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Technology Center will be state of art, great county asset

By: Richard Anderkin
Remodeling is scheduled to begin this week on the old Circuit Court room in the Rockcastle County Courthouse, which will house a state-of-the-art Technology Center.

Last week the Rockcastle County Fiscal Court awarded the \$72,000 bid for the remodeling to a Richmond firm, which has eighty days to complete the work.

"The Technology Center will house Rockcastle's CenterNet, which will make Video Conferencing available to the county for the first time," Rockcastle County Judge-Executive Buzz Carlotis said.

"We think this will help dramatically in our efforts in attracting new

employers to the county," said Bige Towery Jr., who heads the Rockcastle County Development Board.

The development board and the fiscal court have worked hand and hand with staff members at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset in making the Technology Center become a reality.

The Center for Rural Development will pay for the \$80,000 in equipment that will go into the center through a federal grant, which was obtained by U.S. Congressman Harold Rogers' office.

The Center for Rural Development will also provide \$11,000 for the first year's cost of the high speed phone lines that will be needed for

the video conferencing.

But, the \$72,000 for the renovation of the courtroom has been raised locally by the development.

Towery said the Rockcastle Hospital, Bank of Mt. Vernon and Citizens Bank have donated \$10,000 each to the project. The Rockcastle County School System will contribute \$5,000 to the project and the Rockcastle County Fiscal Court will contribute up to \$10,000.

The remaining \$21,000 will come from the Development Board, which has applied for a \$25,000 grant from the state's Office of Coal Development.

Towery said he had been told by officials in Frankfort that coal sever-

ance money would fund the grant and that it was all but a done deal.

"The grant must be included in the Governor's final budget as a line item expenditure, but Rep. Danny Ford is working very hard to get that done," Towery said.

Officials must have the Technology Center in operation by the middle of August, but Towery said that he hoped the center will be in operation by the middle of July.

Besides the ability to hold a video conference with large groups, the center will also have a small room for one on one conferencing.

There will also be computers with internet access for personal use and there will also be personal computers for people simply needing to use a computer.

In the 2,200 square foot facility there will also be a conference room to be used for meetings.

Towery said that the Development Board appreciated the support of the Fiscal Court.

"They have bent over backwards to help us see this project through," Towery said.

Besides providing the space for the Center, the fiscal court will also

pay the utilities and provide janitorial service.

"When you put a pencil to it, the fiscal court's annual in-kind contribution is \$46,000 a year," Towery said.

Besides being used by the school system, government agencies and businesses, the Center will always be open to the public.

Towery said that the County Judge's office will also provide some assistance, but that it is hoped that volunteers will also be willing to work at the Center until it becomes self sustaining.

In Barbara Lovell murder case

Stanziano asks for Judge, prosecutor to be recused

By: Richard Anderkin

The attorney for a local woman accused of murder, has asked that Rockcastle Circuit Judge Dan Venters and Acting Commonwealth Attorney Eddy F. Montgomery be recused from the case.

The case involves Barbara Lovell, of Mt. Vernon, who is accused along with her husband David, of killing Charles "Toddy" Baker, 31, of Mt. Vernon in 1998 and burying his body in a pit off Tark Hill Road.

In the motion filed in Circuit Court on February 4, attorney Mark Stanziano also asked that the indictment against Lovell be dismissed or that statements about the case made by Lovell to Montgomery and police officers be suppressed.

The motion centers around a January 6 meeting in the Somerset chambers of Judge Venters, in which Lovell apparently told him (Venters) she had fired Stanziano and wanted to talk to Montgomery about the case.

According to court records, Lovell told Judge Venters that she couldn't handle the pressure brought on by the case any longer and that she feared for her life.

According to court records, Lovell stated that she was afraid a member of her husband's family might kill her.

"If I have to go to jail, then I'll have to go to jail, but I'm not going down for something I didn't do, and if I did do it, I'd rather go ahead and go to the pen instead of facing David again or his family because one of them is going to end up killing me," Lovell told Judge Venters during the meeting in chambers.

Lovell also told the Judge that she wanted to talk to Montgomery without representation by a lawyer, although Venters told Lovell she could appoint her one in a matter of minutes.

She went to work in the central office to go to work in the central office.

Two previous complaints to the Standards Board, filed against Cash by former RCHS teachers Johnna Ward and Joyce Ponder were dismissed by the Standards Board.

Ponder later filed suit in federal court.

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The Rockcastle County High School Varsity Cheerleading squad took home first place in the cheerleading competition held during the 49th District Tournament at Onelda last week. Members of the squad are pictured above, first row from left: Angela Owens, Debbie Spencer, Crystal Mink, Erica Kirby and Kisha Saylor. Second row from left: Tara Burton, Emily Wright, Jennifer Carmack, Jessica Jones, Ladonya Mink and Brittany Asher. Third row from left: Elizabeth Matekovich, Cathie Midkiff, Leslie Saylor and Natalie Taylor. Fourth row from left: Chelsen Stratton, Vanessa Chidress, Stormie Ambrose, Marie Collins, John Hankins and Ashley Miller.

