

RECORD A SUMMARY OF INTERIM ACTIVITIES

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Task force members discuss, learn about policies to spur housing

by Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Legislators on the Kentucky Housing Task Force 2025 held their first meeting on July 1, discussing and learning ways to spur housing development opportunities in the commonwealth.

"We're hoping this interim to talk about some real-world things we can do in the state of Kentucky, be less ideological and more practical on what we can do," said Senate Majority Caucus Chair Robby Mills, R-Henderson, who is co-chair of the task force.

Wendy Smith, deputy executive director of housing programs at Kentucky Housing Corp., testified that homeownership can be an extremely challenging goal.

"We have folks who could get approved for a loan at... \$170,000 to buy a home," she said. "There used to be homes in Kentucky to buy at that amount, and there just aren't now."

Last year, KHC commissioned a county-by-county supply gap analysis, and every county needs more housing, Smith said. It pointed to a gap of 206,000 units for 2024, split nearly equally between a demand for rentals and homes.

"For rentals, there is a greater need for our moderate and low-income households to have rental options that are affordable. For homeownership, it is almost evenly spread across all the income bands," Smith said.



Rep. Joshua Watkins, D-Louisville, speaks July 1 during a meeting of the Kentucky Housing Task Force 2025. Task force members discussed policies designed to spur housing development in the commonwealth

Smith said it's most important for the task force to set its sights on flexible resources that "move the needle" and accelerate housing production. She highlighted revolving loan funds, economic development tools for housing and employer-assisted housing.

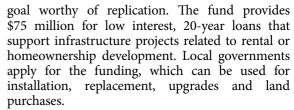
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Task force members,

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"I'm here advocating for the building industry and the building marketplace in Kentucky. Flexible resources can move the market by incentivizing public-private partnerships that accelerate housing production everywhere in the state," she said. The flexibility of state-level funds over federal dollars can't be overemphasized, Smith said.

She pointed to the Indiana Residential Infrastructure Fund as an ambitious housing



Sen. Jared Carpenter, R-Berea, said affordable housing is different for every person, and he asks clients what price range they seek when shopping for real estate.

"I'm doing a lot right now that are what we call affordable housing. I live in Berea, a really fast-growing community," he said.

When Carpenter started building houses in a development in 2019, they were \$189,000. However, on Friday, one of the houses sold for \$289,000.

Carpenter said he made the same profit on both houses even though one cost more money. He said the costs of materials to build houses have increased substantially, along with the price of lots and infrastructure such as roads.

Task Force Co-Chair Rep. Susan Witten, R-Louisville, said there's collective acceptance of the housing challenges, and the problems are not going away.

"The good news is that so many of the potential solutions that you all talked about, we've already talked about. These are in motion. We've been looking at other states. Our goal for this task force is to really tee up some of these pieces of legislation, vet them so that when session starts they can go right to committee and we can really get a lot done," she said.

Mills and others sponsored legislation last year to address infrastructure costs for developers, but it didn't gain full approval by the end of the 2025 legislative session. "You'll probably see that coming back around," he said.

M. Nolan Gray, a Bluegrass Institute scholar who testified on behalf of the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy, said he lives in California now and doesn't want to see Kentuckians face a similar housing crisis. He urged the task force to be open to successful initiatives that exist in other states.

"I'm coming to you from the future," Gray said. "Decades of strict rules and costly mandates gets you to a place where California is today, where hundreds

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Legislators question KentuckyWired stakeholders during meeting

by Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Legislators on the Information Technology Oversight Committee raised questions July 9 about long-standing problems and financial concerns related to the KentuckyWired project.

The KentuckyWired network is a physical system of fiber optic cable that allows broadband internet service to be brought to Kentucky communities. Construction started in 2015, according to the Kentucky Communications Network Authority (KCNA), which has partnered to build and oversee the project.

Committee Co-Chair Rep. Matt Lockett, R-Nicholasville, said committee members want to ensure that taxpayers aren't incurring costs over and above what should be paid, and he looks forward to receiving findings from state auditor's office about the project.

"I think it is this committee's desire, in terms of this whole day and discussion, that we do get to the bottom of these issues," he said. "The bottom line is we are here as representatives of our districts and people to make sure that we are spending Kentucky's taxpayer dollars wisely, to make sure we protect those dollars, that they are not being wasted."

