



THE PRESCHOOL DEPARTMENT – its team of teachers, instructional assistants and support staff – received a **HIVE Award** at the Woodford County Board of Education (BOE) meeting on Aug. 24 for earning a Level 5 rating at all four elementary schools. Pictured, from left, front, are WCPS Superintendent Lori Jones, Becky Short, Rosa Thompson, Emily Hancock, Courtney Chaney, Katie Harvey, Megan Moore, Stacy Fugate, Lauren Kreager and Miranda Fazio; back, BOE Chair Adam Brickler, BOE members Sarah McCoun and Sherri Springate, Preschool Director Kim Johnson, BOE member KT Gould, BOE student-representative Reese Divine and BOE Vice Chair Ambrose Wilson IV. (Photo by Bob Vlach)

WCPS preschool program gets 5 Star Ratings at every school

By Bob Vlach
Woodford Sun Staff

The Woodford County Board of Education congratulated the district’s preschool department for achieving 5 Star ratings at all four elementary schools during its regular meeting on Aug. 24. “It was a long, hard process. It was a lot of individuals, as well as a group effort and commitment...,” said Preschool Director Kim Johnson. To reach a Level 5 rating – the highest possible awarded by the Kentucky All STARS Quality Rating and Improvement System – the preschool programs demonstrated exceptional standard-setting work in classroom and instructional quality, family

and community engagement, staff qualifications and professional development, and administrative/leadership practices, according to information from Woodford County Public Schools (WCPS). WCPS was previously a 5 Star program, Johnson said, but now every preschool center must go through the process to earn that highest rating. It has been a three-year process for preschool staff and administrators to complete training and then stay committed to getting a 5 Star rating, she explained. By being mindful to provide developmentally appropriate classrooms for children ages 3 and 4, everything educators do in a preschool has a foundation of play so children with developmental delays

are ready for kindergarten, Johnson said. In addition to becoming a 5 Star preschool program again, Johnson said she wanted to open a childcare facility and offer a wraparound program – and “all of those things have come to fruition ... so I’m really tickled.” On Wednesday, Sept. 2 at 10 a.m., WCPS will host a ribbon cutting at the new Little Legacy Hive, which Johnson said was an Early Childhood Center for preschool students when she came here as a preschool teacher 18 years ago. Offering a wraparound childcare program is exciting to her because “parents need to be able to have reliable, affordable and quality childcare in Woodford County,” Johnson said.

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clearing up dry hydrants with help from the Fiscal Court. But, as Gill noted later in the meeting, the water pressure issue is a result of areas in Southern Woodford County that have chronically had serious issues, which are out of the control of the WCFD. He also explained that the District is out of compliance with the requirements of the Special Purpose Government Agency due to the tight turnaround of its audit reporting requirements from when the District has the information to provide to its accountants. Montgomery said he has been in communication with the SPGA, and has been assured: “Don’t worry about it, enter it when you get it.” “If you don’t have anything good to say about the WCFD, just don’t say nuttin’,” he concluded. “I don’t see the benefit anybody gets on Facebook by attacking the fire department. When people come to me, they aren’t mad at the fire department; they want to know what’s wrong with the Fiscal Court.” Later in the meeting following the acceptance of the property tax rates of the Woodford County Health Department and Woodford County Library Board, Kay said that though the districts set their own rates, the Fiscal Court “is responsible for the tax policy and encouraging the tax districts to represent and respond to the needs of Woodford County citizens . .

. who are grappling with high inflation . . . property tax is important and important to bring down.” He then went on to respond to Montgomery. “No comments I’ve ever made in (Fiscal Court) or on Facebook had anything . . . to relate to the operations of the District, never said anything about Chief Montgomery or our firefighters, who I respect deeply and are heroes, and Chief Montgomery is a hero.” He then said, “I will say there are members of this Fiscal Court who have taken to Facebook, which is their right. . . . (But), these debates (during meetings) are welcome as are any debates related to public policy.” Kay noted that the decision to hire three new firefighters by the District were not included in the 2026-2027 FY budget, and that though the Fiscal Court is willing to support the District with additional funding, and has shown through use of ARPA funds to increase salaries and grants to purchase equipment, it is the responsibility of the District to ask for help and make the Fiscal Court aware when it needs help. Gill responded to Kay’s comments, saying, “I have seen very negative comments directed at the fire department and made by Fiscal Court members.” She went on to detail how the ISO rating was primarily due to the chronic water issues in the county, and out of the control of the District. She also pointed out, as she had at the earlier

August meeting, “These are first responders who have to be ready at a moment’s notice, they control six fire stations, and the amount (needed) for present and future needs, which this court knows nothing about.” She ended her remarks saying, “I am just asking (us) to leave our personal agendas at the door, let’s get back to just serving the county and stop trying to micromanage the other SPGs.” Magistrate Darrell Varner said he agreed with Gill’s points, and added that though invited, neither Kay nor Magistrate John Gentry attended any of the District’s public meetings. He also noted the District likely needed to make the three new firefighter hires as it has had a lack of recruiting new volunteers. “Stop talking on Facebook, let’s move on and do what the people elected us to do,” he pleaded. The final word on the subject was left to the senior-most member of the court in terms of service, Magistrate Jackie Brown, “This is my seventh court . . . after all this is over, we still have to live here. Let’s settle down and get off Facebook. This is no different from every four years (when we have magistrate elections); everyone here is nice, you are smart and you are young, well, some of us. If you have something to say to someone, just go talk to them.” Kay concluded the discussion, thanking all for engaging in the debate and discussion, for the civility

