-1 vote. Williams, Ms. Edwards, and Kord Cooper voted to approve the ordinance. Council member Pam Jones voted no on the motion.

The second ordinance – designed to limit "bucket shake" fund-raisers at the intersection of KY 56 and U.S. 41 – was also discussed. Volunteers were at that intersection last weekend seeking to raise funds for Teen Challenge. According to accounts on Monday night, traffic was affected by the placement of signs in the roadway. Mayor Smith noted there have been several such fund-raisers over the past months.

On Monday night, first reading was held on an ordinance that will require a permit be issued before a fund-raiser can be scheduled. That permit would be required for each fund-raising event, and individuals and/or organizations would be limited to three fund-raisers within a 12 month period. Additionally, all fund-raising activities will have to be done in daylight hours.

Second reading of the ordinance will be held at the regular meeting of the council on Monday, October 19.

No further business came before the council, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 P.M.

Webster Fiscal Court Meets

Webster County Fiscal Court met in a routine session Monday morning hearing updates from deputy judge/executive Ryan Hammack, accepting a commemorative check from Senator Robby Mills for the Sebree Springs housing development and approving a number of personnel matters.

Following the call to order, magistrates heard a report from Hammack on his activities since the last meeting. Hammack noted that he had worked with Zara Toal in a business and industry round table meeting, attended the most recent Chamber of Commerce meeting, attended the annual Big Rivers meeting and met with several of the county's mayors to discuss their projects, needs and ways they can help each other. Judge/Executive Steve Henry noted that this is the first time since the LARK program has been in effect that all six communities have applied for funding. Previously Dixon has

been the only city to apply for those funds.

Senator Robby Mills briefly addressed the court and presented a \$2 million commemorative check that will help fund the infrastructure at the Sebree Springs housing development. In his comments, Mills noted that the population of Kentucky is growing, the state has a healthy rainyday fund and the state's one time spending bill is providing the funding for the Webster County project on the outskirts of Sebree. The money will be used for roads, water, sewer and other infrastructure needs. The funding was announced earlier this year following the state legislative session.

In accepting the check Henry noted that "it is a huge gift for Webster County to be written into the budget." He thanked Mills for the role he played in securing the funds for

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