

# SHARP SHOOTERS

OHIO COUNTY TOPS APOLLO, 69-57 • SPORTS, PAGE B1



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## RWRA planning expansion, rate hike

BY KEITH LAWRENCE  
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Both of the Regional Water Resource Agency's sewage treatment plants — the Max N. Rhoads Water Reclamation Facility at 1201 Ewing Road North and the David W. Hawes Water Reclamation Facility at 1722 Pleasant Valley Road — are operating at above the capacity for which they were designed.

And the agency has signed an agreement with the Kentucky Division of Water to rectify the situation by 2024.

That means an expansion of the two plants — or an upgrade

of those plants plus the addition of a third plant — needs to happen soon.

The expansion is expected to cost \$50.5 million, Joe Schepers, RWRA's executive director, said Tuesday.

And if the agency decides that it needs a third plant, "it would take us well into the future," he said. "But it would be a lot more expensive."

All that work means that RWRA will be asking the city and county to approve a rate increase.

Schepers said this summer the agency will develop its proposed rate structure and take it to the

city and county, which have to approve rate changes, in November or December.

But he said the proposed rate increase wouldn't take effect until July 1, 2022.

That will hopefully be after the coronavirus pandemic has ended and the economy is improving.

"We're aware that businesses are struggling and many people aren't able to pay their OMU bills now," Schepers said.

The RWRA bill is included in the Owensboro Municipal Utilities' bill.

Schepers said waste from industries has gotten stronger through the years and RWRA is now getting sewage from more subdivisions and shopping centers on Kentucky 54, and other subdivisions farther out on U.S. 231 and Kentucky 81.

"The community is growing," he said. "It's a good problem to have. But our plants have to keep up with the growth."

The work RWRA wants to do to its existing plants — and possibly a third plant — is part of a 20-year plan.

Schepers said RWRA has been discussing the plans with city and county officials for several months. He said the agency is hiring an engineer to design both the expansions and the possible third plant.

"By fall, we'll know whether we'll do the third plant," Schepers said.

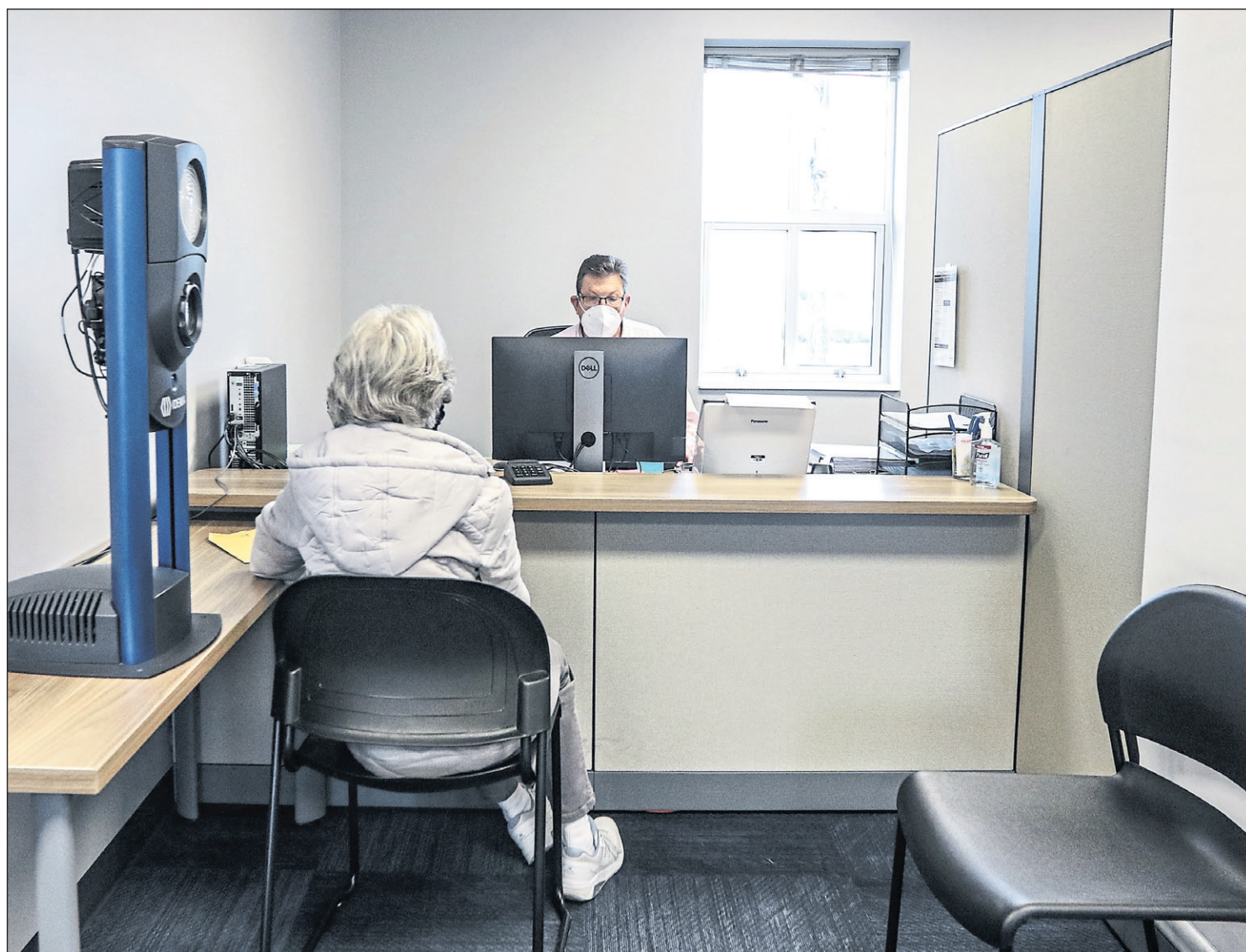
He said the agency hasn't decided yet where the third plant would be.

