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Fiscal Court passes county tax ordinance

**By Hank Bond
Of The Mercury Staff**

CARLISLE — The upper level courtrooms in the Nicholas County Courthouse were nearly full last Wednesday night as Nicholas County Fiscal Court passed a payroll occupational license tax on a 6-1 vote.

Earl Plank cast the no vote. The court, according to law, had scheduled the public meeting prior to acting on the ordinance to obtain input from the general public.

Boag Rigby, a representative from the Bluegrass Area Development District (AADD) was on hand to offer some documentation established by the AADD to show revenue trends within the county.

"I can see only a slow growth in the revenue of the county over the next several years, if the sources remain the same," he told the gathering.

The general fund revenues for the next several years will remain constant, with the current level of property tax locally, and a 4 percent increase as provided by law each year.

Rigby also told the court what it already knew, that Federal Revenue Sharing would be eliminated, in fact has been, and the court could not count on the \$165,000 it had received in previous years.

A minerals tax, paid back to the county by the state annually, also generates about \$28,000 per year for the county.

"Apparently under the new federalism of the Reagan administration in Washington, the push has been to push the programs and responsibility for funding programs back to local government," he explained. "This, according to what I understand the plan to be, this will reduce taxes as at the federal level."

"What did we do before Federal Revenue Sharing?" one member of the audience asked.

"Ambulance service was handled differently at that time, and there are new regulations for landfill," Rigby said.

Carlisle City Councilman Clarence Cord approached the gathering, which was very controlled, and asked the court if the landfill was even licensed to operate.

"We have been working for the past two years to come up with a solid waste plan for the county, which will last the next 25 years," said Nicholas County Judge-Executive Rose Stout.

"We have received notification from the state on our landfill. The state hasn't closed us down... we continue to operate."

Local businessman Jimmy Shaw came before the court to question the need for the tax.

"I have been asking the same question for a long time, and have never really gotten an answer," he said.

"Are you telling me there is no where money can be cut out of the Nicholas County budget?" Shaw said.

Members of the court said yes to the question.

Shaw presented a comparison of money expended in Nicholas, Bath, Fleming and Harrison counties for roads and other functions of government, such as upkeep of the courthouses.

According to figures Shaw used, Nicholas County spends at

least \$1,500 per mile more than any of the other pilot counties. "I just can't understand the large amount of money spent for the department."

Using Bath County's figure of \$2,000 per mile for road upkeep, Shaw said, "If you cut only \$1,000 per mile off the road budget (Nicholas County has about 170 miles of roads) you would be able to generate \$170,000."

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Will the fallout of small family farms mark an end to the type of life in Nicholas County and other parts of Kentucky?

The problem is not self-contained in Nicholas County, but has spread to epidemic proportions in Kentucky and all of the United States as well.

Mike Phillips is the Nicholas County Extension Agent for Agriculture. Phillips has been in that job for a little over nine years.

Phillips has a degree in agriculture from the University of Kentucky, with a business background.

The Western Kentucky native and his wife, Cathy, have four children, Eggy, 17, David, 14, Paul, 13, and Cindy, 10.

Phillips moved to Nicholas County a little more than 11 years ago, first working with Southern States Carlisle Cooperative, before taking the job as extension agent.

"The family farm as we know it today, raises a question in my mind," he said. "Will it continue to be able to continue as it has been in the past, or will it cease to exist?"

"There is a lot of outside pressure that goes into the ever make up of the concern."

"The first would have to be finances," he said.

"Finance is one of the key issues of concern. Cash flow, at least in some is another."

"We have a heavy concentration of once a year paychecks in Nicholas County, which presents a problem for more and more people."

"I doubt if there are very many

people, who work eight to five jobs, which would be able to survive on one a year paycheck."

Phillips began his explanation of many problems, with the uncertainty of the tobacco situation in Nicholas County... as well as all of Kentucky.

"My key concern with the survival with local farmers is the overall tobacco situation."

"What has happened in the past we have had over production of the tobacco industry."

"Not necessarily in the amount produced, but in part by the lessening of demand for the product."

"Years ago there was no important tobacco. We were in the dairy. This is no longer true."

"The second big problem is the terrain of the land we have in Nicholas County."

"The land we have is good, if we use it, but rotation cropping hasn't been used much. It is really limited, and most of the crop land has been earmarked for tobacco."

