Is GCSAD still at square one?

BY DEBORAH LUCAS ANGEL
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Nearly two years to the day from their initial meeting, the Grant County Kentucky Ambulance Service District Board (Board) held their October monthly meeting. Chair Anthony Morgan called the meeting to order, welcoming a new member to the board.

Businessman Jason Litz replaces firefighter/medic Chad Bedard. Morgan said the Board is now "well-rounded" with three business members and two fire/EMT members, all bringing their special abilities to the table.

Treasurer Brooke Cummins was absent but submitted her report to Morgan. After paying Dry Ridge $108,333.33 the account holds $261,814.55.

Morgan noted in November the board will be getting the "big check," referring to the district's portion of Grant County property taxes. At that point they will be able to determine what budget the board can expect to work with in the future.

Morgan referred to an audit the board had had conducted by ETA Investment and Tax Advisiors of Williamstown. He said the report had been requested by the board, with there having been three different treasurers: Josh Willoughby, Rodney Smith and Cummins.

He said the audit revealed a "one cent" difference over the tenures of the three. The report did note a check to Attorney Pete Whaley for $455 from February 2026 has not been cashed and a $0.02 difference on a check to the City of Dry Ridge needing to be adjusted. Otherwise the check register is in order.

Brian Bishop, partner integration director of AmeriPro Health, a private ambulance service, addressed the board. He had addressed the board in February, 2025 concerning his company's interest in providing their services to the district. Bishop just stated he was making a followup visit.

During the citizen's address, it became clear the board has not made a final decision as to how they will be moving forward with the district. It remains to be determined whether the board will:

· Enter into an agreement with Dry Ridge to transition their Ambulance Service from the city to GCSAD

· Build a new, from-the-ground-up county ambulance service

· Enter into a contract with a private ambulance service, such as AmeriPro Health

According to Morgan, there could be finite contract timeframes; though the board may decide to move forward with one of the above options beginning July 1, 2027, it could potentially have a two- or three-year end date and the whole process could begin again.

Morgan said the board has a "lot of work ahead" of them. He said the holidays tend to slow work down, but said they need to be working diligently toward determining how to move forward. He said they should have a decision of which of the three options they will be pursuing by the first meeting in January, 2027.

Dry Ridge EMS update

Kevin Stave, Dry Ridge EMS director, addressed the board with an update on the EMS Department activities. He said Dry Ridge Emergency Medical Services (DREMS) run volume for September was 251 for 2,178 year-to-date.

There were 27 hours of personnel training. At the moment the department is fully staffed with the exception of one full-time paramedic position.

Maintenance was $17,643 due to EC-2 needing its transmission replaced as well as air conditioning repaired. He said YTD was high, with EC-4 having had an engine replacement.

Stave explained the "EC" designation for new board member Litz as a permanent call given the unit, no matter to which station it is attached. He said the "Med" number is the station location call sign. Med numbers can change as units move to different buildings.

In the wake of these costly repairs, Stave said he hopes to settle into "preventive maintenance" over the next few months.

Mileage for the month was 5,917. He said fuel costs have risen.

Stave said revenue and collections remain at a steady rate.

Stave discussed the Brent Spence Bridge repair/replacement, noting Fort Washington Way in Cincinnati is being shut down for a year as well. He said because of these closures EMS will eventually need to go to University of Kentucky Hospital (UK) in Lexington instead of to Cincinnati hospitals.

He said the "Critical Care Program" being developed is nearing completion and he hopes to have it up and going Nov. 1. The program is a collaboration with Scott County and UK.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 11, at 6:30 p.m. at the Courthouse, 100 North Main Street, Williamstown. For information, contact Morgan at (859) 992-7081.

How the Chinese takeout carton became an American icon

BY DEEPTI HAJELA
ASSOCIATED PRESS



Dario Lopez-Mills | AP Photo

A Chinese takeout container with fried rice inside is photographed in Phoenix on May 12.

NEW YORK — It's an icon, that small white receptacle made from a single piece of cardboard folded into a trapezoid-shaped box. Sometimes there's a wire handle, sometimes a bright red graphic of a Chinese-style pagoda on the side. And inside, deliciousness.

