

The Oldham Era



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Intersection concerns La Grange

GLEN JENNINGS
REPORTER

The La Grange City Council addressed the dangers of the intersection of Highways 146 and 53 at its Feb. 1 meeting.

The intersection, which according to Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) Director of Communications Andrea Clifford, has been the site of 23 wrecks since 2013, including Jan. 28's fatal wreck, has recently come under scrutiny for its apparent dangers. The city council, however, does not have the authority to make any changes at the intersection because both 146 and 53 are state roads.

La Grange Mayor Joe Davenport said he has tried to request striping work on 53 before, but the state declined his request. Because of this, he believes that he will have difficulty convincing KYTC to make any additional changes.

Although residents of La Grange and Oldham County
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Plan addresses Ash Avenue's flooding

GLEN JENNINGS
REPORTER

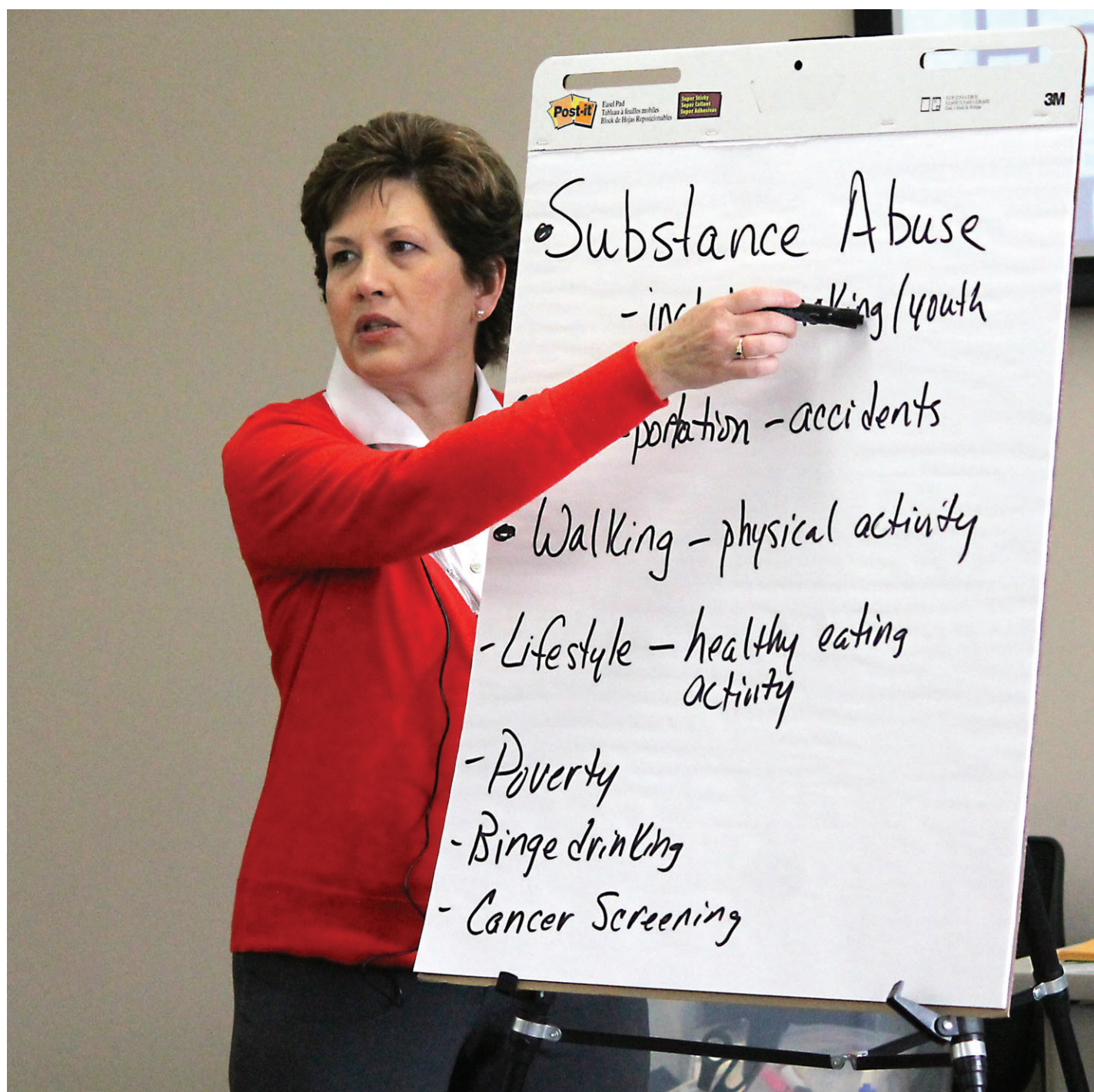
After years of flooding, residents of Ash Avenue may finally see relief.

