

EAST CROWD
Kids, spectators enjoy
Coaster Car Derby— A7

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Jessamine club volleyball wins tournament, B10 • New traffic signal going in on U.S. 27, A5 • East softball streak ends at 17, B1

Residents offer input on land-use plan

By Rosalind Essig
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The Comprehensive Plan Update Committee held an open house Thursday, asking for Jessamine County residents to give their input on the future land-use map.

Committee member Pete Beaty said around 50 people attended the open house, held at the Jessamine County Public Library, mostly from Nicholasville and the county. He said the number of attendees was encouraging because of the importance of getting public input.

"It's critical. Because basically we're setting out the plan book for the county and we follow it," Beaty said.

The future land-use map is just one part of the comprehensive plan, which is updated every five years.

The future land-use map and the comprehensive plan itself received attention during a zone change application process for a property on Vince Road last year. The Jessamine County-City of Wilmore Joint Planning Commission recommended the agricultural to industrial zone change to the Jessamine County Fiscal Court, which denied the application.

The future land-use map, which plans for industrial and commercial development along the U.S. 27 corridor, including Vince Road, was featured heavily in arguments

supporting the validity of the property owners' application. A civil lawsuit filed by the property owners is currently still in litigation, after the fiscal court appealed Jessamine County Circuit Judge Hunter Daugherty decision in favor of granting the zone change to the property owners.

The vast majority of the residents attending the open house were interested in the Vince Road issue — on one side or the other. Carl Waits, a Carolyn Lane resident who also serves on the Water District No. 1 board, said residents in the area had organized an email list to communicate about updates and events related to Vince Road.

Canter Lane resident Robin East — who

described herself as "totally against" the planned development for Vince Road — said she was unaware of the comprehensive plan before the conflict arose. She believes even the people who were aware of it didn't understand the implications.

"Even if they might have heard about it, they understand the importance now," she said.

The county is required by statute to create a comprehensive plan. The 1986 statute KRS 100.183 reads: "The planning commission of each unit shall prepare a comprehensive plan, which shall serve as

see **PLAN** on page A3

INSIDE THIS WEEK

SPORTS



COLTS GET BEST OF JAGS

West baseball rode a big eighth inning to beat rival East 4-1 on Thursday. — See B1

PHOTOS ONLINE



(WEB) GALLERY WALK

Visit www.jessaminejournal.com to see a full photo gallery from last weekend's gallery walk.

Agencies make funding requests to Fiscal Court

By Rosalind Essig
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The Jessamine County Fiscal Court held a budget workshop Tuesday to review agency requests in preparation for a full budget workshop.

The magistrates could not take any official action during the workshop, but discussed West's recommendation for each request. The discussion geared toward keeping most of the funding at the same level or granting a lower amount to the agencies that actually requested less money.

West said he was not comfortable with taking on any new agencies in the current budget situation, which has been balanced the last couple of years by dipping into the county's reserves.

The newly formed Jessamine County Homeless Coalition was the only new agency requesting funding in this budget cycle. West said he felt it was a worthy cause, but did not think taking on a new agency was a good idea.

The homeless coalition requested \$50,000

"One of the reasons that we give these monies out is for special projects

see **REQUESTS** on page A2

HUMAN touch up



STORY & PHOTOS BY ROSALIND ESSIG • ressig@jessaminejournal.com

Habitat back on its feet, back to helping

"You never dream of something like that."

Mary Pope moved into her Scott Street home in Wilmore about 16 years ago, after her mom died. Before that, she lived in a different house on Scott Street for 30 years. A retired nurse, Pope has lived in Wilmore

most of her life. She raised her children and grandchildren on Scott Street.

But it had been years since she was able to have any work done on the house.

What she couldn't dream of was Habitat for Humanity of Jessamine County reaching out to her and filling her front yard with volunteers to do that work.

On Friday, Pope's home was one of three home-repair sites in Wilmore organized by Habitat as a service day partnership with Asbury Seminary. Volunteers power-washed her siding, applied a fresh

coat of paint, weeded and planted in her gardens, and built a roof over her front stoop. They also installed a storm door — something Pope has been trying to get for a few years, but never had the money.

"It's been a long time," she said "... But to have all this much done, it's like a dream."

Habitat for Humanity of Jessamine County's new director Leanne Prout said the organization has served more than

see **HABITAT** on page A3

Lawmakers take look back at budget, session

By David Brock
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Local lawmakers of both parties are generally happy with a state budget that maintained local high-way projects in the two-year road plan, avoided major cuts to public education and took some steps toward dealing with funding crisis for teacher and state worker pensions.

It took every remaining second of an extended clock for the legislature to state's \$22 billion budget. While the last-minute negotiations hinged on other issues, the hot topic of the session was the state's ailing pension funds.

