

VIEWS

ABOUT THE OPINION PAGE

The opinions expressed in the McLean News' columns and letters to the editor contain the opinions solely of the writer. Letters to the editor should be written 300 words or less. Letters by the same writer will only be accepted once in a calendar month. Anonymous letters will not be considered. To submit a letter, email it to mpurazrang@mcleannews.com. For any questions about the McLean County News' editorial page, contact Managing Editor Megan Purazrang at mpurazrang@mcleannews.com.

MUSEUM

FROM **PAGE A3**

Drug Center. Everyone is invited to come and bring a pound of something to eat at the party. An admission of 25 cents will be charged, to be used to build the Ground Observer Observation Post.” They later stated that entertainment had been added to the party, that a lieutenant and a sergeant from the U.S. Air Force would be there, and that a movie would be shown.

Dec. 9, 1954 — “Construction work on the observation post for the Calhoun GOC is well-advanced. The post is a concrete block building with large glass windows. It is located on top of a high hill behind N.O. Dame’s home. All the blocks have been laid, and the window frames and door sill set.” The article added that “considerable work” remained to be done, but with the roof added, the windows glazed and telephone installed it could be used for the alert scheduled the following Sunday.

“The members of the corps, in an expression of appreciation for extraordinary contributions, have elected to award ‘honorary wings’ to four citizens who have demonstrated their deep consciousness of civil responsibility and patriotism by unselfishly volunteering their means and personal services above and beyond ordinary expectations: Mr. N.O. Dame, for volunteering and ceding, by long-term lease, the property on which the post will stand, and the approaches thereto. Mr. Belden Taylor, for volunteering his skill as builder to initiate and carry forward the laying of blocks. Mr. Jesse Tucker, for contributing his time and efforts at the same time as Mr. Taylor, thus speeding the work. Mr. Thurman Ellis, for contributing his time and widely-recognized know-how to the completion of the block-laying and preparing the completed work for the laying of the roof.

Dec. 16, 1954 — On the opinion page of the NEWS, W.S. Kerr, then-supervisor of the Calhoun GOC, said the following, in part, “The organization of the Calhoun GOC is a significant move toward establishing every citizen’s responsibility for the overall national security. If supported by a majority of our citizens it can provide an example for other communities and proof of our willingness to cooperate when danger strikes. The least we can do is to partially train and be ready if called upon to help defend this one of the few remaining ‘Free’ countries. Complacency is suicidal!”

Feb. 13, 1955 — “The Calhoun GOC met for special instructions at the home of Mrs. C. M. Bennett, Tuesday night. Capt. Kerr was the instructor. There were nineteen present.”

Apr. 3, 1955 — A great article on Capt. W. S. Kerr, a retired sea captain, and Supervisor of the Calhoun GOC,

included the fact that the new concrete block observation post sat on a hill behind the Calhoun cemetery. The late Necil Dame leased the post site with approaches to the corps, forever, unless the post should become inoperative as a civilian defense post for as long as two years. The three chief observers were all teenagers: Melvin Bennett, 16, Gale Wetzel, 17, and David Sunn, 13. Of the 150 members, about half were trained observers.

Members of the corps had built a stile over one of the fences on the Dame farm, so that they could get to the post without disturbing the hogs. The highway department was to improve the approach to the post from the Beech Grove road. That, with a cattle gate, would enable observers to get to the post quicker and easier.

June 2, 1955 — Lt. James Henry, USAF, officiated at the awards ceremony, part of the Calhoun GOC open house at the courthouse Friday evening, May 27. Lt. Henry said the Calhoun Ground Observer Post was the most efficient in the area. Gale Wetzel, Chief Observer for May, presided over the affair, which was considered a huge success, with more than 150 persons in attendance. Lt. Henry praised Gale Wetzel for spotting a sneak plane during the May 1 alert. The fact that the Calhoun post detected this plane, which otherwise could have slipped past radar stations, was pointed out by Lt. Henry in showing the importance of the Ground Observer work in defending the nation.

Senator E. W. Richmond and the Owensboro Mayor, both present, lauded the work of Capt. W. S. Kerr. After the ceremonies and talks there was a program of entertainment, including songs by the popular Davy Crocket Boys, a vocal-instrumental quartet made up of high school boys from McLean County. James Clayton Nall heads the quartet, made up of Billy Ford, Gene Miller Lloyd and Charles Robertson. Mrs. Dan Caraway played several numbers on the piano, accompanied by Jimmie Nall on the guitar.