Oldham County Engineer Beth Stuber presented a plan to deal with frequent flooding problems at Ash Avenue at the Feb. 2 Fiscal Court meeting.

Ash Avenue, located in the southern end of Pewee Valley, is subject to frequent flooding during periods of heavy rain. The flooding has also been severe enough to require at least six water rescues to get residents to safety within the past two years. Stuber said that flooding has been a problem for at least a decade. The current fiscal court members have been campaigning for a solution since they were elected.

The county has been unable to address the issue in the past because Ash Avenue is a state road, leaving funding out of the county's control. Magistrate JD Sparks, whose district contains Ash Avenue, said the biggest
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WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE A HEALTHIER OLDHAM COUNTY



MELISSA BLANKENSHIP/THE OLDHAM ERA

Above, Dr. Angie Carmen of the University of Kentucky recently served as the facilitator of a brainstorming and planning session of community stakeholders interested in making Oldham County a safer, healthier place to live. Of primary concern to the community are issues related to substance abuse, obesity and healthy lifestyles. Below, Sgt. James Brown, Oldham County Police Department, analyzed results from a community survey conducted by the Oldham County Health Department as they correlated to recent health data compiled on the county's residents.

Coalition advocates for health

MELISSA BLANKENSHIP
PUBLISHER

In a recent survey of Oldham County residents, nearly 60 percent of respondents identified alcohol and drug use as the problem that has the greatest impact on the overall health of the community. Alcohol and drug use was also identified as the top safety concern by 72 percent of those surveyed.

Following closely as a health concern was obesity, with 41 percent, and unsafe driving, vehicle crashes resulting in injury or death and unsafe roads and sidewalks.

"I think we all want to create a safer, healthier community for our kids," Leanne Kommer, health education coordinator with the Oldham County Health Department, said.

"I'd love to see a community
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Pewee Valley will create its own alcohol ordinance

GLEN JENNINGS
REPORTER

Pewee Valley's city council introduced an individual ordinance regarding the sale of alcohol within its city limits.

The ordinance, although similar to the ordinance proposed by Oldham County's fiscal court, does contain several key differences. The ordinance names Pewee Valley Mayor Bob Rogers as the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) administrator within the city.

If passed, the city's alcohol laws will also ban all sales on Sunday. According to the council, this is not

a city preference, but a provision outlined in the Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) laws. KRS Chapter 244, Section 290 states that alcohol cannot be sold on Sundays at all in cities with a population lower than 3,000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Pewee Valley has a population of 1,500 as of 2013.

The city council will vote on the ordinance after a second reading at the next meeting.

Other issues discussed

- Paige Bjorn, a new member of Pewee Valley's city council, was sworn in. Bjorn has previously served as a member of Pewee Valley's board of adjustments, but

has not served in any other aspect of government. Bjorn said Rogers approached her to ask if she would be interested in serving on the council.

"He knows I love this community," she said. "I've been here for 17 years, and I guess he felt that being on the board of adjustments, I could do this as well."

