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The Woodford Sun

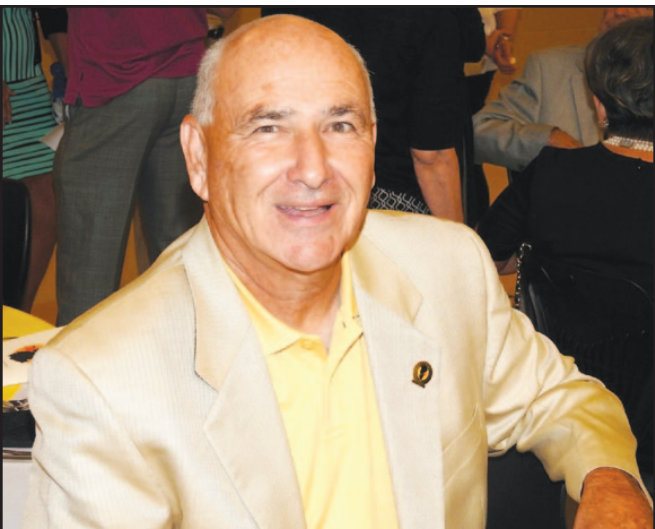
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Woodford County beloved icon, Loren ‘Squirrel’ Carl, dies



Loren “Squirrel” Carl

BY SCOTT WHITE
MANAGING EDITOR

Loren “Squirrel” Carl passed away Sunday evening, June 15. A Versailles native and lifelong resident from an old Woodford County family, he was 74. He is survived by his wife, Kelly, a Woodford County Magistrate. He served his country in Vietnam as a member of the United States Air Force. Carl led a life of consequence, service, selflessness and plain old joy . . . and, spread joy to nearly everyone he encountered. He was easily the best-known person, and maybe the most loved in Woodford County, and, arguably, in the entire commonwealth.

Carl’s dear friend Tracy Farmer, owner of Shadowlawn Farm in Midway and founder of Tracy Farmer Enterprises, and confidant and advisor to governors and elected officials, said, “I considered Squirrel a great friend and I always admired his commitment to his community. I will long remember our times together and discussing his favorite topic, politics, and hearing tales of his interesting life, which were always told with

a sense of humor, and his infectious laugh. Squirrel was admired throughout the state . . . when people found out I lived in Woodford County, they always asked if I knew Squirrel. I was *always* proud to say yes, he is my friend.”

Carl graduated from Woodford County High School in 1968. He went on to Kentucky Business College following his military service, and began a career in finance. By 1980, he made a life-changing decision to join the Woodford County Police Department as a detective following graduation from the police academy at Eastern Kentucky University. Combining his passion for politics and commitment to law enforcement, Carl won his first elected office in 1986, winning the race for Woodford County sheriff where he remained until 1996.

Carl’s tenure as sheriff was crowded with creative programs and initiatives, as well as operating a top-level department. He was the first Kentucky sheriff to be trained as a D.A.R.E. instructor. (D.A.R.E. stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education, a national education program aimed at preventing the use

of controlled drugs; it was established in 1983.) He then established the Woodford County D.A.R.E. Program, which graduated over 5,000 school kids. He significantly upgraded the department’s officer training program, leading to an award for best training in Kentucky. In November 1986, he recorded the largest marijuana arrest in Kentucky, seizing illegal product worth \$13 million and convicting all 12 men who were arrested. He also understood the larger scope of the office, establishing the sheriff’s “Help and Aid” program, designed to assist the needy and underprivileged and creating the “Fun Safety Program” that was taught in the Woodford County elementary schools.

Both Gov. John Brown and Gov. Martha Lane Collins appointed him to statewide anti-drug task forces, and he worked closely with other law enforcement agencies, including the F.B.I., A.T.F. and K.S.P. on a variety of complex investigations. In 1988, he was selected by the Kentucky Sheriff’s Association as “Sheriff of the Year,” and served as the association’s president in 1990.

However, these accomplishments do not tell the full story of Carl’s tenure as sheriff. He loved serving and protecting his hometown.

