

Looking back to July 21, 2018

Written by Mary Ann Kearns

The following information was entered into the July 21, 2018, edition of The Ledger Independent:

Russell group sets 2020 goal
Wikipedia describes an atmospheric theater as a type of theater design where patrons were transported “to an exotic European courtyard or garden.” It goes on to say “A cerulean sky, often intricately dotted with accurately depicted starry skies with wispy floating clouds produced by a projector replaced the ornate domes of traditional theatre design. Rather than crystal chandeliers and gilt ornamentation there were arches, trellises, balconies and statuary to evoke a sense of the outdoors.” True to those words, Maysville’s Russell Theatre was a treat for the eyes long before the lights dimmed and the curtain rose on the entertainment of the day.

According to the theater’s website, “The Russell featured a Mediterranean garden theme, with painted facades of lush landscaping, stone and plaster balconies hung with Spanish shawls, and faux Lombard trees and trailing ivy to add to the effect. Plaster statuary adorned both the lobby and the main floor of the theater. The ceiling, which was painted a dark navy blue to mimic a night sky, twinkled with tiny lights.” Now, a group of residents is determined, more than 20 years into efforts to save the historic movie house from being demolished, to hold a grand reopening in 2020, 90 years after it initially opened.

“That’s a lofty goal, to have it restored and open in 2020,” Luanne Mattingly, vice president of the Russell Theatre Corp., said Friday.

Mattingly said group tours including those from riverboats that dock at Limestone Landing, and movie presentations, such as the showing planned Saturday of Monty Python’s Life of Brian supplement the sustaining fund of \$25,000 annually which keeps the doors open. Movies are shown every second and fourth Saturday, she said. Sales of items from the lobby gift shop along with donations and sales of commemorative bricks also help.

When the original group which saved the theater from destruction bought the building, it faced the immediate need to get a roof on to prevent further damage to the ornate interior.

In the ensuing 20-plus years, the group has replaced the mechanical systems in the lobby; restored the lobby; restored and updated the restrooms; restored the Venus statues; re-installed the projection screen; restored the marquee; repainted the facade; completed asbestos abatement; and installed new windows on the storage building adjacent to the theater. In addition, a projector for the theater was donated and installed. Most recently the storage building was cleared and part of the floor replaced.

Restoring the lobby was possible because of funds designated for the theater during the administration of Kentucky Gov. Ernie Fletcher, Mattingly said.

Now comes the monumental task of raising the \$2.3 million an architect estimates it will take to restore the auditorium of the building to its original condition. That number could be more or less, but it is still a daunting undertaking, Mattingly said. However, she is determined to make it happen.

Mattingly said she has thought outside the box on ideas for raising the money.

“I’ve looked under every rock, written Hollywood stars and TV personalities,” she said.

What she hopes to find is that one benefactor willing to fund \$1 million in seed money. The group also has plans for an antique auction, a repeat of last year’s Summer Jam Session for young artists and some other ideas in the works.

Mattingly hopes the community will embrace the project and come to realize how lucky Maysville is to have an atmospheric theater located here. Most of the other remaining theaters of that genre are located in larger cities — Louisville and Atlanta to name just.

In the meantime, Mattingly said she is looking forward to the day when the Russell Theatre will be open to offer opportunities not just for visitors but for area students whose teachers may be seeking a location to immerse the class in the subject matter or culture they are studying or for residents looking for a unique event venue.

Mattingly said no matter the odds, she is determined to see the project through to the end.

“I’m so passionate about it. I’m just not one to give up on something,” she said.

For more information on efforts to save the theater or to donate visit <http://www.russelltheatre.org>

Fire truck up for auction in Todd County

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

ELKTON, Ky. (KT) – If you’ve ever wanted to have your very own fire truck, here is your opportunity, as the City of Elkton, in Todd County, is currently taking bids during an online action for a 1992 Spartan Ladder fire truck.

The truck is perfect for a construction business, landscaping company, or yes, even a volunteer fire department. This online auction is open to the public at municibid.com and ends Friday, July 25th. Kentucky residents can bid in this government auction online, 24/7, on [Municibid](http://Municibid.com).

Why is this auction considered important? All the

proceeds from this auction will be going right back into improving the local community. 100 percent of the proceeds from this auction will go to the City of Elkton. These funds can be used for road maintenance, setting up local events for residents, community programs, public safety initiatives and more.

The vehicle up for auction is a 1992 Spartan Fire-truck that starts, runs and drives and has 23,000 miles on it. The fire truck features a 12.7L L6 Diesel engine, Allison automatic transmission, a LTI 104’ ladder, a red exterior and black seats that don’t have any damage. The tires are in good condition, none of the glass is cracked, the decal impressions will remain and interior equipment includes lights and siren.

What to know as Texas’ search for flood victims stretches into a 3rd week

John Hanna and Nadia Lathan
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The search for victims of deadly flooding in Texas Hill Country is headed into its third week as officials try to pin down exactly how many people remain missing and lawmakers prepare to discuss authorities’ initial response and providing better warning systems.

Flash floods killed at least 135 people in Texas over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, with most deaths along the Guadalupe River in Kerr County, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of San Antonio. The Hill Country is naturally prone to flash flooding because its dry, dirt-packed soil cannot soak up heavy rain.

