

\$100,000 for rail-trail good health investment

Can the Christian County Board of Health justify spending \$100,000 from its \$2.4 million reserve fund to help complete the first leg of Hopkinsville's rail-trail project from the North Drive trailhead to Pardue Lane? That's a question the health board will need to answer after hearing a recommendation from its director, Mark Pyle, to provide the money to city government.

No health department in Kentucky can ignore the financial challenges that

OUR OPINION

await with the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, so the health board is wise to take some time to study the impact of a rail-trail grant to the city. The board's chairman, at a meeting Monday, said he wants to talk more about the request when the board has a retreat meeting in the coming weeks.

Mayor Dan Kemp and Chamber of Commerce President Carter Hendricks are trying to raise \$400,000 to help pay for the first phase of the recreational rail-trail. Pyle's proposal to use health department money for the project makes good sense for several reasons.

First, it's a preventative form of health care. This proposal shows that Pyle is thinking about ways to improve the community's health with programs that head off chronic medical problems before they land on the health department's front steps. Thousands of people with a wide range of athletic ability and mobility will be able to use the rail-trail for walking, running and bicycling. Pyle's request is a bold move to improve the community's health.

Second, \$100,000 represents approximately 4 percent of the health department's reserve fund. That's manageable. It is not irresponsible or extravagant.

Third, a health grant for the rail-trail will be a one-time expenditure. Unlike salaries and treatment programs that have recurring expenses, this expense has a long-term benefit with a single payment. That is the key to gauging the financial impact on the health board's budget.

Kemp, in his comments to the health board, cited a 2012 state study that shows only four of Kentucky's 120 counties rank lower than Christian County for infrastructure that promotes healthy living.

The design phase of the Hopkinsville rail-trail is complete. Most of the trail will follow the path of the old U.S. Army railroad bed. Bids are being gathered for the first construction phase.

All of this comes after more than 10 years of pushing, prodding, begging and cheerleading from a large local contingency that supports the project for its recreational possibilities.

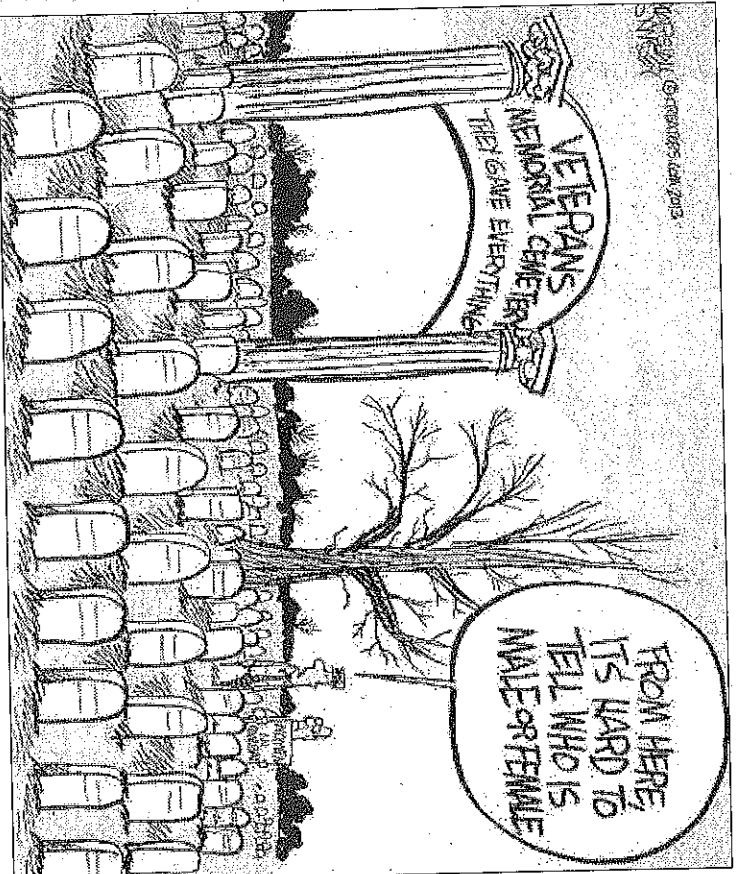
The rail-trail will have a positive influence on the health of local residents. That's what the health board must consider in the funding request. It's the right move for the health board. It supports the health department's mission, and it is fiscally responsible.

Kentucky New Era editorials are the consensus opinion of the editorial board, which meets every week and includes Publisher Taylor W. Hayes, Opinion Editor Jennifer P. Brown and Editor Eli Pace.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is **Wednesday, Jan. 30**, the 30th day of 2013. There are 335 days left in the year.