Wings for 18 hours of GOC services and certificates for 50 hours were awarded. The single 100-hour certificate went to David Sunn. Certificates for 150 hours of service were given to Hugh Fackler, Mrs. Hugh Fackler, and Glenda Wetzel. Capt. Kerr then called the names of 22 persons who had, in important ways, aided the building of the post, giving priority to Mrs. Necil Dame, who was awarded honorary wings in posthumous honor of her husband, who contributed the land for the post’s location. Following the awards and talks, a free buffet barbecue supper was served by Mrs. Ezra Evans, aided by GOC members, along with complimentary items such as cakes, salads, etc., supplied by members, to accompany

SEE **MUSEUM/PAGE A6**

Proposed bills will harm communities and newspapers

Every county in Kentucky has one local business that has been there longer than any other, most more than a century — while some are even closing in on two centuries. In many of these counties, that business is their local newspaper.

I manage two of those local newspapers. The Oldham Era has been in operation for 149 years and is looking forward to celebrating our 150th next year. The Henry County Local has been publishing 168 proud years and counting. I also assist regionally with 13 other area newspapers with similar tenures.

Newspapers are the heartbeat of every community in Kentucky. We exist to inform, to raise awareness, to build community, to be the voice of those that can’t always speak for themselves, to cover local government and hold local officials accountable, to help local businesses grow, to enact change, to celebrate achievements and to archive our community’s history.

Our founding fathers felt so strongly about the importance of newspapers and the role we play in communities that we are the only profession explicitly named in the Constitution of the United States of America.

There are three ways in which newspapers have effectively carried out some of our most important roles — covering local government, keeping officials accountable, keeping citizens informed and helping transparency exist: public notices, open meetings and open records.

Without those three in place, knowing how your tax dollars are being spent, what bids are available and being rewarded, what decisions your elected officials are making for you, when meetings are being held and what new ordinances are being considered would not be as easily accessible.

There are currently two bills, HB368 and SB218, that seek to remove legal notices from newspapers



JANE
ASHLEY PACE
IN MY VIEW

and place them on government websites. Websites that are run by the government themselves. What could go possibly go wrong with that?

When a legal ad is placed in a newspaper, it is placed in the local newspaper, dated and cannot be changed after the fact. In addition, it is placed on a website managed by the Kentucky Press Association where all legal notices in Kentucky can be found easily — kypublicnotices.com.

HB368 and SB218 seek to have entities including county and city governments place public notices on their own websites, yet many have only one employee, if any, and can’t even keep their current websites updated.

I found one city website in my area that hadn’t been updated with meetings or ordinances since 2020. Two others had very little information, none of the council members were current and the monthly meeting time listed was listed wrong.

Officials have said they would create their own statewide website for all notices. I would argue that they are going to spend a lot more money creating a website we have already created and maintained successfully. Right now, paid legal notices are currently a very small part of county and city budgets — only 0.16%.

So why change? Is this what is really best for the community?

In counties of 80,000 or more a bill was passed in Kentucky to change the rules of public notices due to the cost of the larger newspapers. Yet, many of those counties, including Boone, Campbell, Fayette, Kenton, Madison and Warren, have decided that newspapers are still the best way to get their notices out and have continued to place them in newspapers despite the change.

Regardless of the county size, public notices should be posted by a third party, and with a newspaper in almost every county (and statewide website

already in place) it just makes good, common sense.

Besides the concerns I’ve already addressed, while legal notices are not the only revenue that keep newspapers going — it is a part of it, and some smaller, rural counties will probably lose their local newspaper if this bill is passed. A community without a local newspaper is a community without a heartbeat, and countless studies have shown in news deserts across this country that there will be negative, long-term effects for the community.

No, it is not the job of the legislature to keep newspapers running but why are they so against doing something that maintains transparency and at the same time, would hurt some of the oldest local businesses in this state?

I’m not blind to the criticism of the media and think that cable news networks have hurt our industry as a whole. I was trained that a journalist is to cover the facts and to try and keep any biases out.

I think your local newspapers do a pretty darn good job at still doing that. We have opinion/editorial pages that are open for opinions to be shared and topics to be discussed but they are clearly labeled and kept separate from the news content.

Your local newspaper employees are not pushing an agenda. We are actively involved and serving in our communities. We live, work, play and volunteer right alongside our community members. We take our role very seriously, and that includes publishing your public notices.

Any bill that seeks to change how public notices are handled, or diminishes public meetings or public records, is going to be harmful to the community, and your local newspaper, in the long run. I urge you to stand up with your local newspaper and help us keep these three in place.

Jane Ashley Pace is the publisher of the Oldham Era and Henry County Local, regional advertising manager for Paxton Media and the 2024 president of the Kentucky Press Association.

BILL

FROM **PAGE A1**

intends to “disrupt, impede or prevent” legislative business, and “enters into or remains inside” or “conspires to enter into or remain inside” a “chamber of gallery of the General Assembly” or another other room in the Capitol complex.

