

Council approves budget, discusses BLM rally

The Irvine Council met inside city hall Monday for a special meeting on Monday, June 8th. This is the first time the council had not met by teleconference since the pandemic. Those attending the meeting practiced social distancing.

The council gave second reading to the proposed budget for 2020-21, but only after comments were made by Councilman Tim Burkhart.

Mayor James Gross anticipates the budget will have \$51,000 in surplus funds.

"I have a problem seeing where the surplus is coming from," stated Burkhart, a retired math teacher and administrator. "I'm hopeful there is a \$52,000 surplus."

Burkhart said there was an increase of nearly \$32,000 in FICA and Kentucky Retirement rates.

Gross said they had added another police officer to the city's health insurance. That fund was expected to be about \$15,000 higher.

City clerk Robin Powell said property taxes had gone up \$110,000 last year.

"I just hope people will still pay their taxes," Powell stated.

The mayor said that Playtime Daycare on River Drive has requested five days a week garbage pickup, at least during the summer months. The council voted to adjust the garbage rates accordingly.

Gross said some businesses are now getting garbage picked up on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

The council discussed a lease agreement with the former dry cleaner building owned by the city.

Gross said the renter is behind on the \$300 a month lease payment for April and May. He said the business can only operate at 33% because of Covid regulations.

City attorney Rodney Davis said the covid crisis forces landlords to do things differently. He said the renter could give art and music lessons to up to ten students at a time.

Davis said landlords still have costs, including insurance, property taxes, maintenance, etc. while renters are not paying their rents.

The council discussed several options.

"Somebody in that building is better than nobody in that building," stated Councilman Ernest Lee Farmer. "I don't want to put this business out of business."

"If we forego the two months rent, will he be able to come back," Burkhart suggested. "That would show we were willing to work with him."

A motion passed to forego the two months of unpaid rent.

James Woolery had requested to allow property he purchased on Church Street to grow into a green space.

"I think he needs to keep it cut and trimmed," the mayor decided after the council discussed the issue.

The council amended the city's ordinance for 2019-20 to include \$27,500 the city had received in unanticipated revenues for a fire grant.

Gross said the city has an ordinance prohibiting non-domestic animals within city limits.

He stated that recently a woman had

chickens in a coop and had to get rid of them.

Attorney Davis said that Berea allows chickens in city limits if they are kept for fresh eggs.

After the discussion, Gross stated that he will check with nearby cities to see if they have an ordinance on chickens.

"I see no problem with chickens," Farmer stated. He added that a rooster crowing early in the morning could create some problems.

The council took no action on a request for a Black Lives Rally which was being held at the courthouse that evening.

Davis said the rally was occurring on the courthouse property, which the city has no control over.

Gross said the ordinance about rallies does not require the participants to clean up after themselves. They will revisit that issue at another meeting.

The council adjourned to go into closed session to discuss a business which the city has a contract with.

EC Black Lives Rally was a peaceful event

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Kenny Bishop, a former Estill resident and associate pastor at a Lexington church, spoke to the crowd.

"Racism is a sin," he stated.

At one point, the participants got down on their knees for eight minutes of silence. That is the length of time the officer had Floyd on the ground before he died.

The participants marched once around the courthouse.

Before the rally ended they lay down on the courthouse lawn.

When it was over, the courthouse lawn was neat as when the group started. There was no trash. Everything was put back in its original spot.

Traffic on Main Street was heavier than usual during the rally. Some drivers honked their horns. It is unknown if they were for or against the rally.

A lot of trucks revved it and covered up the sounds of the rally.

A black truck drove down Main

Street with a large confederate flag attached. On its next trip, a red truck followed with a confederate flag. On the third trip, the black truck displayed yet another confederate flag.

Two of the rally-goers angrily exchanged words between themselves. A state trooper talked to the young man involved. He crossed back over the street and rejoined the rally.

During the rally, there were police officers on every corner and across from the courthouse on Main Street. Those officers came from the Irvine Police Department, Kentucky State Police, Estill County Sheriff's Department, and Ravenna Police Department. Jailer Bo Morris, several deputy jailers, and members of the rescue squad were available.

Most of the local officers said they had never arrested a black person in Estill County. Blacks make up a very small percentage of the population in Estill County.

IPD executes searches, charges two with drugs

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The man arrested at that address was Craig E. Johnson, 38. He was charged by Chief John Sturniolo with trafficking in a controlled substance, first offense (carfentanil or fentanyl derivatives), trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree and first offense (cocaine), trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree, second offense or greater (methamphetamine), and drug paraphernalia -- buy/possess.

Also assisting at the scene were Detective Sam Hensley and Deputy Josh King.

The first search warrant to be executed was

on Crooked Creek Road, at the residence occupied by Kenneth R. Estes, 54.

The citation states that Office Jason Conrad located two loaded syringes, containing unknown substances. One was in the living room and the other in a garbage can in the kitchen.

The citation adds that Estes told Deputy Josh Rison that there were seven marijuana plants in an outbuilding. Estes reportedly took the officers to the outbuilding where the plants were located.

Estes was charged with possession of a controlled substance, first degree and first offense drug unspecified), and cultivation of marijuana (five plants or more), first offense.

Two men were charged following an investigation into a vehicle blocking a lane on Rosebud Drive on June 6.

Deputy Marshall said as he stopped, a female exited the front seat. He said she had slurred speech and almost fell.