The Texas Legislature is scheduled to convene Monday for a special session. Gov. Greg Abbott initially called lawmakers back to the Texas State Capitol in Austin for other reasons, but he and legislative leaders have added flooding-related issues to the agenda.

How many people remain missing? State officials had been saying about 160 people were unaccounted for after the flooding in Kerr County alone, but they now say about 100 remain missing in Kerr and other counties.

Kerr County officials said the number of missing people decreased as victims were recovered, contact was made with people who were found safe, and some reports were found to be unsubstantiated or falsified. Also, they said, the missing list fluctuates as reports come into a hotline.

The floods laid waste to the Hill Country. Vacation cabins, youth camps campgrounds fill the riverbanks and hills of Kerr County, and Camp Mystic, a century-old Christian summer camp for girls in a low-lying area along the Guadalupe. At least 27 of its campers and counselors died.

The flooding expands lawmakers’ agenda

Abbott called the special session hoping legislators would pass a measure to regulate a booming business in THC products after he vetoed a bill that would have banned them. And since the flooding, President Donald Trump has told the Republicans who control state government to redraw congressional districts to help the GOP’s chances of retaining a U.S. House majority in next year’s midterm elections.

Abbott said lawmakers would also review authorities’ handling of the flooding and consider improving warning systems for Hill Country residents. Kerr County does not have a warning system because state and local agencies missed opportunities over the past decade to finance one.

Trump and Abbott have pushed back aggressively against questions about how well local authorities responded to forecasts of heavy rain and the first reports of flash flooding. The president called a reporter “evil” for raising such issues and said he thought “everyone did an incredible job under the circumstances.”

Abbott dismissed a question about who was to blame for the deaths as “the word choice of losers” and used an analogy that began: “Every football team makes mistakes.”

“The way winners talk is not to point fingers,” he concluded.

Lawmakers plan to visit the hardest-hit county

Abbott has designated bills dealing with early warning systems and emergency communications as priorities for the Legislature’s special session, scheduled to last 30 days.

The House and Senate have formed special committees on flooding and disaster preparedness, and they’re planning a July 31 visit to Kerrville, the seat of hardest-hit Kerr County, to hear comments from residents.

The committees are scheduled to begin with a joint hearing Wednesday to consider the state’s response to the fatal floods; planning for floods; infrastructure for managing floods; and communications among first responders.

One bill already introduced by Republican Rep. Don McLaughlin would require the state’s top public health official to set building standards for youth camps in 100-year floodplains — which FEMA defines as a high-risk area with a 1% chance of flooding in any given year.

During a recent news conference, Republican state Rep. Drew Darby, a member of the House’s committee, said lawmakers cannot bring back flood victims or undo the flooding.

“But what we can do is learn from it,” he said.

Trump offers regulatory relief for coal, iron ore and chemical industries

Matthew Daley
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is granting two years of regulatory relief to coal-fired power plants, chemical manufacturers and other polluting industries as he seeks to reverse Biden-era regulations he considers overly burdensome.

Trump issued a series of proclamations late Thursday exempting a range of industries that he calls vital to national security.

The proclamations cover coal-fired power plants, taconite iron ore processing facilities used to make steel, and chemical manufacturers that help produce semiconductors and medical device sterilizers.

The proclamations allow the facilities to comply with Environmental Protection Agency standards that were in place before rules imposed in recent years by President Joe Biden’s administration, the White House said.

Trump called the Biden-era rules expensive and, in some cases, unattainable. His actions will ensure that “critical industries can continue to operate uninterrupted to support national security without incurring substantial costs,” the White House said in a fact sheet.

Trump’s EPA had earlier exempted dozens of coal-fired plants from air-pollution rules for the same

reasons. The EPA also offered other industrial polluters a chance for exemptions from requirements to reduce emissions of toxic chemicals such as mercury, arsenic and benzene. An electronic mailbox set up by the EPA allowed regulated companies to request a presidential exemption under the Clean Air Act to a host of Biden-era rules.

Environmental groups denounced the offer to grant exemptions, calling the new email address a “polluters’ portal” that could allow hundreds of companies to evade laws meant to protect the environment and public health. Mercury exposure can cause brain damage, especially in children. Fetuses are vulnerable to birth defects via exposure in a mother’s womb.

Within weeks of the EPA’s offer, industry groups representing hundreds of chemical and petrochemical manufacturers began seeking the blanket exemptions from federal pollution requirements.

The Clean Air Act enables the president to temporarily exempt industrial sites from new rules if the technology

required to meet them is not widely available and if the continued activity is in the interest of national security.

In April, the EPA granted nearly 70 coal-fired power plants a two-year exemption from federal requirements to reduce emissions of toxic chemicals. A list posted on the agency’s website lists 47 power providers — which operate at least 66 coal-fired plants — that are receiving exemptions from the Biden-era rules.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced plans in March to roll back dozens of key environmental rules on everything from clean air to clean water and climate change. Zeldin called the planned rollbacks the “most consequential day of deregulation in American history.”

An Associated Press examination of the proposed rollbacks concluded that rules targeted by the EPA could prevent an estimated 30,000 deaths and save \$275 billion each year they are in effect. The AP review included the agency’s own prior assessments as well as a wide range of other research.

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