

Letter to the Editor:

This past week I received several calls, faxes and e-mails from residents in the Mossy Bottom, Broad Bottom, Wells Addition and Mullins Addition area. They are concerned and are being impacted by the City of Coal Run Village's annexation vote that will be on the upcoming November 4th election ballot. People have called asking the City of Pikeville to get involved and help set the facts straight to stop the intimidation tactics being used by the City of Coal Run. Due to the lawsuit that has been filed on this annexation issue by the City of Pikeville which gained support from 23 concerned residents living in the affected area, the City of Pikeville had no interest or intent of being involved in this election issue. We were asked by our utility customers and concerned friends for help understanding the misleading information being presented to their communities. The City of Pikeville has decided to set the record straight.

Residents in these communities who have contacted the City of Pikeville stated that folks representing Coal Run have been knocking on the doors of residents who have the "Stop Annexation Vote No" signs in their yard asking them to change their vote. The concerns of those who called felt that scare tactics are being used to change the minds of the people from a "NO" vote to a "YES" vote. According to those we spoke with, it's being said that if residents do not vote "YES" to allow their community to be annexed by the City Coal Run; then the City of Pikeville will be able to annex their property regardless of their choice because Pikeville owns the utilities in their area. This is absolutely NOT TRUE.

I have been the City Manger for five years. In that time, the City Commission has not annexed the first resident. In June of 2005 the City adopted its first comprehensive plan in years. In that plan it outlined the need for the City of Pikeville to annex certain territories for growth in order to allow the region to prosper. The City has only annexed areas without houses for future development or to protect the City of Pikeville's utilities. The Mayor and City Commissioner's have stated time and time again that the City has NO intent to annex these communities. They have shown so with their actions. The only area near these communities that the City of Pikeville has annexed is territory with our utilities in order to protect the City of Pikeville's investment. The City of Pikeville is not trying to annex these communities, but the fact is: The City of Coal Run is annexing territory without being able to offer much more other than higher taxes. The City of Coal Run Village has resorted to using the City of Pikeville's name as a scare tactic in order to change people's minds. If you see the mailers and listen to the comments of Coal Run, it isn't as much about what they can offer but it is about scaring people into thinking they have to choose between Coal Run and the City of Pikeville. This is not true; you do have a choice. You do not have to be annexed, for your community to stay unchanged and remain exactly as you are today without annexation, vote NO on November 4, 2008.

Residents have contacted us and have been lead to believe if residents don't agree to vote "YES" to be annexed into Coal Run then the City of Pikeville will automatically be able to annex them without their say-so, a petition or a vote. According to the understanding of those who called, they have been told due to the City of Pikeville owning the utilities their community they will not have a voice in an annexation decision. It has also been stated since the City of Pikeville owns and operates the utilities that they have the right by law to automatically annex you or your community. Both these issues are absolutely NOT TRUE. Any property or community that any city may attempt to annex now or in the future would be required to follow the same Kentucky state annexation laws. Any areas that a city would consider to annex without the consent of the owner MUST follow Kentucky law KRS 81A.420. All property owners or those living on the property affected would be able to sign a petition and force the issue to a vote, just like you are doing now. The community and property owners would have the right to make the decision.

We invite you to log onto the City of Pikeville's web site at www.cityofpikeville.com where we have facts on our front page about this annexation. We also invite you to log onto the State of Kentucky web site at <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/> to look at the Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) to validate this statement. You may also contact the Secretary of State's office who oversees annexations. You will find the fact is the decision is yours and not in the hands of government. We feel it very unfortunate that Coal Run is using misleading examples to scare you into these thoughts.

You need to ask yourself what changes by being annexed into the City of Coal Run Village. Your community will end up with the same volunteer fire department, the same utility company, the same ambulance service and the county is still taking care of their road maintenance due to an inter-local agreement. So what changes? More taxes, a weaker financial position, you lose the county's financial support (for items like blacktopping and funds for maintaining your roads) you gain one police officer in a 168 hour work week. The City of Coal Run is attempting to bully these communities into being annexed for an additional tax base with the opportunity of adding additional population. This would enable them to change their city classification so they could implement an occupational tax which results in more taxes. The City of Coal Run Village failed in this past legislative session to change their city classification asking their local representatives to support a change in moving from a 6th class city to a 5th class city. The purpose of becoming a 5th class city would be so the law would then allow an occupational tax to be implemented.

Over the next few days you will see and hear advertisements outlining the City of Pikeville's intent which is to set the record straight and of course state the City of Pikeville has no intent of annexing these communities. This coming Saturday, November 1st, there will be a ¾ page advertisement in the News Express along with several WDHR and FM 103.1 radio spot advertisements to explain the facts and stop the misleading of information.

Everyone in these areas, regardless of the annexation outcome, is still our utility customers and friends and will remain as such. We feel it is the City of Pikeville's responsibility to explain our true position and facts. The facts are: The City of Pikeville is not annexing your community. The City of Coal Run Village is annexing your community without any added value for you. Kentucky law gives every community the choice to say "NO", whether it is to the City of Coal Run or to the City of Pikeville.

Donovan Blackburn