

# Bridge project moving forward

BY TOM LATEK  
KENTUCKY TODAY

Gov. Andy Beshear joined Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine on Friday to announce that the two states have received federal environmental approval to move the \$3.6 billion Brent Spence Bridge Corridor project forward, without tolls.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued a decision that ends the federal environmental review, allowing the project to advance to design and construction.

"The Brent Spence Bridge Corridor project is a testament to what can happen when we work together to get things done," said Gov. Beshear. "The federal approval is a major milestone for us, and we're grateful to all our partners and communities for their feedback. We look forward to completing this project, which will further boost our economic growth and create more good jobs for our families."

"This is an important step forward in bringing efficiency to our nation's supply chain," stated Gov. DeWine. "The project will address one of the worst truck bottlenecks in the nation by improving safety and travel on an interstate connection that carries more than \$400 billion worth of freight every year. It's also a big step in reducing the frustration and inconvenience drivers have experienced in the corridor for more than 20 years."

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# COUNCIL

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Christopher reiterated several times he "can only appoint" and that it is "up to council to approve [or disapprove] my appointment."

Members of the council appeared to misunderstand his intentions, confusing "interim" with "permanent" and "appointment" with "approval."

Councilmember Kim Crupper indicated the way he read the mayor's May 1 email, "Basically you can hire him, pretty much without our blessing."

Christopher answered "That is not correct" and clarified that, according to the city ordinances, he can appoint someone as chief and that person "is interim chief until council either approves of my appointment or denies my appointment."

Christopher said he appointed Willoby as chief, however he would not become permanent fire chief until approved by council. He related this was the process used to fill the Williamstown Chief of Police position recently.

Councilmember Gina Austin Smith asked for clarification. "What are we voting on ... here - interim or permanent position?"

Councilmember John Coleman asked "Interim for two days, and now we are hiring?"

Crupper asked, "Should we have publically advertised for a Williamstown fire chief?"

Austin noted, "We don't have to; we just do what we want...?"

Crupper continued, "We should, as an equal opportunity employer,

we should have advertised if we are going to have a fire chief."

Coleman asked what type of commitment Willoby could give the council, with his having been appointed to council less than a month before and then resigning and taking on the fire chief's position; what assurance could he give he would not "decide retirement was better" than being fire chief.

Willoby said he felt he could be more effective to the community as fire chief; on the council he was just "one vote."

According to Christopher, he had to appoint an acting interim fire chief within ten days of Whalen's retirement.

He said he did receive a recommendation from Whalen for Nathaniel Marshall to serve as interim but "ultimately appointed" Willoby. He said Willoby would be better equipped to handle upcoming issues with the fire department, which he was not at liberty to discuss.

He said, as well, he was following the City Code of Ordinances.

Christopher said members of the fire department had asked to address the council on the matter and this was appropriate.

Williamstown Fire Department Assistant Chief Patrick Whalen and Johnny Philippo, captain of the fire department and fire department board member, spoke.

Whalen recommended there be "defined salary benefits as well as job qualifications set forth by a hiring board." The board would "perform interviews of candidates and present suitable, qualified applicants to the

council and mayor for consideration by Aug. 1."

Philippo explained the fire department and board members recommended Nathaniel Marshall as interim chief and that they had for the past "five weeks" been training Marshall to take over.

Both expressed surprise at Willoby's appointment.

Philippo said he believes the fire department should be involved in the process of choosing a new chief.

He suggested council keep Willoby as interim chief and "open up the position to applicants so that a formal hiring process can be followed." He said the department could use the time to "work alongside Mr. Willoby and hopefully build confidence from both sides."

There were also questions as to the adequacy of Willoby's current status of training.

Christopher further clarified his decision to appoint Willoby, saying because of "the nature of what we have found out over the course of the last month" he "felt it was not a wise move to continue to allow somebody who is currently in the middle of that to step up to the plate and be in charge."

Instead, he felt it "better to bring somebody from outside who is not a part of the current Williamstown Fire Department and put them in charge. That way, there is no favoritism; covering up anybody, anything that has happened."

Ultimately, a motion was made to table the issue. Christopher will meet with Whalen to set up a hiring board and possible procedures to create a job application for a fire

chief. Willoby remains interim chief until further notice.

## 2024-2025 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Alex Cummins accompanied City Clerk Vivian Link in discussions of the upcoming budget.

Link asked that council go through the proposed budget page by page.

As she noted the amount of attorney fees had increased "quite a bit" Crupper spoke up.

"You're still light on that." He indicated the attorney's fees would possibly have to be doubled "but that's just my opinion."

Christopher noted budget items such as a "grant writer" and a "code enforcement officer" were more of a "wish list" than a requirement.

Crupper said, "There are going to be several capital expenses and things that you are going to have to slice out to balance your budget because you gotta keep in mind, this year for 2024-25 you've positioned yourself to where you simply cannot borrow no money right now, so anything you want to buy that is a sizable item you want to have to finance, you got to forget it."

Crupper later noted the city cannot borrow money due to "the lawsuit." Over the course of the evening, Crupper proceeded to "slice out items" to "get the general fund back up."

Items on the chopping block included vehicles, Conrad Lane repairs, street department vehicle and equipment, police cruisers and sidewalks.

Link noted a "fire funds" item would be created "for the expenses from the revenue that we will be getting

from the county now." She had already included the amounts as revenue.

## UPGRADING CITY BILLING SYSTEM

A required upgrade to the billing system cannot be removed from the budget as the system must be upgraded in 2025. The current system becomes obsolete at the end of 2024.

