



ADAIR COUNTY  
**COMMUNITY VOICE** 50¢

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12 pages

**SPECIAL REPORT**

**State lacks clear standard to fund county roads**

Clear-cut rules to prioritize which county roads can be repaired with state funding do not appear to exist.

A recent review of records by the Community Voice revealed that many county roads are not evaluated according to a state standard before a county government is allowed to spend state money on repairs.

A recent flap spurred the investigation over the paving of county roads, three of which were said to be ineligible for state road funds because they did not meet state guidelines.

An investigation by the Community Voice found an inconsistent and sometimes non-existent evaluation process when roads are chosen for state funding.

The Community Voice filed an open records request with Kentucky state government in search of evaluations of county roads blacktopped and repaired in recent years. The investigation found that a number of roads were blacktopped without a formal evaluation process; other roads were evaluated but ranked low in a needs assessment.

The Voice was told by one state official that there is no official written assessment process required for the use of discretionary funds for road repairs. An evaluation process exists for repairing roads that are funded by the rural secondary road program, but the Voice found roads that were funded by that program which fell well below the minimum criteria.

The Voice was told by one state official that there is no official written assessment process required for the use of discretionary funds for road repairs.

**THE ROAD TO INELIGIBILITY**

Adair County's conflict began after state Rep. John "Bam" Carney requested and received \$385,000 in state road aid to improve six county roads.

Carney bypassed County Judge Executive Ann Melton when he requested the funds. An obvious rift between the two Republicans came to a head when Carney presented the approved road list in September to Adair County Fiscal Court. The court approved the list.

Melton said that James Hoskins, an inspector with the Office of Rural Secondary Roads, showed up at her office the next morning. After reviewing the six roads for which Carney had received funding, Melton said Hoskins ruled that three roads were ineligible. The three roads deemed ineligible were ranked a 3 out of 10, with 10 being in the worst condition.

When asked if she attempted to get the roads disqualified that Carney had requested, Melton replied, "Absolutely not."

Ultimately, Melton, Carney and magistrates agreed on a process to select different roads in order to keep the \$385,000 in state funding.

**MIXED POT OF FUNDS**

State approval for the \$385,000 Carney secured stated that \$315,000 came from FD39, or state contingency funds. The remaining \$70,000 came from CBO6, or funds from the rural secondary program, but this particular pot is treated the same as contingency funds.

Unlike other road funds, contingency funds, often referred to as discretionary funds, are spent at the discretion of the secretary of the Transportation Cabinet. Kentucky law states that those funds should be used for emergency projects, promotion of economic development, relief of a hazardous condition, or other purposes the secretary determines to be a priority.

Contingency funds are considered highly political, and Melton has bridged a Republican county with a Democratic-led state executive branch to garner a significant share of contingency funds during all one but year of Gov. Steve Beshear's almost seven years in office.

During Melton's first year as judge executive, which coincided with Republican Gov. Ernie Fletcher's reelection pursuit, Adair County received \$1 million in

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**ALL DRESSED UP**

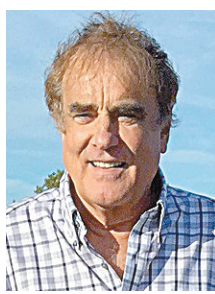
**AND READY TO ROLL**



Students are dressing up pumpkins like their favorite storybook characters this week at Adair County Elementary School. In the top photo, Aliziah Abbot, 4th grade, stands by her pumpkins made in the likeness of characters from "Frog and Toad Are Friends" by Arnold Lobel. Maggie Shirley, from Mr. Curry's fourth grade class painted her pumpkin like "Little Critter," Beth Cowan, from Mrs. Walker's fourth grade class, decorated her pumpkin to look like Minnie Mouse. Shown right, Brody Blair, from Mrs. Montgomery's third grade class, decorated his pumpkin to look like Mr. Creacher.

**Arnold files as write-in mayoral candidate**

Inventor and scientist Ben Arnold filed Tuesday to run as a write-in candidate for mayor.



Arnold earned a lot of attention recently after writing a letter to the editor about the city's plans for an occupational tax.

"I didn't have any intentions to run," Arnold said. "I wrote that letter as a good citizen response. Then the response was so strong. I thought about it later. All I did was vent and didn't give an option to anyone."

Arnold said the swift community response made him ask himself: "Maybe this is a message I should put myself out there."

Arnold wants young people involved in the community's leadership and wants to see job growth, whether it's through out-of-state recruitment or from growing locally developed companies.

He wants the community to aim at jobs that offer an "acceptable payscale," perhaps starting around \$15 to \$20 per hour, he said.

Property owners should not be taxed by the city and county and Arnold said he wants to consolidate city and county governments. While

other communities tried and failed, Arnold said he believes consolidation can and should be done.

"I'm going to work to do that; I'm going to work to do that as a blueprint for other towns," he said.

Originally Arnold recruited people who would be willing to run as write-in candidates for city council, but has ended that effort. He said he realized that approach would not succeed. Instead, he says he wants to work with the elected council members.

A second letter written by Arnold last Wednesday is located on page 4.

By Sharon Burton  
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**Mayoral candidates talk tax, law enforcement**

Curtis Hardwick and June Parson, opponents for the office of mayor, agree that Columbia has been struggling financially. Each say they will work hard to get the budget back in order.

During a recent candidate forum hosted by WAIN and the Community Voice, the two mayoral candidates were asked about the city's vote on the occupational tax.

Parson, who wants "to move Columbia in a different direc-

tion" and do "business a new way," chaired the committee that recommended the recently approved 1 percent occupational tax.

She said the tax could be used to address citizen concerns, including economic development, activities for young people and the neglect of roads and sidewalks.

"You look at what you have

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**Free trash disposal this weekend**

The county is providing free tipping this weekend at the transfer station on L. Willis Road.

The facility will be open Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. to noon.

Items and materials not accepted include:

- Tires
- Concrete
- Steel cable
- Lumber
- Rock
- Dirt
- Capacitors
- Burning barrels
- Air tanks
- Hazardous materials
- Paint not dried with sand or cat litter