"With the limited land resources we have, it is difficult to change the use of the land to more profitable crop."

"Call it heritage or tradition, or whatever, we have a long standing tradition of tobacco farming in this area."

"In a lot of cases, it boils down to wanting what we know best as a farmer."

"The third thing is overall farm management."

"Many of the alternative crops directly compete with land use and labor."

"Many of these crops will have income."

"When the time comes we need

to have time for the alternative crops it often falls at the same time we have to work in tobacco."

Phillips does see a survival of the small farm, but feels there will have to be some changes made.

"To remain viable, we need to take a close inventory of farming operations."

"Are there some areas we can become more efficient in?"

"Are we making the best use of our equipment... are we using the right techniques?"

"Are we using what is available to us to make our farms the most profitable?"

"If we utilize what we have learned in managing crops, our time would be better used," Phillips continued.

"Let's take a look at what farms have to offer in the overall."

"We should take advantage of the grass we have available."

"We can either work it and sell it, or feed it through some type of livestock."

"Grass may not be the answer, but it certainly can be a consideration."

"The overall answer may be going back to many of the ways things were handled 25 or 30 years ago."

"I don't matter whether you started six or seven farmers would get together and work all of the fields and plant the crops and harvest the crops and not be in a position to have to go out and hire a lot of additional labor."

"Today, things aren't handling that way very often; times are changing, and we may have to go back to neighbor helping neighbor to survive."

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Hearing the ordinance
Above, members of the Nicholas County Fiscal Court heard the ordinance of the Nicholas County Fiscal Court during the public hearing held last Wednesday night concerning the payroll occupational license tax. Following the hearing, the ordinance passed the second reading on a 6-1 vote.

County to get new ambulance

**By Hank Bond
Of The Mercury Staff**

The Carlisle - Nicholas County Ambulance Service will probably have a new vehicle in the next few months.

According to information received from the State of Kentucky, Nicholas County Fiscal Court will be able to purchase a new vehicle for about one-half of the normal price.

The state has approved and offered a matching grant of up to \$10,000 toward the purchase of a new ambulance, to replace the service's oldest vehicle.

According to Nicholas County Judge-Executive Rose Stout, the grant will also include funds for some other emergency service related items.

The court agreed to seek the best price possible for the use of the vehicle, and use that money as part of the county's cost for the new ambulance.

Stout explained that the state calculates that a vehicle with over 70,000 miles should be taken out of service as an emergency vehicle. The new ambulance, which is costing \$20,000, will be moved to a back-up status once the new ambulance is in possession.

The court voted to continue pursuing the purchase of the ambulance, since the grant stipulated it must be used by June 15, 1987.

Stout said following the meeting, the county plans to continue its service contract with Ronald McDonald to operate the Carlisle - Nicholas County Ambulance Service.

"We will use most of the carry over from the Federal Revenue Sharing Funds (in this year's county budget) to purchase the new vehicle and continue the contract with McDonald's," Stout said.

"We won't begin receiving any funds from the payroll tax by the time we will have to make the vehicle purchase, because of the state

deadline, and will have to renew the contract by that time, too."

According to figures provided the court, the projected cost of the new ambulance will be between \$24,000 and \$26,000. Those were the figures used when the county made application for the grant, several months ago.

The state is actually allocating a matching grant to Nicholas County of \$11,663 toward the purchase of the ambulance and associated equipment.

In other action, during the regularly scheduled court meeting following the public hearing held last Wednesday night concerning the payroll occupational license tax, the court made necessary budget transfers.

The court also approved the appointment of magistrate Earl Plank to the Nicholas County Health Board to fill an unexpired term for two years.

The court tabled a decision on the Johnson-Mulder Health Care Board.

Cord also heard that a radiator was leaking at the old armory and agreed to have the station locked into. The contract for removal of the rental of the armory was also approved.

Roadwork set

The state will provide funds for the county to reconfigure 528 feet of County Road 214, Candy Creek Road in Nicholas County, according to Governor Martha Layne Collins.

"A strong transportation network requires continuous upgrading to meet the needs to the traveling public," said Collins. "Our rural communities depend on a safe, efficient road system."

State Transportation Secretary G. Leslie Shewen said the project is estimated to cost a total of \$17,400 and is being financed with Rural Secondary funds.

Shewen added the county will be responsible for all phases of work.