Bjorn said she is "thrilled" to be taking on a new role in her community. "This is just another aspect of our little government," she said.

- There will be a public hearing at Pewee Valley Town Hall on Feb. 25 at 5:30 p.m. to discuss Ash Avenue's flooding problem.
- The city council approved several

event permits. The first was for the St. Aloysius Eagle 5K, a 5K run open to Eagle Scouts which will be held May 14. The second was for the St. Aloysius Fish Fry, to be held from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Fridays from Feb. 10 to March 18, with the exception of the Feb. 10 fish fry, to be held on a Wednesday. The third was for Pewee Valley Presbyterian Church's Fish Fry, to be held March 18 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.

- A sign permit was approved for the Center for Holistic Healing, a new business located at 205 La Grange Road.

The next Pewee Valley City Council meeting will be March 7 at 7 p.m.



GLEN JENNINGS/THE OLDHAM ERA

The safety of intersections crossing Highway 53 in downtown La Grange has recently come under scrutiny following an accident that killed a pedestrian.

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have discussed the possibility of installing a traffic light at the intersection, KYTC has had no official requests for such an action.

Clifford said the matter has been discussed internally, however, and officials are reluctant to place a traffic signal in close proximity to the railroad tracks, fearing it could result in dangerous situations for other drivers.

KYTC has taken some measures to alleviate the dangers at the intersection by adding new signage

to warn about pedestrian activity, increasing the size of stop signs and reducing the number of signs obstructing the view of the intersection.

The intersection is also scheduled for asphalt work during the summer, at which point the striping will be reapplied and improved, according to Clifford.

She added that drivers should always remain vigilant at a crosswalk.

"It is still the responsibility of the driver to watch for pedestrians when they are making their turns whether there is a signal or not," she said.

'Health'

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where prevention was the standard, where we promote and focus on positive behaviors," added Liz Burrows, health educator with the department. "I'd like to see a community with the availability to promote a healthy lifestyle, where that becomes the norm."

To that end, both Kommer and Burrows, along with Anna Hobbs, also a health educator with the Oldham County Health Department, work together to direct the Coalition for a Healthy Oldham County.

The Coalition for a Healthy Oldham County began in 2011 to form partnerships that would address the health and safety of the community. Members span a wide range of disciplines throughout the county including government, schools, law enforcement, health care providers and more.

The recent survey results, combined with input from community leaders and other sources of data, has led the coalition to create a plan to address identified concerns.

In the fall of 2015, the coalition hosted a half-day meeting of their membership and other stakeholders in the county to conduct a community health assessment. At this meeting, data from the survey was shared, then attendees worked together to identify needs, resources and potential gaps in services. After gathering and disseminating all this data, as well as information from additional sources, the coalition was ready to move forward with developing its plan.

The Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan captures the recently collected data, as well as strategic goals and objectives to address concerns about Oldham County's health and safety over the next four years.

The coalition chose two primary areas of concern upon which to focus its attention and resources: healthy lifestyle/physical activity and substance abuse – the same focus areas the coalition first identified when it was created.

"The reason we formed the initial committee was to explore a state grant available at the time that focused on health and safety," Kommer explained. "It used evidence-based strategies to address physical activity,

smoke-free policies and access to recreation. When we got that group together, we decided to assess the community's needs first, instead of just focusing on what we thought the needs were."

The group then underwent training to conduct a variety of assessments to determine the primary needs of the community, which were identified as substance abuse, physical activity and nutrition. As the coalition developed, the group applied for a Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Grant to help it tackle the issue of substance abuse in Oldham County. The coalition won the grant in the fall of 2014, gaining about \$125,000 each year for up to 10 years to further its goals and objectives.

"Our primary focus, especially with DFC, is on substance abuse, but we know that creating a healthier environment all around will positively impact substance abuse," Burrows, who acts as the coalition's project director, said.

