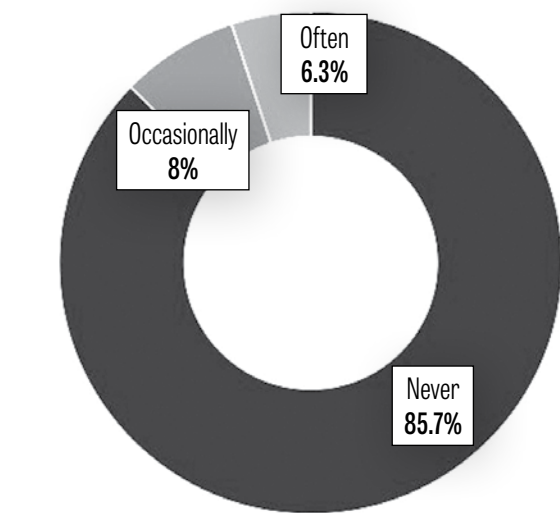


ONLINE POLL:
How often do you use the city-owned Ann Street or transit center parking garages?



This poll reflects the opinions of 476 respondents.
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EDITORIAL

Thacker built Lady Flyers program into powerhouse

Though it wasn't quite the job he envisioned when he joined the coaching ranks more than two decades ago, we can't imagine Joey Thacker — who compiled a 538-229 record at FCHS and is the all-time winningest girls coach in 11th Region history — anywhere other than on the basketball court leading the Lady Flyers. On Monday, at the team's annual banquet, Thacker announced his retirement from the position after 22 years at the helm.

Thacker built the Franklin County program into the powerhouse it has become. Under his watch, the Lady Flyers were 41st District champions 17 times and 11th Region champs seven times in addition to being regional runner-up twice. At the state tournament, FCHS made it to the Elite Eight two times and finished as state runner-up in both 2016 and 2017.

"I never really imagined that I would end up a girls basketball coach during the majority of my vocational life, but I can honestly say that no one has been luckier than me after leading this program for the last 22 years," Thacker wrote in a letter to Flyer Nation posted on the program's X account earlier this week. "There are so many memories, wonderful young ladies and families that I've had the privilege to share this experience with. All of you have been a true blessing to the utmost degree."

Thacker took over the Lady Flyers program during the 2003-04 season after coaching the Frankfort High School girls basketball team for two years. He came to FHS in 1999 and served as football and baseball coach.

Thacker plans to continue to umpire high school softball games and give lessons to players in the off-season. He also intends to cheer on the FCHS teams and players and be a mentor to the next coach, if she or he so desires, just like others did for him when he was learning the ropes.

Success can be quantified with numbers, but we believe one true measure of achievement is leaving things better than you found them and Thacker has definitely done that.

In fact, the Lady Flyers' next coach will not only inherit a dynasty, but also a 94-game district win streak. Thank you, coach Thacker! Enjoy your well-deserved retirement from the bench.

City working to address budget concerns

By Layne Wilkerson, Katima Smith-Willis, Kelly May, Leesa Unger and Rob Richardson
Guest columnist

As individual members of the Frankfort Board of Commissioners, we have the privilege of serving a city undergoing a remarkable transformation.

We have witnessed historic recent investments, new businesses opening their doors, and significant infrastructure improvements, all of which will lay a foundation for long-term prosperity. Frankfort has taken big steps and made bold investments over the last couple of years. These investments, by their very nature, take time to mature, generate returns, and enrich our community. With several major projects set to begin, Frankfort's momentum has never been stronger.

However, recent discussions have brought attention to our city's financial outlook, and we want to address this matter directly. During a recent city commission meeting, city staff presented an analysis of our budget, highlighting the impacts of COVID-19 on our local economy. It was noted that increased expenses (driven largely by payroll) have not kept pace with revenue and — provided we don't get ahead of it now — would result in the city exhausting its emergency fund in the next few years.

While this scenario may understandably raise concerns, it is essential to understand that these projections are not inevitable. Our city has several strategies and tools at its disposal to improve this fiscal outlook, and our commission remains committed to responsibly managing our finances with transparency and

strategic foresight as we navigate the future.

Modernizing our revenue administration is a critical step in this approach. We have strengthened our collections team by adding dedicated positions tasked specifically with recovering outstanding fees, taxes, and other revenues. Additionally, we are considering updating our approach to collecting E911 fees. Historically assessed on landline phones, this method is no longer practical or equitable in today's mobile world. These measures will enhance our fiscal stability and promote fairness by making sure every resident and business contributes appropriately to our shared growth.

We are working diligently to expand our commercial base and tax revenue to maintain and enhance the quality of life Frankfort residents expect and deserve. To catalyze private investment, the city has invested millions of dollars in developing the westside interstate exchange into a regional commercial hub. This project will improve transportation infrastructure, stimulate private sector investment, and open new opportunities for economic growth. Similarly, we have invested in infrastructure to develop the downtown parcels, potentially the site of a new meeting and event center, and secured tens of millions in federal and state funds to improve major corridors like Holmes Street and Versailles Road. These steps demonstrate our commitment to the growth and revitalization of our community, ensuring Frankfort remains vibrant and economically dynamic.

Revenue growth is a reason we joined with our other governments to explore the creation of the Franklin/Anderson Com-

merce and Technology Park. This regional initiative has the potential to attract high-paying jobs and boost our regional economy. It is precisely the type of project that demonstrates our commitment to growth and ability to collaborate regionally for mutual benefit.

Moreover, we remain focused on other strategic goals to further stimulate economic growth, including revitalizing underperforming commercial properties and corridors, developing the riverfront, expanding housing options, and building an indoor aquatic and wellness center that will enhance community health and recreational offerings. These projects are not mere expenditures; they are strategic investments with tangible returns, bringing jobs, visitors, new residents, and additional revenue streams into Frankfort.

Our momentum is strong, and we are committed to maintaining it. The recent budget discussions are part of our transparent approach to governance, ensuring that we know where we stand and that our community remains informed and engaged. We are united in navigating challenges responsibly and strategically, and we ask for your support as we build a city that thrives for generations to come. Because Frankfort, the best is yet to come.

This opinion piece was signed individually by Mayor Layne Wilkerson, Commissioner Katima Smith-Willis, Commissioner Kelly May, Commissioner Leesa Unger and Commissioner Rob Richardson. They can be emailed at lwilkerson@frankfort.ky.gov; katima@frankfort.ky.gov; kmay@frankfort.ky.gov; lunger@frankfort.ky.gov; and rrichardson@frankfort.ky.gov.



THE State Journal

Joe Imel, Publisher
270-783-3273
joe.immel@bgdailynews.com

Chanda Veno, Editor
502-209-6340
chanda.veno@state-journal.com

Hannah Brown, Design Editor
502-209-6339
hannah.brown@state-journal.com

NEWS

Linda Younkin
502-209-6336
linda.younkin@state-journal.com

Phil Case
502-682-5995
phil.case@state-journal.com

Linda Boileau, Editorial Cartoonist
linda.boileau@me.com

ADVERTISING SALES

Meri Latek, Director of Advertising
502-395-3434
meri.latek@state-journal.com

CLASSIFIEDS/LEGAL NOTICES
classifieds@state-journal.com
public.notices@state-journal.com
502-871-4559

MAIN OFFICE

Sheri Bunker, Director of Customer Service
502-209-6305
sheri.bunker@state-journal.com

Jim Wainscott, Bookkeeper
502-209-6301
jim.wainscott@state-journal.com

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