BOE’s first agenda review meeting gets mixed reviews from board members

By Bob Vlach
Woodford Sun Staff

Woodford County Board of Education (BOE) members Sherri Springate and Sarah McCoun voiced frustration with not having enough time to review information and materials prior to last Thursday’s agenda review meeting. For agenda meetings to be productive, BOE members need to receive the materials on the Monday before the Thursday meeting instead of Wednesday, McCoun said. Given the smaller staff at Central Office to cut costs, board Chair Adam Brickler said asking for those materials on the Monday before the agenda meeting on Thursday, “I don’t think is a reasonable request.” “I do,” said McCoun. She said financial and other agenda materials were available to the BOE for review prior to the planning meetings on the Monday before regular meetings when Scott Hawkins was superintendent and had a similar-size Central Office staff. Describing the agenda meeting as a compromise so the BOE had an opportunity to discuss items on the regular meeting agenda beforehand, Brickler said, “We’re going to keep it this schedule for now. If we get to a point where we feel like the information is needed more in advance, then we can work with (superintendent) Dr. (Lori) Jones and her team on that.” “... I don’t think that’s very helpful,” said McCoun. Emphasizing the first agenda meeting was helpful, Brickler said board members asked a lot of questions and got a lot of answers during the meeting, which was conducted via video teleconference and lasted for more than an hour. Board member KT Gould said the agenda meeting was an opportunity to get questions answered before the regular meeting, which was very beneficial. She also acknowledged they had a tight window of opportunity to review the agenda and formulate questions before the agenda meeting. “Even if we just had a little bit more time with the agenda, it would become more fruitful in conversations and serve our constituents as well. So if that’s a possibility, I would really appreciate that,” she said. During a review of contracts, Gould questioned spending \$300 to rent Church Barn

Farm on Fords Mill Road for a budget/tax information session in Nonesuch “given the tightness of our budget.” During a discussion about contracts for mental health services, Gould, a mental health professional, stressed the importance of having licensed clinicians for those services. Jones said she will reach out to district social worker Jill Hargis for an answer to her concern related to Woodford County Public Schools (WCPS) ensuring they have master-level mental health providers under terms of the contract. Later, after responding to questions about WCPS exploring the possibility of allowing cell towers to use rented space on school properties and hearing Gould’s request that WCPS do its own “evidence-backed research” into the pros and cons of allowing cell towers, Jones told board members, “We have a much smaller staff at Central Office. So we are committed to everything that we’ve laid out in our vision and that you guys have asked me to do. And we are diligent – very diligent – in working overtime to make sure all those things are accomplished. But we do have a *much smaller* staff, so being mindful of that is very helpful.” **Pisgah property** The BOE was also informed that WCPS did not receive any sealed bids on the former board office/Central Office facility on Pisgah Pike. Jones said she will recommend that the BOE extend the period of time to accept sealed bids, but the BOE could also vote to sell the building at public auction. She also noted the expenses associated with owning a property that’s not serving students. The meeting began with Jones reviewing agenda items for the regular BOE meeting on Aug. 24, including fundraisers for school organizations/clubs and athletic programs. Also, Central Office will seek BOE approval to ask for donated items as incentives for student attendance and staff safety. During a review of travel requests and given the district’s current financial realities, Gould said if career and technical education (CTE) funds are used as a supplemental funding source for a trip to the National FFA Convention at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, “shouldn’t those funds be utilized for all students to have that opportunity versus a slight few?” Jones said she would check on that and get an answer for Gould.

all showed even though, for some, it was emotional. **Other matters** Due to space and time, there will be a story in next

week’s *Sun* covering other subjects taken up by the Fiscal Court, including: a permit application for the Bourbon Chase Run, a new airfield at

the county park for the model airplane club and rezoning of the Midway EMS station to sell.

FALL ELECTION LOCAL CANDIDATE FORUMS

SPONSORED BY THE WOODFORD SUN, WOODFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU, WOODFORD COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WOODFORD COUNTY REPUBLICAN PARTY, AND FORMER MIDWAY MAYOR TOM BOZARTH

All questions for the candidates will come from Woodford County residents. Send your question to forum@woodfordsun.com, identify which race it is for, and include your name and contact phone number to confirm it is from you.

All forums will be from 6 to 8 p.m., and moderated by former Lex Fox 56 Anchorman Marvin Bartlett.

September 14: Midway City Council, Fiscal Court Magistrate District 1, and County Jailor at Duthie Auditorium at Midway University.

September 22: Versailles City Council and Versailles Mayor at WCHS auditorium.

September 24: Fiscal Court Magistrate Districts 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 at WCHS auditorium.

October 1: County Judge-Executive, County Attorney, and County Clerk at WCHS auditorium.

Forums located at the high school are not affiliated with Woodford County High School or Woodford County Public Schools.

THE DISTRICT market days

SECOND & FOURTH Saturdays

MAY - AUGUST 8:30 AM - 12 PM

local meat, eggs, vegetables, flowers, baked goods, kids crafts, live music & more

THE DISTRICT

105 ROSE HILL AVE, VERSAILLES, KENTUCKY