Lorran Hart Ferguson, chief of staff for the Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts, said Senate Bill 25 from the 2025 legislative session earmarked \$1.5 million for her office to audit the project.



Rep. Matt Lockett, R-Nicholasville, speaks during the July 9 meeting of the Information Technology Oversight Committee. He also serves as co-chair of the committee.

KDE (Kentucky Department of Education) runs things and the way I see some state agencies. KDE, they contract out, they farm things out. They don't try to be the experts in every detail. They contract their email, they contract out their networks," he said.

Representatives from KCNA, Accelecom, and the Kentucky Department of Education, also testified during the meeting.

Kevin H. Marino, legal counsel for Accelecom, said Accelecom is willing to renegotiate and mediate with KCNA. Things were going fine until recent leadership changes, he said. "It's not something just anybody can do."

Doug Hendrix, executive director of the KCNA, spoke about the termination of OpenFiber. In 2017, KCNA entered into a contract with OpenFiber, and its employees were essentially a sales team, he explained.

"They were going to go out and market this. And as I said, there was a revenue sharing agreement, but that agreement has terms and conditions like all contracts that they have to comply with. Unfortunately, as you know, since we're here, that contract's just not worked out as intended," he said.

The authority issued three notices of default to the company, Hendrix said.

"They've connected their network without permission. We have a temporary restraining order that the Franklin Circuit Court prohibiting them from connecting to the network without our permission," he said.

Rep. Chad Aull, D-Lexington, asked if both political parties were cooperating with requests from the state auditor's office, and Ferguson answered, "as of now, yes."

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for Aug. 13 at 10 a.m. in the Capitol Annex.

Unless a special session is called by the governor, the general assembly can't act on legislation until the regular session begins in January.

Ferguson said Kentuckians deserve answers to two "big" questions – why isn't the project complete and what needs to be done to get there. The audit is at its beginning stage, she said.

Committee Co-Chair Sen. Gex Williams, R-Verona, said one problem with the project is the government is involved in a "very dynamic, fast-moving industry."

He also expressed concerns about procurement codes and if KCNA officials had a say over what happened to a contract with Accelecom, which is registered with the Kentucky Secretary of State's Office as OpenFiber Kentucky Co. LLC.

"This has been a big loss for the state, and it's a difference between the way



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2025 Kentucky General Assembly

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2025 Kentucky General Assembly

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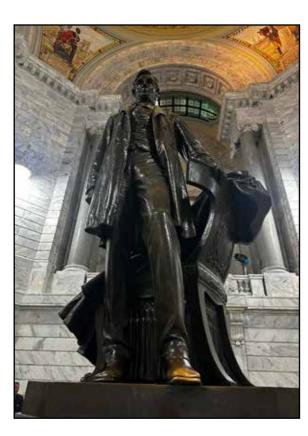
Task force members,

from page 2

of thousands of people are leaving the state, where folks who remain have no path to home ownership, they're doubling or tripling up in apartments. Folks are living in tents and cars."

Rep. Joshua Watkins, D-Louisville, said he has a local government housing background and he's a real estate agent. He noted that the supply gap isn't just an urban problem; it's widespread across the state.

"It's a 120-county wide problem. I think it's the biggest existential threat that the state is facing," he said.





Committee Meetings

Minutes for Statutory Committees that met recently may be found at the following sites:

Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Banking and Insurance:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/B&I/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Education:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Education/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCF&C/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Health Services:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCHS/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Judiciary/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Local Government:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc Gov/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR & E/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on State Government:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/St Gov/minutes all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology:

 $\underline{https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes_all.html}$

Interim Joint Committee on Transportation:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes_all.html

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2025 Interim

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The Commission and its staff, by law and by practice, perform numerous fact-finding and service functions for members of the Legislature, employing professional, clerical and other employees required when the General Assembly is in session and during the interim period between sessions. These employees, in turn, assist committees and individual legislators in preparing legislation. Other services include conducting studies and investigations, organizing and staffing committee meetings and public hearings, maintaining official legislative records and other reference materials, providing information about the Legislature to the public, compiling and publishing administrative regulations, administering a legislative intern program, conducting orientation programs for new legislators, and publishing a daily index and summary of legislative actions during sessions.

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