

BOARD

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The 2026 general fund revenues will be approximately \$12 million in state SEEK funding, \$5.3 million in on behalf payments, and local tax revenue of \$4.6 million

General fund expenditures will be approximately \$18 million on salaries, wages, and benefits. Transportation expense would be \$2 million, building and grounds \$2.2 million, and technology expense \$664,000.

Besides the general fund, other funds include the special revenue fund, the food service fund, the day care fund, and the capital outlay/building/debt service fund.

As of the draft budget, the anticipated contingency projection for the year was \$10 million.

After the draft budget, the board then unanimously approved the financial report for December 2024, which showed a slight decrease on the cash ending balance, from \$15.7 million at the end of November, down to \$15.3 million at the end of December.

Compared to the prior year, the general fund held \$2.1 million more at the end of December 2024 than December 2023, or \$11.38 million versus \$9.25 million.

Earlier in the meeting, the board in consent items approved contracts for school resource officers. In 2024 the district had two



Casey County Judge/Executive Randy Dial, left, on Jan. 13 swears in new Casey County Board of Education members for District 1 Kyle Allen, and District 5 Jennifer Overstreet.

school resource officers, both employed by the Liberty Police Department. This year, the district has a contract with the Casey County Sheriff's Office, and hopes to expand its total resource officers to three.

The contracts are for a six month term instead of a one-year term, as the calendar year contract conflicts with the fiscal year, which is July through June instead of January through December.

Superintendent Barry Lee said that after the six months is up at the end of June, the board can look again at the contract and determine whether it wants to go for a fiscal year, or another six months.

According to a 2019 state law (KRS 158.4414), a school resource officer should be on every school grounds by the school year 2025-2026, but throughout the state it has been difficult to find and hire, not just SROs, but police

in general. The three resource officers would be two short of the law, as Casey County Schools has five campuses.

According to the same law, if a school is unable to find a resource officer, it can employ a "guardian."

Board member Allen asked if there were any districts employing a guardian at the current time. Superintendent Lee said that there were not, to his knowledge, any guardians employed by any district.

Also in the meeting:

- Lee announced that the character education Word of the Month would be "Loyalty" defined as "Being faithful to a person, group, and cause." Lee said that students were reading the definition on radio station WKDO 98.7.

- The character education program is designed to encourage and reward good behavior among the students in Casey County schools.

- Chair Darrell Bar-

low, and Vice-Chair Terry Price, were re-elected to their positions on the board.

- After an executive session, the Casey County Board of Education unanimously voted to extend a four-year contract to Superintendent Lee, through June 30, 2029, and authorized board chair Barlow to "execute and negotiate a contract" with Lee on behalf of the board.

Lee thanked the board for the opportunity, and for what they do for the kids.

- Liberty Elementary School Principal David McFadden presented a report on the school's progress, which went from being classified as an "orange" to a "green" in the most recent evaluations. He said that the teachers were working hard to keep the momentum moving in the right direction, but it is difficult to depend on the performance of eight- to 11-year old students.

- Lee gave a mid-year update, and said that the radio equipment was nearly installed, and that the school's progress toward replacing old buses is ongoing, going from having one of the oldest fleets in the state, to buying multiple buses every year. Also in the report was the announcement that the district would have a fitness facility available for staff to use in the afternoons and evenings.

The next meeting of the Casey County Board of Education would be at 7 p.m. Feb. 10.

GARBAGE

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The Liberty City Council on Dec. 4, 2019 signed a five-year deal with Rumpke to keep costs at \$11.50 per month. An extra can was \$2.50.

Richie at the Jan. 13 meeting said that this rate now was by far the lowest that Rumpke was being paid, and that most of the rates were now at around \$20.

She said that to match rising costs the new rates were a significant increase.

"They are quite a bit of an increase. I'm not going to lie; they did increase. But again we're talking five years ago is what they're increased from," she said. "Immediately after we started servicing the City of Liberty, COVID hit. The price of vehicles, the price of maintenance, the price of labor jumped up."

Instead of a one-time jump up to a rate closer to the company's average,

Richie said that she was proposing a two-dollar increase every year on the three-year contract, plus a fuel surcharge to offset high diesel fuel costs.

In February the company will charge \$13.50 plus fuel surcharge. She said that with the current fuel surcharge the base rate would be \$15.61. Each additional can will cost \$3.50.

The fuel surcharge will automatically adjust each month, based on the price of diesel fuel. The three-year contract includes an exclusivity clause, which means Rumpke is the only hauler allowed to collect garbage in the City of Liberty.