A person found “obstructing or impeding a legislator, legislative officer or legislative staff member’s ingress, egress or movement” within the Capitol, or conspiring or facilitating someone else doing so, would also be guilty of second-degree interference.

Blanton was asked via email if simply being in the House gallery, without engaging in any other conduct, would be enough to be charged with second-degree interference. Blanton was also asked through email if protesters could be charged with interference if they were chanting in the rotunda and could be heard inside the House. Blanton didn’t respond to questions.

FLOODING

FROM **PAGE A1**

that the county’s designation as a “Storm Ready” community has allowed emergency management teams to be better prepared to deal with the flooding issues.

“Getting certified as ‘Storm Ready’ last year has allowed us to have an efficient plan in place to provide better communication between agencies and a better allocation of community resources,” he said.

So far, the county hasn’t faced any main road closures, besides a lane closure on Highway 431 outside of Island. Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) public information officer Matt Hughes explained last week that the closure was due to a landslide that washed away dirt from under the roadway which, in turn, caused one of the roadway’s lanes to sink about 8 inches. Hughes estimated that the closure will extend into March because the repairs can’t be made until the weather warms up.

“As Island residents, we’re pretty well used to this,” said McLean County Magistrate Robert Bishop. “Granted, the flood waters can pose dangers for our community mem-

Blanton was also asked if the conduct under the bill was already covered by existing state law, specifically the law against disorderly conduct.

Second-degree disorderly conduct pertains to public places, and a person charged must have the intent to cause “public inconvenience or alarm.” The definition of disorderly conduct includes “unreasonable noise” and creating a “hazardous or physically offensive condition by any act that serves no legitimate purpose.”

One difference between second-degree disorderly conduct and interference with the legislative process would be in the criminal penalty. Second-degree disorderly conduct is always a class B misdemeanor which carries a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and a \$250 fine.

Second-degree criminal interference with the legislative process would be a B misdemeanor on the first offense and a class A misdemeanor on the second offense or future offenses. A class A misdemeanor carries a sentence of up to 12 months in jail and a \$500 fine.

First-degree interference would be a class A misdemeanor for the first

bers, but most of us have been through this before and, if they haven’t personally, they know someone who has been, so they know how to prepare. Plus, we’re such a small community that helps take care of each other. We will persevere.”

Dame said that county officials have used the Flood Insurance Rate mapping from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in order to determine which locations around the county would be most affected by flooding.

“About 60% of McLean County is zone for flooding, so having a proper plan in place is critical for success in times like these,” he said.

Dame said, that with the help of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Daviess County Emergency Management Agency, the county has been able to distribute more than 250 sandbags to residents to assist with the relief efforts.

The Green River at Calhoun crested at around 32 feet over the weekend, which was earlier than initially anticipated by experts. The Green River flooding in Calhoun has left areas like downtown Calhoun and Rumsey underwater.

“We’re not too bad off with the river at 32 feet,” Dame explained. “But if we reach in the 34 feet ball-

offense and a class D felony for a second or subsequent offense. A class D felony carries a sentence of 1 to 5 years in state prison upon conviction.

The bill would require law enforcement to arrest anyone charged with either first or second-degree interference.

The bill would seem to have a strong chance of advancing this year. An identical bill, also filed by Blanton, passed the House last year, largely on partisan lines. That bill, House Bill 626, was never heard in the Senate by the judiciary committee, and died when the session ended.

The current bill has been assigned to be heard by the House judiciary committee. There’s no timetable for the bill to be called for consideration.

Angela Cooper, communications director for the ACLU of Kentucky, said House Bill 399 wasn’t a current ACLU priority in the session, but said the bill was under review by the organization’s legal department.

James Mayse, 270-691-7303, jmayse@messenger-inquirer.com

park, that’s when we’ll have to make alternative plans, especially in the area of emergency services.”

Dame said that those alternate plans would potentially include parking ambulances on higher ground in the Southern area of the county because “standard emergency routes will be inaccessible.”

He also said that a few county residents have been displaced from their homes because of the flooding, but with help from the Kentucky Red Cross, those individuals have been relocated to safe areas.

McLean County Sheriff Ken Frizzell said that so far all of the emergency systems are functioning as normal and that they haven’t had to help with significant evacuations or water rescue events.

“We’ve all been here before,” he said. “So, we all know what to do. Luckily, it seems like the water is starting to go down. Hopefully, the most vulnerable areas of the county will be out of the woods soon.”

Additional information and resources regarding the flooding across the state can be obtained by calling 211 or by texting 898211.

Dame encouraged county residents to follow the McLean County,

SEE **FLOODING/PAGE A6**