

# School calendars amended; board hears reports

BY CHARLIE VANLEUVEN  
CVANLEUVEN@CASEYNEWS.NET

The Casey County Board of Education amended its school calendar for this current school year, and also amended the calendar for the following year in a March 10 meeting.

The board also heard reports regarding finances and attendance.

Superintendent Barry Lee told the board that two days that were normally non-instructional days should become instructional days, to make up for two snow days that were used since January.

“Amending this calendar by making this Friday (March 14) a student day — it was originally scheduled a staff work day — but also making May 2 a student day — it was also a scheduled staff work day — those will offset two days that we missed that we were not able to use NTI,” he said.

The end of school and graduation are, for now, scheduled for May 23. If any other days were missed then the district would add an instructional day on May 27, the Tuesday after Memorial Day.

The board also amended the upcoming school year calendar by moving the Spring Break week to April 6 through April 10, instead of April 13 through April 17.

Prior to the discussion on calendars, Assistant Superintendent Kevin Stephens announced that

down for January, saying that not one school had increased its percentage over the prior month of December.

The highest percentage of attendance was at Jones Park Elementary School at 92.59%. The lowest was Casey County High School at 90.37%. Overall district attendance was 91.1%.

According to a sheet showing the attendance percentage going back ten years to the 2015-16 school year, this January’s 91.1% attendance was the lowest in 10 years.

Stephens said that it was partially due to the amount of respiratory illness going around in the county.

Lee also said that disruptions in the school year were also partially to blame.

“Last week was our second full week back from having at least one or two days off almost every week since Christmas break,” said Lee, adding he hoped the routine would increase attendance. “We are seeing some sickness across the district, but hopefully nothing that’ll be major for us.”

Also in the meeting, Hagen Williams, treasurer and director of finance, told the board that the district held \$15.1 million in its account, down from a beginning cash balance of \$15.3 million.

In looking at the general fund through February 2025, the total receipts for the fiscal year through

the end of February, was at \$13.2 million, up from \$11.8 in the prior fiscal year by that time. State SEEK funds was up \$1.1 over the prior year.

Total expenses were up from \$10.2 million to \$10.4 million in 2025. The ending balance was also up from \$9.4 in 2024 up to \$10.8 in year to date 2025.

Some of the increase in general fund expenses would be related to the district resuming paying for positions out of the general fund as opposed to pandemic-related emergency funding.

Williams said that he doesn’t think of it as an increase, but would describe it as a “normalization.”

“I wouldn’t necessarily call this an increase. I would call this a normalization, and it’s not normal to have \$22 million in federal funds that were (paying for) teachers,” he said.

Also in the meeting, Lee read the “Word of the Month” for March, which is “Discipline” defined as “Having control of our behaviors and actions.”

The “Word of the Month” is part of the district’s Character Education program, to help instill good behaviors in students. Schools and teachers incorporate the word into curriculum and programs.

The next meeting of the Casey County Board of Education would be at 7 p.m. April 14 in the district annex building.

# Sheriff’s office seeks missing teen

BY CHARLIE VANLEUVEN  
CVANLEUVEN@CASEYNEWS.NET

The Casey County Sheriff’s Office was, as of March 16, still seeking a missing 16-year-old girl from a home on Possum Trot Road in Casey County.

Harmony Smith, 16, who is described as being 5 feet, 5 inches tall, weighing 110 pounds, with brown hair longer than shoulder-length and brown eyes.

The office originally sought information on Smith on March 8 but added a warning on



HARMONY SMITH

March 11 that anyone who was keeping information from deputies could be arrested and charged.

“Anyone caught withholding information or har-

boring a missing juvenile will be charged/arrested” the message began in all-caps. “Possible charges include kidnapping, unlawful transaction with a minor, hindering an investigation, etc.”

Casey County Sheriff’s Deputy Hannah Adams said that she could not share much information because it involved a juvenile, and was still an open investigation, but said that police have spoken to several people of interest, and were pursuing all avenues to bring Smith home safely.

# Get your 4-H camper ready for adventure with these 9 prepping exercises

BY JOEY BARNARD  
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H Camp is an exciting opportunity for youth, but a group living environment with high independence can also be stressful. Basic tasks like managing one’s own belongings and navigating the campgrounds can be a big adjustment. Parents and caregivers can make sure their future campers are physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared for their upcoming 4-H adventure with these nine helpful exercises:

1. Pack a suitcase with your child a few days before camp. Packing clothes in Ziploc bags with dry labels can help your child stay organized; dirty clothes can then be repacked at each day’s end in the empty bags.
2. Practice stocking a daypack. Help your child pack their own backpack with items they’ll need for a typical camp day, including a towel, a Ziploc bag for a wet swimsuit, sunscreen, water bottle, hat, and sunglasses. At camp, counselors will also help campers review the schedule and remind them to double-check belongings before moving between activities.
3. Test-drive a shower caddy for toting toiletries. To manage camp toiletries, try using a small backpack for dry items and a caddy or waterproof bag for wet items. Practice using a caddy at home for bathing, brushing teeth, getting ready for the day, and going to bed.
4. Help your child keep track of shower time. Camp shower lines can be long. Practice five-minute showers before camp. The showers at camp are private, but for children who are modest, they can always shower in bathing suits.
5. Prepare to “pitch in” to keep the camp clean. To get into the routine, encourage your youth to sweep, wipe the kitchen table after meals, and make the bed daily.
6. Get comfortable with tracking time and monitoring surroundings. Camp gets busy! While exploring

the campgrounds on the first day, note landmarks. To familiarize your child with the camp layout, look up your campground map on the 4-H website. Before camp, take family walks to prepare your child for hiking.