Rep. Russ Meyer was glad the regular legislative session revolved around the dire situation of the public retirement systems. The Democrat and former Nicholasville mayor said he was satisfied with long overdue progress made on a problem he made a focus

see **SESSION** on page A2



PHOTO BY LUIS DAVID FUENTES

Luis David Fuentes impressed art lovers with photos of his home country of Cuba during Friday's gallery walk.

Cuban artist's work lights up gallery walk

By Rosalind Essig
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Luis David Fuentes' photographs of life in Cuba were among the featured works in the Creative Art League of Jessamine County's first gallery walk of the year held Friday.

Fuentes, who lives in Frankfort, moved to central Kentucky from Cuba 15 years ago. There were only 200 to 300 Cuban people living in Kentucky, and most in Louisville, at the time. Since then, Fuentes said that population has "exploded" to around 17,000.

As he watched more people join the Cuban com-

munity in Kentucky, he realized there was something missing: information. Fuentes said in Miami, where most Cubans in America live, people have a lot of ways to access information in Spanish — radio, newspapers and magazines.

"I said, well it would be a good idea to start some kind of publication for: First, recreating what we left behind. You know, culture, music, all of these things. But also for helping the community to



LUIS DAVID FUENTES

understand and be accepted in Kentucky," he said.

So he started a monthly magazine, El Kentubano, about seven years ago — "Kentubano" is a pet name he gave his children who were born here, combining "Kentuckian" with "Cubano."

In addition to publishing about Cuban culture, such as music and art, he provides news and information that will help immigrants from the country transition into life in Kentucky. He said it is an "abrupt" change for people coming from Cuba to the U.S., who need information that would

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A1: HABITAT

25 families and added three new board members since August. Jessamine Habitat has gone back to basics with home repairs and revitalizing neighborhoods after being inactive for about two years.

“From last August, we’ve really focused on the housing support side. Just getting re-focused back on how Habitat can serve our community in the way in which our mission states. We exist to bring communities together to build homes, community and hope. So, we’re putting all of our efforts back to that mission,” Prout said.

Prout wants to keep the pace up and serve “many, many, many more families” before the fiscal year ends in June. Friday’s service day tied that home-repair focus into another goal of the organization: partnering with institutions to give residents an opportunity to volunteer and increasing the number of volunteers available to get more projects done.

For Pope, that meant getting a much-needed roof built over her front stoop. With no awning or cover, rain would get her mail wet and ice made the concrete too dangerous for her to go outside in the winter — even just to take out the trash.

“My grandson says, ‘Granny, don’t come out side,’ and he goes outside and skates,” she said with a smile.

Pope’s home was one of three that Jessamine Habitat worked on Friday.

Volunteers tore down an unstable deck and painted the metal roof with sealant at one home, adding about eight years of life back into the roof, Prout said. The old deck was replaced with one with a ramp. At the third home, volunteers cleaned up the yard and installed railing from the front door down the homeowners’ steep driveway. Prout said the elderly couple had fallen multiple times on the drive, which is especially dangerous in the winter.

As Pope sat on her new porch Monday, she still couldn’t believe it was real.

“I just come out here to look. I was telling my daughter about it. I just love these beams,” she said, looking up at the two-by-fours that support the little roof.

A LOW POINT

From 2014 until last August, Jessamine Habitat was essentially inactive.

The executive director was removed and the Restore shut down after the board was made aware of some serious problems and Habitat for Humanity International — the parent organization — stepped in to make sure the issues were resolved, Habitat board president Wayne Hayden said. Hayden was president of the board during that turbulent period. He said the problems in the organization went on for at least a couple of years without the board’s knowledge.

No civil lawsuits or criminal charges were filed as a result of what Hayden described as “unethical” activities that were going on and problems with management and employees. He said “some of it could probably border on criminal activity” and that the issues were related to the management of the Restore.

Consequently, executive director Ron Bishoff, who joined Jessamine Habitat as director in 2008, was



Mary Pope sits in front of her home that was repaired Friday by volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. The group put a new roof on her front stoop so she could sit outside and enjoy the weather.

PHOTO BY ROSALIND ESSIG/RESSIG@JESSAMINEJOURNAL.COM

removed and no director was hired for a time, Hayden said.

“Our board at the time was basically following what the leadership was doing until we found out these complaints,” he said. “... So, once we found out about that, our board voted to eliminate our executive director position for the time and work through our board to straighten out all of the problems that had occurred through Habitat for Humanity International. Some of them were as simple as not filing the proper documents that we’re supposed to file every quarter. Some of them were just morally wrong.”

Hayden said Habitat for Humanity International required the board to meet with the parent organization’s consultants on a monthly basis until everything was resolved. When they corrected the problems and shut the Restore down, the board also decided to go back to focusing on the home repair mission of Habitat.