The Chinese takeout container — at least, as it's commonly seen in the United States — is actually about as American as it gets, with its mix of ingenuity, immigrant cultures becoming homegrown staples, and the desire for convenience (also known as sitting at home in your PJs.)

The idea of what is essentially a paper bucket dates to 1894, when inventor Frederick Weeks Wilcox was granted a patent for what he called "a new and useful improvement" for pails used to carry oysters. A single piece of material would be folded in such a way that it would have structural stability while also limiting the ways it could leak, and also incorporate a lid.

That's the container. What about the contents we assume are inside it?

Chinese immigrants started coming to the U.S. in the mid-1800s, taking part in the Gold Rush and working to help build the railroads. The communities they created, known as Chinatowns, rose up in places like San Francisco and later around the country. They included eating spots where the foundations of an Americanized style of Chinese food was laid.

After World War II, there was a "real profusion of Chinese restaurants, diversifying away from just chop suey and chow mein ... we see this explosion of interest and growth in Chinese food," says Michelle King, professor of Chinese history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Crucially, it was also the start of an association in the public mind of Chinese food with cheaper prices, availability and convenience, she said. And restaurant owners wanted to be considered accessible, for which takeout played a part, she said. "You need to take it home, you have a dinner party you want to cater for, we can do that for you, right?" King says.

At some point in the 1970s, at a packaging company then known as Fold-Pak, the pagoda design was added, sometimes along with words printed in a font used to stereotypically evoke an association with Chinese culture.

"It kind of becomes claimed as a Chinese American food eatery item, like the pizza box or something like that might be for Italian food," King said.

These days, takeout cartons come in a variety of shapes, and the food landscape has expanded to include a range of cuisines that might show up in the former oyster pail.

Even so, it IS still an icon — quite literally. Check your emojis for "takeout."

Part of a recurring series, "American Objects," marking the 250th anniversary of the United States. For more American objects, click here. For more stories on the anniversary, click here.

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Williamstown leaders discuss development projects and city upgrades

BY LILY FABELA
NEWS REPORTER

Williamstown city officials outlined ongoing projects, economic development and future improvements during a town hall meeting Monday, Oct. 12, including plans for a $1.5 million downtown park, new businesses and infrastructure upgrades.

Mayor David Henson led the meeting at the Williamstown Performing Arts Center, reviewing the city's accomplishments, discussing upcoming projects and answering questions from residents. One of the largest projects discussed was the proposed Williamstown Park and Amphitheater Project, which would create a public gathering space between Mill Street and Paris Street, behind the downtown business district.

Brandy Hall, the city's office manager, presented the plans, which have an estimated cost of $1,500,520. Proposed amenities include a permanent performance stage, playground, splash pad, picnic pavilion, public restrooms, additional parking and improved accessibility.

"This project is an investment in our future," she said. "A vibrant public gathering space creates reasons for people to come downtown."

The city is working with the Northern Kentucky Area Development District to pursue two grants to fund the project. Funding decisions for the Government Resources Accelerating Needed Transformation grant and the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant are expected in July and September 2027, respectively.

When a resident asked what would happen if the grants were denied, Henson said the city would continue seeking funding.

"We won't give up," Henson said.

Economic development was another focus of the meeting. Henson discussed several upcoming businesses, including a Marriott-affiliated hotel expected to open in spring 2027, a Casey's location on Mercedes Drive scheduled for fall 2027 and a Shell station expected to open in December.

A campground and resort on Barnes Road is also planning a soft opening in December, followed by a grand opening in spring 2027. Henson also highlighted planned residential development by D.R. Horton featuring three- and four-bedroom homes.

Downtown improvements include plans to develop the property beside the Welcome Center using a $50,000 matching grant from the Grant County Tourism Commission.

The city hopes to use the space for farmers markets, artisan vendors and community events. Infrastructure updates included a proposed $960,000 project to address invasive zebra mussels affecting the city's water intake system at Williamstown Lake. The city is seeking funding assistance for equipment designed to prevent the mussels from clogging pipes and damaging infrastructure.

Officials also discussed ongoing sidewalk accessibility improvements along portions of U.S. 25 and School Road.

Henson provided an update on city finances, announcing that a forensic accounting review had been completed and all 25 bank accounts reconciled. He said the review identified two significant findings, which the city addressed, and that information was provided to law enforcement.

