

Opinion

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

UPPING TAX RATES SQUEEZES SENIORS AND RETIREES

Dear Editor,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed increase in the school tax rate and to ask the school board to be accountable to the taxpayers who are being asked to pay more.

As a senior citizen who will be living on Social Security, I am extremely concerned about another increase in my property taxes. Senior citizens living on a fixed income cannot simply increase our income to cover higher taxes. They must live within the income we have.

The cost of groceries, utilities, insurance, home repairs and other necessities continues to rise. Increasing property taxes makes it even harder for seniors and retirees to remain in the homes we have worked for and paid taxes on for many years.

I do not have children in the school system. However, I understand the importance of good schools and want our children to receive an excellent education. But supporting our schools should not mean giving the school board a blank check.

If you are asking taxpayers for more money, you owe us a clear explanation of exactly where that money will go.

Before approving this tax increase, the board should publicly explain:

- Exactly how much additional revenue will this increase generate?
- Exactly what will the additional money be used for?
- What programs, positions, or expenses will receive the funding?

- What efforts have been made to reduce unnecessary spending before asking taxpayers for more?
 - Why can't these expenses be covered with the funds the school system already receives?
- Taxpayers should not simply be told that the schools "need more money." We deserve to know exactly why more money is needed and where every additional dollar will go.
- Families and senior citizens must balance their budgets and make difficult financial decisions every day. The school system should be held to the same standard.
- I respectfully challenge every member of the school board to show the taxpayers the numbers. Tell us exactly how much additional money you intend to collect, where it will be spent, and why the existing budget cannot cover these expenses.
- Until the Board provides a clear and convincing explanation, I believe approving another tax increase is unreasonable and unfair to the taxpayers expected to fund it.
- I strongly urge the school board to vote against the proposed tax rate increase and find ways to operate within the resources it already receives.
- Our children deserve excellent schools, but taxpayers deserve responsible government and financial accountability. We should not be asked to pay more without knowing exactly where our money is going.

Respectfully,
Susan Melhart of Crestwood

After 9/11:What changed — and what never will

Before the public ever hears a siren, the preparation has already begun. We've checked our radios, inspected our equipment and prepared ourselves for whatever the day might bring. Most calls are handled routinely and professionally. But every firefighter, police officer, dispatcher and EMS provider in Oldham County also understands that the next call could be the one that changes someone's life forever.

That constant preparation is one of the lasting legacies of Sept.11, 2001.

For those of us who remember that morning, the memories remain



KEVIN PARKER

frozen in time. We remember the disbelief as the events unfolded and the realization that our country—and the way emergency services responded to major incidents—would never be quite the same.

We also remember the 414 first responders who went to work that day and never came home.

For younger generations, however, 9/11 is history. It is a chapter in a textbook or something they have seen in a documentary. That makes it important for those of us who remember to continue telling the story—not to create fear, but to help others understand why

preparation and training matter.

September 11 changed emergency services across the country. Before 9/11, many agencies operated largely on their own. Fire departments, law enforcement agencies and EMS providers often had different procedures, communication systems and ways of managing emergencies.

Today in Oldham County, those agencies train together more than ever before.

When a major emergency occurs, the public does not care which agency is in charge or whose patch is on whose uniform. They simply want help to arrive—and they want those responding to work together.

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KENTUCKY DIVISION OF FORESTRY • BRANCH MANAGER

By Maurice LaRochelle

STAY THIRSTY

The importance of SOPs

Someone recently asked me, “What was the secret sauce that enabled your company, Rocket Man, to expand rapidly across the United States?” I quickly answered, “SOPs – Standard Operating Procedures.” Let me explain.

While our innovative portable beverage dispensing equipment and strong brand name recognition added an important zest, the base of our secret sauce was a decidedly old-fashioned tool, one that is near and dear to my heart: operating manuals.

Without uniform, well-defined franchise-style operating manuals, Rocket Man’s meteoric growth would not have been possible. For our business to successfully operate in dozens of stadiums and arenas, from Delaware to California, we had to have proven methods for consistently executing essential tasks, regardless of who was working.

Rocket Man’s SOPs helped us be more efficient, ensure consistent performance, provide proper training and preserve organizational knowledge regardless of turnover. In short, they made us a more effective and organized high-growth company and separated us from competitors that struggled with quality control.

The importance of operating manuals first became clear to me when I held entry level part-time jobs at fast food outlets as a teenager in Lexington. At Wiener King (WK), the full-time worker who trained me left after I was on the job for only three months. I then had to teach a new people how to do things but didn’t have half the working knowledge my trainer walked out the door with. Since WK did not have written procedures, I was only able to give beginners a diluted version of the training



MARK HAERTZEN

I received from a more experienced employee.

By contrast, another fast-foot restaurant I worked at — Burger King — had a detailed operating manual, which documented standard procedures with photos to ensure consistency. This enabled me and my fellow workers to do our jobs in the proper manner, such as taking apart and cleaning a broiler, without a lot of training or direct supervision.

