



Jerry Weaver (right) with President Bill Clinton during a visit to Weaver's Annville plant in 1999.

A Decade in Recovery

Sue Fox spent over three decades struggling with addiction, until finding recovery in 2016 while in federal prison. She was incarcerated in 2012 and sentenced to 10 years for conspiracy to distribute oxycodone. Today, she is thankful for her time in prison. "I was relieved and I was thankful because I was done at the time, but just didn't know how to get out," Sue said. "It (prison) made me sit still and take a look and really evaluate myself."

On February 5, she and her friends at the Manchester Recovery Community Center — operated by Volunteers of America Mid-States — gathered to celebrate her major milestone. Sue participated in a prison program that helped her find recovery. After exiting incarceration in 2019, she returned to Manchester but was concerned about the lack of sober support resources in the area. "There was one meeting and it was an NA/AA meeting smashed together, and that's all there was. I'm like, 'What am I going to do?'"

To receive more support, Sue traveled to London and was connected with some old friends who told her about a new Recovery Community Center (RCC) in Manchester. She decided to stop in and was met by 60 to 70 people sitting in a circle for a recovery meeting.

"It was a spiritual awakening for me because I found my place," Sue said. "I found some acceptance in the RCC, and people trying to do the right thing — get their lives back."

Since finding VOA's RCC, Sue has become committed to helping others find what she did — a community of like-minded individuals uplifting each other on their recovery journeys. RCC helped Sue receive her Peer Support Certification, and she started working for VOA. Today, she shares her story and uses her 10 years of sustained sobriety to show others that recovery is possible.

She is the Community Outreach Supervisor for VOA and works on Team Kentucky's Recovery Ready Communities initiative. Sue travels across the state and helps other communities establish accessible recovery support systems so individuals who are struggling with addiction have the resources they need to take back their lives.

"I was always part of the problem in my community, but today, I try to be part of the solution," she said. "I have a job that I love. It's not work; it's a passion."

Learn more about RCC and the other recovery resources VOA offers at <https://www.voamid.org/services/substance-use-recovery/>.

GOLF

From A1

ensuring the facility remains an asset for our citizens. Our goal has always been to see Big Hickory thrive, and we're confident this agreement puts it on that path."

In his submission, Likins emphasized a commitment to continuity and community involvement, writing that the property is "more than land — it is a community asset with history, relationships, and long-standing partnerships that deserve to be respected and strengthened."

Likins said his approach will focus on long-term stewardship rather than short-term gains. "My goal is long-term stewardship — not short-term change," Likins stated. "I want to protect what has been built while creating a stronger future for the course and the community it serves."

Documents outline several commitments, including maintaining existing residential leases on the property, continuing the high school golf partnership, and preserving the arrangement that allows city jail work crews to assist with course maintenance.

Likins also expressed appreciation for local support, noting guidance from community members with experience and relationships in Manchester. A multi-year proposal included plans to stabilize operations, improve turf health, upgrade irrigation, enhance clubhouse amenities, and strengthen communication with members and the public. Longer-term ideas outlined in the proposal include expanding programming, adding golf simulators, increasing events and tournaments, developing youth programs, and exploring infrastructure improvements such as upgrades to the driving range and additional amenities to boost usage.

Likins said he views Big Hickory as a place that can serve a broader role in the community. "Big Hickory has the opportunity to be more than just a golf course — it can serve as a gathering place for families, youth programs, schools, and local events," he wrote. "My goal is not only to own the course, but to elevate it, preserve it, and grow its value responsibly for the long term."

City officials noted that the sale is contingent upon completion of standard inspections and financial review, with closing anticipated in early spring. The decision comes after ongoing discussions about the future of the municipally owned course and the need for investment to maintain and improve facilities while keeping the course accessible to the public.

WEATHER

From A1

tion for local emergency planning, agriculture, and infrastructure decisions. "This is a great resource for Clay County," Harmon said. "Having accurate, real-time weather data right here at home helps us better prepare for storms, flooding, and other challenges, and it gives our farmers and emergency responders the information they need to make informed decisions."

Officials noted that long-term weather data helps communities better understand past events and prepare for future challenges. "Weather records allow us to compare the present with the past, helping us learn from previous generations and become more resilient," Brotzge added. Beyond historical value, officials said the Mesonet system supports improved forecasts, earlier severe weather warnings, more efficient farming practices, safer travel, and better energy planning.

The ceremony hosted by Harmon drew local leaders and representatives from state and federal agencies, including Dustin Jordan, acting Meteorologist-in-Charge at the National Weather Service office in Jackson, and Donna McClure, field representative for U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell. Since 2022, the Kentucky General Assembly has allocated \$1.75 million annually to support the Mesonet system, helping maintain and expand one of the nation's most comprehensive statewide weather networks. The long-term goal is to establish at least one station in each of Kentucky's 120 counties. For Clay County residents, the new station represents more than just technology — it provides a local tool for understanding weather trends that affect farming, emergency planning, and daily life across the community.