In 1649 England's King Charles I was beheaded.



NEW ERA COLUMNIST

How to pick presidents from a voter's long view

In 1928, when Al Smith and Herbert Hoover were candidates for president, I was 8 years old, but I already had a strong single interest. In the outcome of the election, Smith was a "wet" who wanted to repeal the 18th



TOBY HIGHTOWER

amendment and restore the legal sale of alcohol. I had seen my father creeping steadily into alcoholism, and I thought legal drinking would hasten his journey to a full alcoholic. Both my

parents were strong supporters of Smith, so I kept my thoughts to myself. But I was never quite in agreement with my parent's political choices. When I was first old enough to vote, I was overseas and had no opportunity to cast a ballot. When Franklin Roosevelt died and Harry Truman became president, my company commander gave me materials to read and assigned to me the task of a non-political presentation of the biography of Truman to our company of troops. When I returned from the war, my first presidential vote was for Truman. I next voted for Eisenhower, but not because I disliked Stevenson.

I went with Richard Nixon over John Kennedy, probably because of some prejudice against Kennedy's father's anti-British stand and his father's opposition to World War II. I voted for Johnson over Barry Goldwater because the press had led me to believe that Goldwater was a madman ready to start World War

III. Lyndon B. Johnson did almost exactly what Goldwater had promised to do.

I greatly respected Gerald Ford, but I accepted the media evaluation of him as somewhat slow witted and voted for Jimmy Carter, to the bewilderment of all my family.

Ford was clearly given a hatchet job by the press. I chose Ronald Reagan in the next election. I voted one time for Bill Clinton and one time against him. I voted for both the Bushes. I voted once for John McCain and then for Barack Obama.

In looking back, I do not yet know whether my choices were good or bad. By today's standards, Truman would clearly be a racist from the context of his remarks that blackbirds and bluebirds do not mix, and Johnson would qualify as a racist by his "Martin Luther Coon" comments.

Looking back over the slate, I can see why we have learned to hate while being very careful to hide the hate. I do not see Obama as a bad president but I do see him as a man little inclined to compromise and much inclined to have his own way. All of our presidents have been flawed in some way, and that is why I am very concerned that we seem to be drifting more and more into imperial presidency on both sides of the barricade. I want to keep the three branches of our government strong, and I hope to see a survival of the two-party system, but even in retrospect, I do not know how I should have voted.

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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Congress urged to address how sequestration hits Army budget

The Editor, New Era,
It is important for members of Congress to know they are risking our national security by failing to address, in a timely manner, the fiscal needs of our defense forces. Recently Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno spoke at the Association of the United States Army's January Institute of Land Warfare breakfast in Washington, D.C., and his message was clear — our national security is at risk because of the fiscal uncertainty that we face today. The numbers are sobering — \$6 billion shortfall for fiscal year 2013 in Army operations and maintenance accounts because Congress

freezing civilian hiring, potential furloughing of existing employees, and laying off temporary workers. The bottom line is that training and therefore readiness will suffer. He described Army end strength reductions to \$490,000 that will occur regardless and said that if sequestration triggers, the number of troops could further dip.

What the Army needs most, the general stressed, is some budget predictability through several years so end strength, modernization and readiness can be carefully balanced and a hollow forced avoided. AUSA has been urging Congress to solve the sequestration puzzle quickly and we continue to highlight the significant dangers posed by sequestration and the repeated need of continuing resolutions to

COLUMNIST

A marriage to seek truth

More than perhaps anyone else in America, David Blankenhorn personifies the struggle so many have experienced over same-sex marriage. First he was agnostic, then he was against it, now he's for it.

This is to say that Blankenhorn — a long-standing opponent of same-sex marriage — has shifted his energies to save the institution of marriage, regardless whom one chooses as a mate.

If you're unfamiliar with Blankenhorn it is because he hasn't been barking his positions on television the way so many loggers do. And this may be because he not strictly an ideologue but one of those rare people who agonize in search of the right thing.

As creator of the Institute for American Values, Blankenhorn initially sought to avoid the gay marriage issue altogether because it was so divisive — and because opposition necessarily meant hurting friends and often, family.

Eventually, he wrote a book against sex marriage and testified against it in California's Proposition 8 was challenged in court.

Then, last summer he changed his mind. Tuesday, Blankenhorn and more than a dozen signatories released a letter to Americans to end the gay-marriage and change the question from "Should we have a gay marriage?" to "How can we save marriage?"