In January 2026, the rate will rise to \$15.50 per month, with the fuel surcharge. In January 2027, the rate will rise to \$17.50 per month.

"That still keeps the rate under twenty dollars, which I can (say) I have 28 contracts that I take care of, that have just residen-

tial and commercial service on them, and I have maybe two (contracts) that are under twenty right now," Frances said.

Councilman Lewis Allen asked about the commercial rate. Richie replied that the commercial rate for dumpsters would go up 10 percent, and add a fuel surcharge.

The commercial cart service would be the same as the residential.

Councilman Nick Turner said that the rate was reasonable.

"Just an FYI there's people in the county who pay \$25 per month," he said.

The council and mayor agreed that Rumpke had done a good job over the past five years in collecting garbage for the city.

The council unanimously approved the three-year contract.

After the only item on the agenda, Mayor Haddad gave updates from the city. He said that the city had been awarded a grant of nearly \$80,000 to repair the head wall of the dam at

Lake Liberty. This damage is age-related and normal after the 50 years the dam has served the city.

The cost to the city would be \$20,000 for the repair.

The other costly item for the city was a main sewer line break on the Green River, across from the sewer plant near downtown Liberty. He said that the line broke about two weeks ago.

City Operations Manager Allen Sparr reported that trucks were running

back and forth, collecting raw sewage and taking it to the treatment plant.

The repair would be \$200,000, as it would include drilling under the river.

Sparr explained that after flooding events, the line had been moving, causing the break, and going under the river would fix the problem.

The city has been in contact with the Kentucky Infrastructure Authority (KIA). Haddad said that the Phase 1 sewer project

was nearing completion, and had a \$400,000 surplus. The city will seek to add this project to the phase 1, which would completely cover the cost of the repair.

Haddad also reported that legislature would consider the city's \$9 million request to build a new lake adjacent to Lake Liberty. He said the he hopes to hear news by next month.

The next meeting of the Liberty City Council would be at 5 p.m. Feb. 10 in Liberty City Hall.

INSPECTOR

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Their report will be at the next meeting of the Casey County Fiscal Court, along with a public hearing on the road. The next regularly scheduled fiscal court meeting would be at 5 p.m. Feb. 17.

Dial said that there were many roads that were like Shannon Drive, which haven't been used for many years. Yet if the road is on the state map, the road is also on maps like Google Maps, and drivers using directional apps can end up on the road where they shouldn't be.

"It is something that we do need to take a serious look at in the near future and get some of these things cleared up so that we don't have that information out there it not being accurate," Dial said.

Also in the meeting, the fiscal court agreed to hire a new building inspector.

Dial explained that the former inspector had given notice that he would no longer be inspecting buildings.

He said that Carley Fudge had been recommended as a building inspector. Fudge has inspected buildings in Adair and Russell Counties.

"I have had two or three (people) give him a good recommendation," Dial said.

He also presented the court with Fudge's fees to inspect buildings.

The court unanimously approved appointing Fudge as the new inspector.

Also in the meeting:

- The fiscal court approved the Casey County Sheriff's Office budget for 2025-26, the sheriff's maximum salaries for deputies and assistants, and the sheriff's advancement from the state to begin the year 2025.

- The fiscal court approved the Casey County Clerk's budget for 2025-26, and the clerk's maximum salaries for deputies and assistants.

- Dial said that the company contracted to replace the roof at the Casey County Detention Center would delay installation until warmer, drier weather comes. He said there was a minimum temperature for applying the substance, and it must be a certain temperature for up to three days with no rain.

- Sheriff Chad Weddle gave his report for December 2024. In that month, his deputies: drove 13,059; served 32 warrants; opened 14 cases; worked 641.5 hours of court security; worked five accidents; had six DUI arrests; conducted 38 vehicle inspections; had 40 arrests; issued 124 citations for non-arrestable offenses; issued 164 total citations; served 60 summonses, subpoenas and eviction notices; responded to 615 calls; and worked a total of 1,635 hours.

The next meeting would be at 5 p.m. Feb. 17 in the Casey County Judicial Center in Liberty.

All-Heart Award, which came with a \$300 scholarship.

Now back in Casey County, Hernandez looks forward to continuing to represent the county as the Distinguished Young Woman, and looks forward to next year's competition in September.

"I think the biggest thing I'm looking forward to is just seeing who will compete. I'm excited to see what the 2026 class will look like. I think we'll have a lot of good competitors and I'm excited to see what the future holds for them," she said.

WOMAN

FROM PAGE A1

She didn't win any categories, but was recognized as being one of the four hardest-working contestants in the event with the Jackie Thomas

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