“Our previous board did wonderful work, working through this tough situation,” he said. “But the new board has even taken it a step further and creating fundraising techniques — and we’re also actually doing projects in the community that the whole board has supported through (Prout’s) leadership.”

MOVING FORWARD WITH VISION

In her sixth year working for Habitat, Prout said she wanted to continue to be involved with the organization when she moved to central Kentucky from Michigan. She already had experience volunteer coordinator and in community development with her Habitat affiliate in Michigan.

“When I came here I just sought to get involved and it just worked out. And, you know, God’s provision, and doors were opened (so) that I was

able to just continue my professional career — my passion — working with Habitat,” she said.

Prout said she started talking with board members about the status of Jessamine Habitat. They started meeting regularly last summer and brought her on part-time as a consultant in August. From there, she said they were able to create a strategic mission.

“It’s really by the grace of God that we ran into her,” Hayden said, adding that Prout was going to work for Habitat in Lexington because she didn’t know there was an affiliate in Jessamine County.

“Our previous board had to work through a lot of real problems and I commend them for that. And I think that’s why some of them have stepped off of here ... It was very tough — for every member of this board — to go through that. The reason I stayed with it, I believe there’s something more that we could do than what we were doing at the time. And (Prout) has proven that through her work,” he said.

Pope connected with Prout via a referral from the thrift store at Wilmore Methodist Church.

“Leanne is just, she’s so good,” Pope said. “She’s such a nice person, you know, just like she’s not a stranger. She just comes in and everything, she’s so willing to help you. And all the workers (are).”

Pope said Prout took her to pick out paint colors — cream for the siding and gray-blue for the window trim — and some yellow flowers. Pope got up to look at the blue paint when one of the volunteers opened the can.

“I have trouble with colors. I can’t make up my mind,” she laughed to the volunteer.

Pope and the volunteer decided

she picked a great color.

Garnering community support for the work Habitat is doing and building awareness of the “immense need” in Jessamine County are important aspects of what Prout is trying to accomplish right now. And she’s looking ahead, with the goal of doing a major construction project this year.

Prout said the rehab could involve a donated house or a home with an existing homeowner in need of significant repairs. But she said Habitat works with the homeowners so they work on their home and “actually gain pride in paying for the work,” which is discounted and is not charged interest.

One of the reasons Jessamine Habitat needed to go back and restate their mission is because many residents didn’t know there was a local Habitat affiliate or had misconceptions about what the organization does.

“They just thought we give houses away. Well, no, we actually partner with families to transform their understanding of homeownership and they actually pay it back — the mortgage, it’s at a zero percent, but — and they have to do hours on their home. ... A lot of people just aren’t educated here about what Habitat is,” Prout said.

Hayden and Prout both expressed excitement for the future of Habitat

for Humanity in Jessamine County. Hayden said Prout and the board are working on plans for fundraising initiatives and community partnerships.

“It’s exciting — I’m so excited,” Prout said. “And the community has been wonderful. Habitat would not exist without the community’s support — it doesn’t work. So, Jessamine is such a generous community with volunteers and resources and it shows a lot. And we’re excited to continue growing.”

While the organization was and is transforming itself, Jessamine Habitat has an immediate impact on the quality of life for the people it works with. People like Pope, who said she’s amazed by how caring the volunteers were and how much they were able to accomplish in a day.

“It’s like a miracle. Because like my neighbor was saying, (when) she went to work at 8 o’clock that morning (the volunteers) were just getting together — and when she came back, they were about finished. You know, it’s a miracle what they did. And I enjoy the company because I’m here by myself.”

A1: PLAN

a guide for public and private actions and decisions to assure the development of public and private property in the most appropriate relationships. ...”

Beaty described it as “a vision” for development — and areas that won’t be developed — in the county. He said that as they work on it, the committee does the best they can to reflect the majority of people.

“This is the time to help us with the vision,” he said.

County planning and zoning director Chris Woodall said getting as much public input as possible is “the best way to get a good comprehensive plan.”

The open house featured large maps of the county and cities for input on where to locate residential, industrial, and commercial and professional development, as well as where to conserve agricultural and natural landscapes. They also provided blank comment cards.

Woodall expects there to be at least one other opportunity for residents to have their voices heard on the future land-use map, but the committee has not decided on a format. He said it might be another open house or they may ask the public to submit letters, but it will be advertised in the public notices as they did with Thursday’s open house.

“I anticipate that there will be another venue ... some formalized way for people to provide their input,” he said, adding the committee wants “as many people as possible to provide their input.”

People interested in keeping up with the process can attend the committee’s meetings, or talk to him and Nicholasville planning and zoning director Dean Anness to get more information. He cautioned that the committee meetings are open, but not intended to be for receiving public input.

The committee meets the second Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Nicholasville City Hall.

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