Two wonderful examples came from the Versailles City Council’s June 17 meeting, the first following Carl’s passing. There to give the opening prayer, Journey Church Associate Pastor Tony Hardin said that his son, Jacob Hardin, who is now a sergeant with the Versailles Police Department, wanted to be an officer since he was a small child.

“Once when we were trick or treating Jacob dressed up as a police officer,” Tony

said. “Squirrel was patrolling and saw us. He pulled over, jumped out and gave Jacob a kid’s size plastic badge. . . . I think he still has it. Anyway, it made a huge impression on Jacob, and I’ll never forget it. This shows the type of man our community has lost.”

During the same City Council meeting, Versailles Fire Chief T.A. Rankin, after his regular report, said, “I know we’ve all been here a long time, but I just want to relate a Squirrel story . . . something we all have who’ve lived here for any amount of time. I attended D.A.R.E. as a kid and he and Bear (Coyle) were the instructors and it just had a great impact on me. I’d see Squirrel around town as a kid and was amazed and proud he remembered my name. I’m really going to miss him.”

Surprising many in Woodford County, Carl left office to

join the new administration of Kentucky Attorney General Ben Chandler as the director of the Financial Integrity Enforcement Division where he remained until joining Chandler’s congressional staff in 2003 as the director of field services. (Chandler is the publisher of the *Sun*.)

“When I was elected attorney general, Squirrel had been the sheriff of Woodford County for several years and wanted a new challenge and so came to work for me as an investigator,” Chandler recalled. “Of course, he did a wonderful job and everyone in the office loved him.”

Chandler loved telling the story in front of Carl about how they first met.

“I’ve known Squirrel about my whole life. When I was 9 or 10, he was umpiring one of my Little League games and he called me out!” More humorous is Chandler’s

description of Squirrel’s unique vocabulary . . . something anyone who knew him at all knew all about. “We called these ‘Squirrel words,’ and one of my favorites was ‘stabability.’ One time I was giving a speech in Western Kentucky and instead of saying ‘stability,’ ‘stabability’ came right out of my mouth. I had to stop my speech and explain to the entire crowd what a “Squirrel word” was.”

Chandler also recognized Squirrel’s talent and skill as a law enforcement - he knew his job and did it with excellence.

“Squirrel had more jobs than just about anyone I knew. In addition to being sheriff, running an important investigative division in the attorney general’s office and ultimately being appointed as the United States Marshall, he

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WOODFORD COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS AND DETECTIVES in 1982. Squirrel, if you cannot tell, is front and center. Though seemingly harmless, he could be pretty firm and unsmiling when he pulled you over. Just ask *Sun* editor Scott White, who experienced Officer Carl on two such occasions while commuting to UK from Versailles. (Photo provided by James Kay, Jr.)

Versailles Council rejects lower Midway police budget request

Mayor Laura Dake included lower payment in budget, but the council voted to remove it

BY SCOTT WHITE
MANAGING EDITOR

A Versailles City Council debate over the inclusion of a lower contribution from the City of Midway for the Versailles Police Department’s annual budget grew emotional, was marked by interruptions and included a surprise appearance by Midway Mayor Grayson Vandegrift.

The issue first became public during a City Council budget work session on May 27. The June 17 debate

among the council members included input from Mayor Laura Dake with information provided by City Attorney Bill Moore, City Clerk Elizabeth Reynolds and Police Chief Rob Young.

Midway’s request for a lower contribution was ultimately denied. In a 4-2 vote, the council approved a motion by Councilmember Fred Siegelman to, essentially, bill Midway the full amount required of it by the interlocal agreement between the two cities. Councilmembers Gary Jones and Lisa Johnson cast the nay votes.

While explaining the police budget at the May 27 work session, Dake explained that Vandegrift approached her about reducing Midway’s share to “no more than \$404,000, as he was told last summer by (then) Mayor Brian Traugott and (then) Police Chief Mike Murray that Midway should expect to pay no more than \$404,000, or about a \$100,000 more than 2025, for 2026.”

Dake said she supported the request and included the lower amount in the budget for a number of reasons, which have been previously reported in the *Sun*.