Joining Blankenhorn are scholars, professors, theologians and, notably, his former arch-rival Jonathan Rauch. Whether one is straight or gay, say the challenge is to figure out how to strengthen marriage for the broadest fit to society.

Blankenhorn's journey through the marriage minefield parallels that of Americans who, though they held a mostly toward gays, weren't sure they wanted to change the institution of marriage in the best interest of society.

Like Blankenhorn, my greatest concern has been the effect on our nation's children. The operative questions, posed well by traditional marriage warrior G. Callaghan, were: Do we want to the notion that one parent, either the mother or father, is dispensable? A mother or father is dispensable? A what effect might this have?

We have witnessed the fallout from broken families in the past several decades during which divorce and out-of-wedlock births have skyrocketed. These trends have wrought not by expanding the definition of marriage but by a general loosening of respect for the institution. Blankenhorn's group suggests that given Americans' evolving acceptance of same-sex marriage, we should refocus our energy on that transcends sexual orientation.

His group's focus is on the distinction of marriage in the middle class, which, they say, is a class of underclass of inequality. As it has well-educated people tend to stay in greater numbers, while the less educated — high school and no college — coming a subculture of economic pressed, single-parent families. So no longer need to be cited to convey of what we know: Children from homes have a lousy shot at the path to happiness.

Blankenhorn still believes, as do Americans, that a child benefits from a loving mother and father committed to marriage. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child even noted this arrangement as a right marriage. Blankenhorn has written that society bestows on its children. But this gift has been badly damaged too often these days, withheld. A many same-sex couples today at children. It is simply not possible offering societal protections to certain children. As Blankenhorn recognized, it is in everyone's best interest that all children in all families the security of parents committed to



KATHLEEN PARKER

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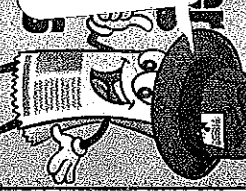
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A8 Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2013 | **FROM THE FRONT** | www.kentucky.gov

TRAIL

FROM PAGE A1

rail-trail, that ought to bump us up a little bit," Kemp said.

He called the old railroad bed a "tremendous resource," Hopkinsville received for free from the U.S. Army. Other communities have paid railroad bed fees for the railroad beds they converted to recreation trails, he said.

Hendricks said it would help affect a culture change. He wants Christian County residents to believe they can have public resources equal to those in other regions.

"It's much more emotional and visceral than, 'I like to go run,'" he said, speaking of the trail's significance.

The city hopes to raise \$400,000 to help pay for the first phase, which would extend from the Hopkinsville-Christian County Public Library to a trail-head on Pardue Lane. This contribution from the health department would go a long way.

Pyle said the department can afford it. The money isn't there for sitting on, he said. It's supposed to advance public health, and it makes him proud to see the board using some of it.

Afterward, board members took turns voicing their concerns.

"To consider this at this

REACH NICK TABOR at 270-887-3231 or ntabor@kentuckynewera.com.

and Nov. 18.

April 22, June 24, Sept. 23

the rest of its meetings for

the board scheduled

mittee designee.

Gamble as executive com-

secretary; and Dr. Marty

Cayce as treasurer; Pyle as

Jones as vice chair; Mike

ton will serve as chair; Tom

its 2013 officers. North-

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FRONT

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Health dept. could bankroll rail-trail

Director urges board to OK spending \$100,000 on project

BY NICK TABOR
NEW ERA SENIOR STAFF WRITER

The director of the Christian County Health Department wants to give \$100,000 from the reserve fund to Hopkinsville's rail-trail project.

But most members of the Board of Health fear the health department can't afford it.

They need to save enough for a "rainy day," said Dr. Wade Northington, the board's new chairman. Several board members noted the budget shortfall in this

fiscal year, financial troubles with the school nurse program and ongoing delays in Medicaid reimbursement.

The reserve fund has nearly \$2.4 million.

Some \$650,000 of that will go into the general fund by this summer, but more will come in too, Health Department Director Mark Pyle said.

Pyle proposed the allocation at a board meeting Monday evening. The board decided to

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consider it in a finance committee meeting and make a decision in a month or so.

Hopkinsville Mayor Dan Kemp

and Chamber of Commerce President Carter Hendricks attended the meeting to talk about the trail project's importance. Kemp gave a short speech before the board's decision.

In a study last year, Christian County ranked 116th out of Kentucky's 120 counties when it came to infrastructure that promoted healthy living.

"I would think that if we were to spend this money to build this

SEE TRAIL, PAGE A8