I believe this difference helps explain why Wiener King went bankrupt, whereas The Home of the Whopper now has more than 19,000 locations worldwide, each flame broiling burgers in the exact same manner. This understanding had a major impact on me and how I help manage every business or organization, including the La Grange Rotary Club, I’ve been involved with ever since.

I wanted every aspect of Rocket Man’s operations in all venues, from Hardrock Stadium (Miami Dolphins) to Ford Field (Detroit Lions), to be as stable, consistent and scalable as possible. Keeping with this theme, we continually refined our processes, based on best practices whenever possible, which for me has been a career-long obsession.

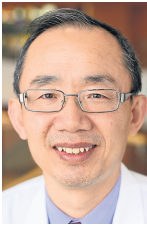
Rocket Man’s success at a given sporting event — Super Bowl, World Series, Kentucky Derby, etc. — depended upon the discretionary actions of each individual worker on our crew. For this reason, we took hiring, training and supervising employees very seriously and, as always, broke each down into step-by-step protocols. This was the primary ingredient in Rocket Man’s “secret sauce.”

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Recommendations on cancer prevention, treatment in seniors

People across the world are mourning the death of Dolly Parton, the country music singer and songwriter who has been a cultural icon for decades. Just a few days prior to her death, Parton said in an interview with People magazine that she was “dealing with some health issues that I just didn’t pay attention to” while caring for her late husband Carl, who died in 2025. This week, Parton’s estate confirmed her cause of death as cancer, though at this time they have not disclosed what type.

Parton’s admission that she overlooked her own health serves as a powerful reminder to be proactive in your healthcare, regardless of age. As a medical oncologist at the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center, I treat patients with cancer well into their senior years. In terms of prevention, many screening guidelines include lim-



ZHONGLIN HAO

its on age, but people can develop cancer at any time.

Kentucky has the highest rate of cancer deaths in the country — but many of these cancers are treatable or even preventable through screening.

Recommendations vary by cancer type and the overall health and personal risk factors of the individual. Here are some guidelines to consider.

WHAT ARE THE SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS?

Lung cancer

We’ll start with the highest burden of cancer in our state: lung cancer. Across the country, only 18% of screening-eligible adults have opted to get screened for lung cancer, which is done with a quick CT scan. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include all the following factors to recommend lung cancer screening:

- Age 50-80
 - Have a 20-pack-year or more smoking history (in other words, smoking the equivalent of a pack a day or more for 20 years)
 - Currently smoke now or quit within the past 15 years
- Beginning at age 81, the CDC and other national health organizations agree that screenings should stop.

Colorectal cancer

Current recommendations suggest beginning colorectal cancer screening at age 45 and continuing until age 75. However, the CDC suggests patients ages 76-85 speak with their physician about continued screenings, based on past medical history and overall health. Generally speaking, colorectal cancer screenings are not advised over the age of 85.

Breast cancer

Most national health organizations recommend beginning mammograms from ages 40-74 but there are differing opinions

on frequency. The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends a mammogram every two years, while the American Cancer Society recommends more frequent screenings: yearly beginning at age 45 to age 54, with the option to continue yearly thereafter based on medical history and risk.

For patients over the age of 74, there are no set guidelines around continuing screening. Some studies suggest that continuing to screen may not be necessary, as most breast cancers in women over 70 would not grow enough to cause harm. However, a study of women over 80 who continued to get mammograms showed that screenings found more cancers earlier, when treatment was less aggressive; as a result, these patients lived longer.

Because the incidence of this cancer is so high in our state, we recommend shared decision-making between individual patients and their physicians regarding the option to continue screening beyond age 74.

Cervical cancer

There are two tests to help find cervical cancer early: the human papillomavirus (HPV) test, and a Pap smear. The CDC recommends women begin screening with a Pap smear at age 21; if results are normal, their physician may recommend only screening every three years up to age 29.

From age 30-65, your physician may recommend either an HPV test or Pap smear, or both. Depending on which test(s) are done, if the results are normal, they may suggest screenings at 3- or 5-year intervals.

Most national recommendations suggest stopping cervical cancer screening after age 65; however, a 2021 study showed that an estimated 20% of new cervical cancer cases in the U.S. are in women over the age of 65.

In 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of Gardasil in adolescents and young adults, an HPV

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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Letters to the editor should include your name, address and phone number where you can be reached for verification. Letters should be limited to 500 words. The Era reserves the right to edit all letters for clarity, style and taste. The Era restricts publication of multiple letters on the same topic from the same author to two letters and one per every 30 days. The Era also reserves the right to hold all letters considered libelous or in poor taste. Letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Era staff. During election season, the Era will not publish letters from any individual who is running for office, and letters that criticize any candidates during election season will not be published.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ADVERTISING:

Ad deadlines are noon Monday unless there is a holiday or a countywide issue. Kentuckiana ads are due by 4 p.m. one week prior to publication.

SUBMITTED ITEMS:

Any submitted obituaries, news, photos, editorials and community page items must be at the Era office by noon Monday for that week’s publication.

CORRECTIONS:

The Era will publish a correction of any error that it is made aware of. The newspaper will also make clarification of facts that may be misconstrued. The newspaper strives for accuracy, fairness and clarity in its coverage of Oldham County.