The mayor also discussed recovery efforts following the June 18 EF1 tornado, thanking emergency responders, city employees and residents who assisted with cleanup. He said some recovery work remains unfinished.

During the public comment portion, residents raised concerns about pedestrian crossings, speeding, road markings and traffic safety, including a possible traffic signal at U.S. 25 and Kentucky 36.

Henson said the city would look into several of the concerns and encouraged residents to communicate directly with city officials.

"I try to be transparent, I try to give the good, the bad, and the ugly," Henson said.

The city plans to make a recording of the meeting available on its YouTube channel.

Crittenden adds maintenance worker position

BY DEBORAH LUCAS ANGEL
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

All members were present at the Oct. 13 Crittenden City Council meeting as Mayor Jim Purcell called order. On the agenda were a municipal order and personnel planning.

MUNICIPAL ORDER 01-2026 MATERNITY LEAVE POLICY

According to Purcell, the city does not have provisions for pregnant employees in its handbook. He said with the potential hire of a female maintenance worker, this has become a necessary change.

The municipal order (MO) adds a "Maternity Leave Policy," that covers eligibility, leave entitlement, use of accrued leave, benefits during leave, the request procedure and return to work procedure. The MO adds non-discrimination and administration requirements to the personnel manual.

Motion to approve carried unanimously; councilmembers signed the MO during the meeting.

Related to the MO, councilmembers approved adding an additional position at the Maintenance Department.

Council then unanimously approved hiring Jess Collins as a maintenance worker.

Ernie Lockaby was not in attendance, so a zone change request agenda item was not heard. As well, a legal topics update on the agenda was not provided.

MISCELLANEOUS

· Council approved changing from Gatlin Voelker Law Firm to C. Ed Massey & Associates, PLCC out of Erlanger; Joe Taylor will represent the city.

· According to Crittenden Fire Chief Alex Cole there is a statewide burn ban in effect from Oct. 1 – Feb. 15, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

· Council agreed moving forward and follow the Kentucky League of Cities' recommendations for a job description and procedures for naming a city manager.

The next meeting of the council will be Tuesday, Nov. 10 at 7 p.m. at the City Building, 117 Main Street. For more information on the meetings or any city business, call (859) 428-2597.

Ask Rusty

BY RUSSELL GLOOR
AMAC FOUNDATION

Dear Rusty: I was a little confused with one of your past articles. This September I hit my full retirement age and for every month I continue to delay, my SS benefit goes up a little more. But reading your article sounds like the extra benefits are only added at the end of the year.

For example, let's say that at my full retirement age in September I get $3,524, and in January 2027 I would get $3,619. According to the Ask Rusty article I read, if I start my benefits in June of 2027, I will have earned $3,735, but it sounds like I would only get $3,619 up until the end of the year, and then they would adjust it.

If this is the case, would I get retroactive money back for the six months I did not get the correct amount? Signed: Seeking Clarification

Dear Seeking: Thanks for your inquiry. Your understanding of the previous Ask Rusty article is correct. If you start your benefits in June 2027 (10 months after your full retirement age (or your "FRA," in Sept. 2026), you will initially only get the Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) you earned through the end of 2026. The DRCs you earned from January 2027 to June 2027 would not be credited until January 2028, and you would not get any retroactive benefits for the DRCs earned during the January – June 2027 timeframe.

SSA's reasoning for this is somewhat confusing but has to do with your ability to claim retroactive benefits when you claim after reaching your full retirement age. When claiming after reaching your FRA you have the ability to claim benefits retroactively for up to six months.

So, to avoid potentially overlapping benefit payments, SSA defers applying your current year's DRCs until January of the following year. Thus, you essentially lose the extra 2027 DRC money for the remainder of 2027.

And, FYI, the one exception to this rule is that when benefits are claimed mid-year at age 70, all DRCs are immediately paid. Please understand that I'm not endorsing this SSA rule; only trying to explain how it works and why.

Like many SSA rules, there are nuances to how benefits are paid. And this is a classic example. And just remember, as attractive as taking six months of retroactive benefits may sound, it also means your monthly amount would be reduced by about 4% for the rest of your life.