So when community leaders collaborated in that "think tank" type work session last fall to review the survey results, examine data that detailed the health of Oldham County's residents and identify risk factors that could negatively impact the community's well-being, it was not surprising that substance abuse and nutrition/overall wellness again hit the top of the list. Other chief concerns were unsafe driving, lack of walking trails and safe sidewalks,

poverty, alcoholism and the need for more cancer screenings.

Information gathered at that meeting was consolidated into the Community Health Improvement Plan and used to develop strategies and goals to address the areas of concern. The next step will be to form two committees – one to take on the issue of substance abuse, the other to tackle promotion of healthy lifestyles including nutrition and physical activity.

The DFC grant, however, has already been at work to impact the issue of substance abuse. Monies have been used to fund sobriety checkpoints with law enforcement, retail tobacco compliance checks, educational materials for parents, prescription drug drop boxes, youth activities and more.

Future projects include web-based trainings for parents and a social norms marketing campaign that would reinforce positive attitudes and beliefs about youth substance abuse and the risks associated with it.

"Most of our kids and our parents are making good choices," Burrows said. "We want to support that norm. Kids don't have to drink by the time they are seniors in high school; it's not a rite of passage and it's not inevitable."

Another focus of the group will be on developing a stronger communication system so that health providers and educators can better know what each other offer, but more importantly, to find better ways to inform the public about what



MELISSA BLANKENSHIP/THE OLDHAM ERA

Denise Anthony, of Crossroads Pregnancy Resource Center, reviews data provided to her at a recent community health assessment meeting. Anthony was one of nearly 50 community members who attended the session administered by the Oldham County Health Department.

services and activities are available to them. It was part of the process at the assessment meeting to match needs with resources. The exercise was meant to capture the work toward health that's already happening throughout the county. Some found it eye-opening.

"We're doing a lot in Oldham County," said Lisa Prewitt, the business development coordinator for Our Lady of Peace. "There's a lot being done on education and linking people to services. Many times people in the room don't realize what is being done and by whom in the community."

Most in the room had no doubt that substance abuse was an issue in Oldham County, although just about 10 years ago, many community members would have refuted that claim.

"We absolutely have a drug issue in

Oldham County," said Sgt. James Brown of the Oldham County Police Department. "I'd estimate that 85 to 95 percent of all crimes committed in Oldham County are drug-related."

Brown explained that even if an individual is not charged with drug possession or trafficking, many other charges like assault or thefts, are drug-related in some way.

"It's definitely the issue that we deal with every day," Brown added. "It's the root of almost all our problems – theft, assault, domestic violence – almost everything we do has that tie back to a drug or alcohol problem."

Which is why the members of the coalition will partner with the Oldham County Health Department, as both share common goals.

"Our goals at the health department are to provide population-based health

initiatives," Kommer said. "We provide one-on-one services and we educate a whole community, and to do that we assess the community's needs to create strategic priorities. That's what the Coalition has done with the Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan. They go hand-in-hand."

A draft copy of the plan is available for review and feedback is welcome. See www.coalitionforahealthycoc.com to learn more about the coalition and the Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan. Attend the next coalition meeting to provide feedback or input to the group or to join its efforts.

"There is a place at the table for everybody and every talent," Burrows said. "That's whether you're simply taking information home to your family or maybe providing the group with technical assistance with the website or our Facebook page."

Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at 12:30 p.m. at the Oldham County Health Department, 1786 Commerce Parkway in La Grange. The next meeting will be held Feb. 24 at which a guest speaker from the Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition will present on the use of naltrexone – a widely used treatment for opioid overdoses, including heroin and morphine.

"Everyone is welcome – parents, youth, people who are interested in the community's identified concerns," Kommer said. "We're all part of the public health system. We're all partners. Ideally, we all work together."



MELISSA BLANKENSHIP/THE OLDHAM ERA

Working in small groups, community members analyzed why certain health concerns specifically impacted Oldham County and how they could be addressed. Above, Terri Paige of the Medical Transformation Center, shared her table's findings with the group.

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