7. Encourage your child to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. To determine how many ounces your child should drink daily, divide your child’s body weight by two. Start using a camp water bottle in the weeks before camp to track water intake.
8. Learn how to air-dry wet items. No one likes moldy clothes! Teach your child to use a clothesline and space items out to dry in the sun.
9. Teach your child how to take a break. Discuss ways your child can find quiet time in a busy environment and how to recognize when a break is needed. Your camper can ask a counselor for quiet time. Talk about managing emotions, too. Give your child a scenario and discuss what to do if problems arise.

Above all, remind your youth that it’s normal to feel overwhelmed in a new environment and that it is okay to ask for help. Our staff and volunteers want every child to thrive at camp and are committed to

supporting your camper.

Casey County 4-H Camp Applications will be available beginning Monday, March 31st! The first 60 completed applications (with a \$50 deposit) turned in will receive a \$75 discount. Scholarship Applications are also available upon request to provide additional financial assistance. Contact your local Casey County Extension Office for more information on 4-H Camp opportunities. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

The University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment news and communications team provides monthly Extension Exclusives in the categories of Horticulture, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H and Family & Consumer Sciences. To see more exclusives, visit <https://exclusives.ca.uky.edu>.

# Homestead Gardens

— GREENHOUSE & GARDEN CENTER —

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**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**Rural Development**

**East Kentucky Power Cooperative:** Notice of Availability for an Environmental Assessment

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA

**ACTION:** Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment for the Liberty Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine Project (Project)

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, is issuing a Draft Environmental Assessment in connection with possible impacts related to a project proposed by East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC), of Winchester, Kentucky. EKPC is requesting a loan from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) RUS to construct a Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) facility in Casey County, Kentucky and to rebuild and upgrade existing electric transmission lines in Casey and Marion Counties, Kentucky.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Questions and comments should be emailed to the Environmental and Historic Preservation Division, USDA Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service at: [RUSPublicComments@usda.gov](mailto:RUSPublicComments@usda.gov)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Liberty RICE Project includes the construction and operation of an approximately 214-megawatt (MW) net RICE power plant to meet projected load demand and support the integration of increased amounts of intermittent renewable energy generation on the EKPC system. The plant will be powered by natural gas with fuel oil as a backup option. Twelve individual 18-MW RICE would be constructed at a site approximately 3.2 miles north of Liberty in Casey County, Kentucky (Figure 1). The 108-acre Project Site is currently agricultural land that EKPC would develop for the Project. Approximately 43 acres would be permanently disturbed within the proposed fenced facility, 10 acres would be permanently disturbed within new permanent rights of way, 33.8 acres would be temporarily disturbed during construction, and 21.2 acres would be undisturbed. A security fence would be constructed around the permanent facilities.

Operation of the Liberty RICE facility would require installation of a new natural gas pipeline lateral and a new water pipeline to service the facility. The pipeline lateral would extend approximately 530 feet southeast from the Project Site boundary to a tap point on an existing pipeline. The water pipeline would tap into an existing water main located approximately 0.1 mile east of the Project Site. Figure 2 shows the total undisturbed area, construction disturbance area, and permanent disturbance area.

The Project also includes upgrades to approximately 6.6 miles of existing electric transmission line, rebuild of approximately 7.6 miles of existing transmission line, and construction of 0.3 mile of new interconnection transmission line. Approximately 3.9 miles of transmission line upgrade and rebuild would occur approximately 1 mile northwest of Lebanon in Marion County, Kentucky. The remaining transmission line rebuilds and upgrades would occur in Casey County, Kentucky, extending northwest and southeast from the proposed power plant. The locations of the transmission line rebuilds and upgrades are shown in Figure 1.

Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc., an environmental consultant, prepared an Environmental Assessment for EKPC that describes the Project, assesses the proposed Project’s environmental impacts, and summarizes applicable mitigation measures used to minimize environmental effects. RUS has conducted an independent evaluation of the Environmental Assessment and believes that it accurately assesses the impacts of the proposed Project. No significant impacts are expected as a result of Project construction or operation.

Written questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at the email address provided above. RUS will accept questions and comments on the environmental assessment for 14 days from the first date of publication of this notice. All comments must be provided electronically with no hard copy comments being accepted at this time.

Copies of the environmental assessment and supporting documentation will be available for public review on RUS’s website at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/liberty-reciprocating-internal-combustion-engine-rice-project>

Any final action by RUS related to the proposed Project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal environmental laws and regulations and completion of environmental review procedures as prescribed by 7 CFR Part 1970, Environmental Policies and Procedures.

Dated: March 2025

**Figure 1: Liberty RICE Project location**

**Figure 2: Project Site Disturbance Areas**