WEAVER

From A1

to the school. Those early experiences helped shape a career that would span decades and impact communities across Kentucky and beyond.

In the early 1950s, Weaver, along with his brother John and cousins Jack, Glenn, and Jimmie H. Chesnut, moved to Dayton, Ohio, where they learned the tool and die trade — skills that would later form the foundation of several successful manufacturing ventures.

By the mid-1960s, the Weaver brothers relocated to Alabama and launched multiple manufacturing companies, building a reputation for innovation and hard work. But their vision always included bringing opportunity back home.

In the early 1970s, the family returned to Clay County to establish a business locally. The Etowah Manufacturing plant — named after Etowah County, Alabama, where they had lived — was constructed on Sexton's Creek. The facility introduced the first assembly line in Clay County, producing appliances for Hamilton Beach.

The plant provided more than jobs; it created career pathways. Many local employees completed apprenticeships in tool and die building and received specialized training, helping to strengthen the region's workforce.

After a fire in the 1980s destroyed part of the Sexton's Creek facility, the Weavers rebuilt with a modern assembly plant in Annville, focusing on electrical assemblies for the appliance industry and continuing their commitment to local employment.

Weaver's work gained national attention in July 1999 when then-President Bill Clinton visited the Annville plant as part of an initiative promoting industry and economic development in rural, underserved areas.

Known for always having a "next project" in mind, Weaver later purchased the former Westinghouse Manufacturing plant in London, where Highlands Diversified Services was established, further expanding job opportunities in the region.

Beyond business, Weaver and his wife Irene — also a native of Sexton's Creek — were known for their strong connection to their hometown. The couple quietly supported numerous local causes, often sending donations without seeking recognition. The Weaver family also contributed to the construction of the new Robert Clark Masonic Lodge, dedicating it in honor of their parents, Joe Bob and Jackie Weaver.

Jerry Weaver is remembered not only as a successful businessman but as someone who believed in investing in people and bringing opportunity back to the mountains he called home.

WAGERS

From A1

always do."

Clay wasted little time asserting itself, opening the game with Wagers scoring eight of the Tigers' first 10 points while the defense kept Jackson County off the board. Clay stretched the lead to 16-5 before the Generals rallied late in the quarter to trim the margin to 18-13.

Wagers scored 11 points in the opening period and opened the second quarter with a three-pointer to push the lead to 21-15 — a momentum spark the Tigers would build upon.

Maxton Gray followed with a bucket, and Jacob Rogers knocked down a big three to extend the advantage to 26-17 as Clay's defense tightened. The Tigers held Jackson County to just four points in the second quarter, taking a 30-19 lead into halftime.

Both teams struggled to find rhythm early in the third quarter until a hustle play ignited the crowd late in the period. After a loose ball near midcourt with under eight seconds remaining, Brody Hooker dove to secure possession and quickly found Rogers, who buried a three-pointer at the buzzer to give Clay a commanding 46-30 lead heading into the fourth.

The Tigers continued to pour it on from beyond the arc in the final period as Rogers, Wagers and Gray each connected on three-pointers. Clay's defense was equally impressive, holding Jackson County scoreless for nearly eight minutes spanning the third and fourth quarters — a stretch that put the game out of reach.

Coach Michael Jones credited his team's defensive intensity and effort down the stretch. "Fantastic defensive effort when we switched to man-to-man," Jones said. "We played with heart and desire, and that's exactly what you want to see at tournament time."

Rogers finished with 12 points, while Gray added eight. Adon Grubb contributed five points and nine rebounds, Skylr Sizemore scored five, Brody Hooker

COUNCIL

From A1

Jockey Street project. The bid was awarded to Clay Pipeline, with the work to be funded through state dollars aimed at supporting infrastructure improvements tied to downtown revitalization.

Chelsie Wolfe provided an update on behalf of the Thompson Scholars LEGO Lions, sharing that the team has advanced to state competition and is preparing to host a STEM fair in April at Eastern Kentucky University. In support of the students' efforts, the council approved a \$1,000 sponsorship.

Water Plant Supervisor Josh Murphy addressed recent concerns over water leaks across the system. Murphy explained that the majority of issues stemmed from leaks on customer lines rather than failures within the city's infrastructure. He noted that two significant leaks on Belles Fork alone drained the Elk Hill water tower below normal operating levels.

Murphy told council that crews conducted a system-wide effort to check meters, shutting off service where leaks were identified. Once repairs were made, water service was restored within approximately 24 hours.

In other business reflected on the agenda, council reviewed items including approval of a bore bid, consideration of a resolution authorizing completion and filing of a 2024 grant program totaling \$135,556 for a water meter replacement project, and a second reading of an ordinance declaring certain real property surplus and authorizing its sale by sealed bids. The council also received routine updates from the water department.

The meeting underscored ongoing efforts to maintain city infrastructure, support local students, and ensure financial accountability as Manchester continues to pursue development projects and address operational needs.