Alex Cummins, of the clerk's office, said the new system can have autopay with electronic draft so can have immediate payments without lag time for payments. The system will have email notification options but will also continue paper mailing and in-person payments.

Council preliminarily decided to include the credit card fee to be passed on to customers. It is currently costing the city approximately \$48,000 per year.

The fee the customer will see is: \$2.50 on charges up to \$50; over that will be a 2.5% charge.

Cummins said if approved prior to July 1, the city will receive a \$9,000 credit. Final decision on this matter will be done later in the budget discussions.

In a vote of four to one with Coleman voting "no," council moved into closed session to discuss the replacement of city council member Willoby.

Upon exiting the closed session, council moved to vote to name replacement for Willoby. Coleman exited the meeting, "stepping down" so as not to cast a vote.

The remaining council members moved to vote then to nominate and unanimously approve David Henson as the new council member.

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# MASTER COMMISSIONER AUCTION

Friday May 24th 5:30PM

4137 Center Ridge Rd  
Demossville Ky, Pendleton Co



2.2+ Acres, 1991 Crim 28x72 Double wide mobile home on block foundation with a barn all situated on a nice corner lot.  
Frontage on Center Ridge Road (Hwy 3184) and Knoxville Gardnersville Road  
Visit our websites for up to date information: [SWITZERASSOC.COM](http://SWITZERASSOC.COM) & [AUCTIONZIP.COM](http://AUCTIONZIP.COM)  
Announcements AUCTION DAY take precedence over written material

In Order to comply with the orders of the Pendleton Circuit Court, in action 23-CI-00071 [The Estate of Dallas Barton and Raymond Barton, Jr. v. Carol Barton Mefford, et al.] the Master Commissioner will sell on the premises of the property located at 4137 Center Ridge Road, Demossville, KY 41033, on May 24th, 2024 at the hour of 5:30PM. Said property shall be sold as part of a partition action due to indivisibility as set out in the Judgment and upon the (unless otherwise indicated) following terms and conditions: 1) The purchaser shall be required to pay ten percent (10%) of the purchase price on the date of the sale, to apply on the purchase price; 2) The balance of the purchase price shall be due and payable, in cash or certified funds, within thirty (30) days from the date of sale; 3) The purchaser shall be required to execute a bond, with good and sufficient surety thereon for the unpaid balance of the purchase price, said bond to bear interest at the rate of 12% percent per annum from the date of sale, until paid; 4) The purchaser shall have the privilege of paying all or any part of the purchase price or paying said bond before maturity by paying the balance of the principal, together with all accrued interest thereon; 5) The purchaser shall be required to assume and pay any and all ad valorem taxes on the subject property for the current year, and all subsequent taxes; 6) The subject property shall be sold free and clear of all liens and claims of any party to this action, except restrictions and easements thereon appearing of record in the Pendleton County Clerk's Office, if any; 7) Possession of the subject property shall be given to the purchaser upon confirmation of Commissioner's sale and payment of the purchase price, and the Defendants or any persons claiming through them shall have vacated the premises by that time; and 8) Said property shall be sold subject to: a) Assessments for public improvements levied against the subject property; b) Existing zoning ordinances, statutes, laws or regulations; c) Any facts which an accurate survey or inspection of the property may disclose; d) The property is being sold "AS IS."

The Property is as follows: 1. The Estate of Dallas Barton and Raymond Barton, Jr., (Spouse of Shirley Barton), Plaintiffs, v. Carol Barton Mefford (single), Donna Barton Schneider (single), Brenda Barton Moses (single), Richard Barton (single), Diana Barton Tatum (single), Kenny Tatum (spouse of Diana Barton Tatum), Shirley Barton (spouse of Raymond Barton, Jr.), Unknown Occupants of 4137 Center Ridge Road, Demossville, KY41033 and The Estate of Donna L. Barton, Defendants  
PIDN # 002-00-00-017.00 Address: 4137 Center Ridge Road Demossville, KY 41033  
Pendleton Circuit Court Case: 23-CI-00071  
Judgment ordering that the real property described therein and the 1991 Crim Doublewide Mobile Home bearing the VIN: CALS0710AB located thereon, be sold. The property being sold is described in the Judgment; entered in Pendleton Circuit Court, Action No. 23-CI-00071 on April 5, 2024 and with a Property Identification Number of 002-00-00-017.00. Being part of that same property conveyed to Dallas Barton and Donna Barton, husband and wife, with rights of survivorship, by Charles E. Loyd, Jr. and Goldie A. Loyd, husband and wife, by Deed dated the 23rd day of August 1985 and of record in Deed Book 154, Page 372. Donna Barton died on the 14th day of June 2017 and the property vested solely with Dallas Barton pursuant to the survivorship provision. Dallas Barton died intestate on the 22nd day of May 2020 leaving the following heirs at law who each took one-sixth (1/6) ownership interest in the subject property: Raymond Barton, Jr., Carol Barton Mefford, Donna Barton Schneider; Brenda Barton Moses, Richard Barton, and Diana Barton Tatum. As shown by Affidavit of Descent to be recorded in the Pendleton County, Kentucky records. All pursuant to Judgment and Order of Sale entered April 5, 2024. Plaintiff's Attorney: William J. Verax, IV, 115 E. Pike Street, Cynthiana, KY 41031. Phone: (859) 234-4445. Edwin M. Culbertson, Pendleton County Master Commissioner, 109 E. Pike Street, Cynthiana, KY 41031, P: (859) 234-3962 F: (859) 234-3966

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