"But it will likely be in the Panther Creek watershed," he said. "Probably southeast of the city."

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Joe Schepers



Brian Edwards, a REAL ID specialist, processes a license for a client Tuesday at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's regional driver licensing office in the Daviess County Operations Center at 2620 Kentucky 81.

Photo by Greg Eans, Messenger-Inquirer | geans@messenger-inquirer.com

## New REAL ID office is now open

BY KEITH LAWRENCE  
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's regional driver licensing office in Owensboro finally has a permanent home.

It's open now in the Daviess County Operations Center at 2620 Kentucky 81.

Last year, a temporary office opened on the second floor of the McAtee's Building, 121 E. Second St.

That meant people in Daviess County didn't have to drive all the way to Madison-

ville to get a REAL ID license that would let them board planes after Oct. 1, 2021.

The state had trouble rolling out the REAL ID program and initially, there were no plans for an Owensboro office.

But Daviess Judge-Executive Al Mattingly said that was unacceptable and started lobbying for an office here.

The coronavirus pandemic slowed the process.

But the permanent office — the state's 13th — is now open in a larger space.

The announcement said the

new office will process applications for REAL ID or standard licenses and ID cards.

Application for a REAL ID must be done in person, with proof of residence, Social Security and identity.

People wanting to renew or replace a standard-issue license or ID card can do so by mail or drop-off with the circuit court clerk's office in the Morton J. Holbrook Jr. Judicial Building, 100 E. Second St., if there has been no change of name or address.

The state said the new office

will enforce social distancing and the wearing of face masks and has a sanitized work station for every customer.

The office will be open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Applicants can make appointments online at drive.ky.gov.

A limited number of workstations will be available to serve walk-ins.

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## Black leaders: Report on state racial inequality needs action

BY JAMES MAYSE  
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

A report that puts a spotlight on how racial inequality affects learning, career prospects and the criminal justice system in Kentucky requires not more study but action, black leaders said Tuesday.

The report, which was prepared by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, shows how systematic racism has caused Blacks to fall behind in education and more likely to be incarcerated than whites.

In a discussion hosted by the state Chamber of Commerce, Black leaders said they weren't surprised by the statistics, but the report shows the need for people to recognize that disparities exist and work to address them.

"What we have ... is a society built on the backs of many," said Aaron Thompson, president of the state Council on Postsecondary Education. Society is built on an "infrastructure that has disenfranchised people of color," he said.

Institutional racism is when racist policies are embedded in things like the education system or criminal justice system and people are not consciously aware of them, Thompson said.

Anti-racism, he said, gives people the tools to combat institutional racism.

When asked what he would say to people who are uncomfortable with talking about racism, Thompson said, "It's impossible to talk about this without having everybody at the table, including the business community."

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, Black residents make up 8.5% of the state's population. But, in 2018, Black inmates made up 21.8%

SEE ACTION/PAGE A2

## U.S. boosting vaccine deliveries amid complaints of shortages

BY JONATHAN DREW  
AND ZEKE MILLER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Answering growing frustration over vaccine shortages, President Joe Biden announced Tuesday that the U.S. is ramping up deliveries to hard-pressed states over the next three weeks and

expects to provide enough doses to vaccinate 300 million Americans by the end of the summer or early fall.

Biden, calling the push a "wartime effort," said the administration was working to buy an additional 100 million doses of each of the two approved coronavirus

vaccines. He acknowledged that states in recent weeks have been left guessing how much vaccine they will have from one week to the next.

Shortages have been so severe that some vaccination sites around the U.S. had to cancel tens of thousands of appoint-

ments with people seeking their first shot.

"This is unacceptable," Biden said. "Lives are at stake."

He promised a roughly 16% boost in deliveries to states over the next three weeks.

The administration said it plans to buy another 100 million

doses each from drugmakers Pfizer and Moderna to ensure it has enough vaccine for the long term. Even more vaccine could be available if federal scientists approve a single-dose shot from Johnson & Johnson, which is

SEE VACCINE/PAGE A2



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### INSIDE

Astrology/Region, C5  
Classifieds/Business, D2-3  
Comics/Region, C6  
Crossword/Business, D2  
Dear Abby/Region, C5  
Lotteries/Region, C5  
Markets/A4  
Records/Region, C2  
Television/Region, C4



33 High  
23 Low  
Details, Page A6