The primary business on the City Council’s June 17 agenda was the adoption of the fiscal year 2026 budget, which begins on July 1. The budget ordinance requires two readings to become law.

It received its first reading at the last council meeting on June 3.

Preceding the first reading, details of the budget were discussed by council members, department heads, staff and the mayor at the May 27 work session, as well as informally and at other work sessions beginning in January 2025. A detailed copy of the proposed budget was provided to members at the May 20 council meeting.

Unlike her predecessor, Dake provided members with a highly detailed, line-item spreadsheet setting out each source of revenue and proposed expenditures and appropriations to “be as transparent as I could possibly be about this,” Dake said. All of these budget documents are also posted on the city’s website.

The 19-page document details each item and compares it to the prior year’s expenditure, shows if the item is being repeated, is four columns in width, and is printed in 12-point New Times font.

Even so, several members, though appreciating the detail and transparency, which was new, complained at the June 17 meeting that the print was too small and that there was so much information it was hard to remember what they had read.

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Commission votes to reopen Troy Pike zone change hearing

Attorneys to speak on traffic issues

BY BOB VLACH
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

The Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning Commission voted unanimously on June 12 to reopen the public hearing on a request to rezone 22.5 acres at 1470 Troy Pike from A-1 agricultural to R-4 high-density residential.

The commission did not reopen the hearing for additional comments from neighbors as requested by the attorneys representing them, but instead limited additional comment to the attorneys representing neighboring subdivisions and the applicant.

“We would like a little additional time to be able to digest this information, review the law and submit that information to you guys at the July 10, 2025, hearing,” attorney Bethany Baxter said. “In particular, traffic issues have been raised,” noting different traffic studies have been submitted.

Also, Joe Johnson, who identified himself as president of the Cedar Ridge Homeowners Association, said there are some concerns about water mitigation and a proposed retention structure for the development. Those issues and traffic can be addressed by the attorneys when the hearing continues next month, according to the motion to reopen the hearing.

Scott Schuette, the attorney for developer Vision Engineering, LLC (Jihad Hallany), said they did not oppose reopening the hearing if that’s what the commission wants to do.

With his agreement to waive a 60-day requirement for the commission to take action, Commissioner Whitney Stepp said she had no problem with reopening the hearing.

“But I think it should be limited to just the attorneys speaking because we have heard from the community . . . I think everyone’s had an opportunity to be heard,” she said.

Chair Patty Perry agreed.

At the May 8 hearing, neighbors filled

the third-floor courtroom in the courthouse and voiced concern about adding traffic to what they described as an already congested Troy Pike.

When Schuette said the applicant’s traffic study showed the proposed development would have no impact on Troy Pike, laughter and comments from audience members caused Perry to use her gavel. Schuette then clarified that the 22 townhouses and 62 single-family houses being proposed would have no impact on the level of service of Troy Pike.

“If you travel this area in the morning and/or in the evening you don’t need a traffic study to know what the congestion already is,” said Fred Powers. He was among the 49 people who signed up to speak during last month’s hearing.

Short-term rental

The commission unanimously recommended a zone change from R-1B single-family residential to A-1 agricultural and approved a conditional-use permit to operate a short-term rental at 197 Browns Mill Road.

Versailles City Council must approve the 1.19-acre zone change before the proposed short-term rental can open. Short-term rentals are not a conditional use in the single-family residential zoning districts in Versailles, so a zone change was necessary.

Property owner Sea Island Company, LLC (Josh Barrett) agreed to conditions, including a limit of eight adult guests in the four-bedroom residence.

In-family conveyances

The commission approved in-family conveyance plats that subdivide 30 acres at 4994 Delaney Ferry Road (Beau and Caitlin Neal) to create 1- and 5-acre lots; and subdivide 105.167 acres at 1744 Germany Road (Robert Daniel and Diana Whalen) to create lots at 1598, 1526, 1500 and 1480 Germany Road. The second plat was previously approved,

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GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

Tuesday, June 24, Woodford Fiscal Court at 5:30 p.m.