Officer Stewart Morris arrived and observed the two men move an object and throw it under the seat. The citation identifies that object as a solid chunk of what field tested positive as methamphetamine.

Officer Marshall arrested Kenny Dale Clark, 29, of Dark Hollow Road, Irvine, and Jeffrey Dale Harrison, 38, of Lexington. They were each charged with trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree (methamphetamine). The citation states that this was Harrison's second offense or greater.

Clark, the driver, stated that Harrison had gone to his sister's house and picked up methamphetamine.

Local Police activity report

Ashley McCoy, 32, of Sweet Lick Road, Irvine was traffic stopped June 4 on River Drive by Deputy Josh King because her rear license plate was not illuminated.

The deputy was given consent to search the vehicle. He said he located a syringe containing a clear liquid under the driver's seat.

McCoy was charged with drug paraphernalia - buy/possess, possession of a controlled substance, first degree and first offense, and rear license not illuminated.

McCoy's passenger, **Elizabeth Sandlin**, 40, of Murphy's Ford Road, Irvine was charged by Deputy King with trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree (greater than or equal to two mg. methamphetamine) and drug paraphernalia - buy/possess.

The deputy stated that Sandlin consented for him to search her purse. He reported finding a black box containing two tied plastic bags, one which contained a white crystal substance and the other a tan powdered substance.

He added that inside the black box were five individually wrapped papers containing a tan powdered substance, \$560 and a roll of receipt paper.

Lauren East, 32, of Main Street, Irvine was

arrested June 7 by Deputy Chris Coffey.

The citation states that Coffey received a call about drug activity in the McDonald's parking lot. When he arrived, he said that East was out of her vehicle. He was given consent to search the vehicle.

The citation states that she claimed a small baggie in her purse which contained a crystal like substance, suspected methamphetamine.

There was also a pipe, needles and plastic baggies in the vehicle, according to the citation.

East was charged with possession of meth and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Jerry William Spence, 44, was arrested June 6 at his residence on Dawes Road, Irvine by Deputy Coffey.

The citation stated that Coffey was dispatched to Spence's resident. Upon his arrival, he said Spence went behind the house.

The deputy said he found Spence lying face down in a creek with a beer in his hand.

When he put handcuffs on Spence, he said the man threw a bottle of hydrocodone which belonged to his girlfriend.

The girlfriend reportedly told the deputy the medicine was in the car, and Spence had taken them without her knowledge.

Dustin D. Reynolds, 26, of Ticky Fork Road, Irvine was arrested June 5 by Deputy Josh Rison.

The deputy was dispatched to Ticky Fork Road when a home alarm was activated. Upon arrival, he saw a white Toyota which had been reported stolen several days earlier.

The homeowner, who was in Lexington, gave Rison permission to enter the residence through a window. After a thorough search, Rison said he found no one in the home.

He opened the garage using the door opener found inside the home. He said he located Reynolds in the attic of the garage.

The citation states there was an active EPO in effect against Reynolds by the homeowner.

Reynolds was charged with violation of a Kentucky EPO, theft by unlawful taking or disposition of an auto, \$500 or more, but under \$10,000, and second degree burglary.

Patricia Brammer, 54, was arrested June 1 on a charge of alcohol intoxication of a controlled substance (excludes alcohol) by Officer James Marshall.

She was sitting on the sidewalk north of Rice Street with her feet extended almost out into the roadway, he said. She was also swaying back

and forward.

Assisting at the scene were Detective Sam Hensley and Deputy Brad Smith.

Theresa Ann Bishop, 41, of Woodward Ridge, Ravenna was arrested June 7 on River Drive by Officer Marshall.

He charged her with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol/drugs.

Deputy Coffey had observed Bishop's vehicle cross the yellow line twice on River Drive and had conducted a traffic stop.

Officer Marshall said the passenger was extremely intoxicated and the smell of alcoholic beverage was strong.

Bishop was asked to exit the vehicle, and field sobriety tests were administered.

William Sizemore, 36, of Witt Ridge Road, Irvine, was charged with alcohol intoxication in a public place, first offense by Officer Marshall on June 7.

A tenant of Shepherd's Apartments called and said that Sizemore was in the breezeway and appeared to be under the influence. She added that he had approached her car, and she was scared.

The citation states that Sizemore admitted to drinking a half pint of vodka.

Officer Stewart Morris assisted with the arrest.

Early Voting

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Voters will not be using a voting machine. They will be given a paper ballot and an ink pen which they keep. Once they vote, the voter scans the ballot in a scanner.

Election worker Angie Walters said that county clerk Brian Crowe had used grant money to purchase the scanner.

Walters said that if a voter does not mark the ballot correctly, the scanner tells them. They get three chances to correct it.

Near the scanner is a voting machine with a touch screen for handicapped voters. When the voter is finished, their ballot is printed out and scanned.

Walters said that voting machine is suitable for hearing impaired voters and the blind because it is braille capable.

Crowe is in his second year as county clerk. He said that in previous elections, the county clerk's office could not count absentee ballots until election day.

This year, his office will be processing the absentee ballots early.

Crowe said all absentee ballots must be postmarked by June 23. Because his office may not receive them on election day, any ballots received through June 29 will be counted.

On election night, Crowe said preliminary election results will be announced in the upstairs courtroom.

The official vote total for Estill County will not be made until June 29 in order to receive all ballots postmarked by June 23.

To request an absentee ballot, you may contact the county clerk's office at 723-5156.

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