Mt. Vernon to give \$25,000 to local development board

By: Richard Anderkin

The Mt. Vernon City Council wasted little time Monday night in committing some of the extra money that will be raised by their new payroll and net profits tax.

By a unanimous vote the council voted to provide \$25,000 annually to the Rockcastle County Development Board to help boost their efforts in attracting new jobs to the county.

Mayor Karen King suggested the donation to the council and all members voted yes.

"We appreciate the city's help in our efforts to attract more industry and jobs to Rockcastle," Bige Towery, Jr., Director of the Development Board said.

The council also agreed to participate in the Renaissance Kentucky Program, that will provide money for the revitalization of main street.

The first phase application is due in Governor Paul Patton's office by June 1.

Mayor King appointed council members Clarice Kirby and Lonetta Daugherty to a committee that will head the project.

Towery told the council that the committee will likely have seven members, besides himself, who will serve as a consultant, and will be responsible for gathering the needed information for the project and making suggestions as to what work needs to be done.

Towery said the Governor had set aside \$12 million in this year's budget, which has not been approved yet, he said he felt like the \$12 million will remain in the budget.

The first phase of the program

will only qualify the cities, which are approved and then a second round application will provide money for the projects that are approved.

Mayor King also informed the council that she had hired an occupational clerk to handle the paper work involved in collecting the city's new tax.

King hired Janette Robinson, of Mt. Vernon, who will also assist the city in obtaining grants as well as serving as occupational tax officer.

Cash case now over after agreement

The final chapter in the highly controversial firing of former Rockcastle County High School principal Ronnie Cash has been written.

On Monday, Cash and the Education Professional Standards Board in Frankfort reached an agreement that will put an end to the case.

In the agreement, Cash's teaching certificate was suspended for two years and his administrative certificate was suspended permanently. In August of 1998, Rockcastle

Superintendent Larry Hammond fired Cash, who had worked in the local school system for 28 years and had been principal at RCHS for eleven years.

The firing was based on complaints of sexual harassment and retaliation by then English teacher Julie Cruise.

Cash appealed his firing to a three member tribunal board and after a few days of hearings he reached an agreement with the local school board

utes, according to court records.

But in his motion Stanziano said that Lovell was "coerced, threatened and intimidated," by State Police Detective Gary Lane and Rockcastle Deputy Sheriff Darrell Doan, after her bond was revoked and she was picked up on a warrant.

Their scarce tactics and repeated requests for a statement, under their "legal advice" to Ms. Lovell that she would be better off making a statement-violated Ms. Lovell's fifth, sixth, and fourteenth amendment, as well as her right to due process, to remain silent and to counsel," Stanziano's motion said.

Stanziano said Wednesday that because of what happened January 6,

Judge Venters and Montgomery were now potential witnesses in the case against his client and that they both violated her constitutional rights by not having her lawyer present during any interview by Montgomery or police.

On March 1, Judge Venters overruled Stanziano's motion to recuse himself from the case, but he did not rule on the motion to recuse Montgomery or suppress the evidence.

Stanziano said he is submitting a sworn affidavit from his client asking Kentucky Chief Justice Joe Lambert to overturn Venters' ruling on himself. Stanziano said that ruling could come Thursday.

Tobacco farmers will receive more money in April

Kentucky tobacco farmers who received money from the state in December as part of the national tobacco settlement, will get another check in a few weeks.

Danny McKinney, Chief Executive Officer of the Burley Tobacco Growers Co-op Association, said the money will come from the federal government as part of farm disaster relief program.

McKinney said that Congress approved \$328 million for the program and that tobacco farmers who received checks in December will not have to re-apply for the money coming in April.

The government is going to use the same application that was used in December and if a tobacco farmer received \$1,200 in December they will receive approximately \$1,250 in April," McKinney said.

"This is only a one year deal with the federal government and it has nothing to do with the tobacco settlement monies," McKinney said.

McKinney said that his co-op also opposes a plan that would send a

large portion of phase I tobacco settlement money back to the county level where a local board would decide how it is spent.

That bill has a hard fight on its hand in the Senate and McKinney believes farmers as a whole would be better off if at least 50 percent of the phase I money was spent according to the original plan in House Bill 611.

"We need to implement a program with a statewide goal for family farm profitability while ensuring strong and impartial local input to address local and regional needs and opportunities," McKinney said.

McKinney said that his board is concerned about how local boards would distribute or use the money and that everyone should look at the statewide picture and how the money can be of better use.

McKinney said his board was in favor of using enough money from phase I to help fund phase II so tobacco farmers would receive the same amount of compensation each year.

The bill is expected to pass the House, but it is in for a fight in the Senate.



Rockcastle County motorists got somewhat of a break over the winter from the delays caused by construction on U.S. 25 from Renfro Valley to Mt. Vernon but those days are over again. Tuesday workers were blacktopping portions of the road which caused some delays. The project is slated to be completed in late Spring or early Summer.



The Rockcastle Kiwanis Club raised \$7,000 during their annual radio auction last Friday and Saturday held at Mt. Vernon City Hall. Shown above, from left are Bob Randolph, Jeff Smithern and Jeff Burdette helping out during the auction. (See story and additional photos on page A4)