

# In and about Washington

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Here are items from the July edition of the *In and about Washington* newsletter

## School opening plans still up in the air

Parents, students, and educators were still trying to figure out at the beginning of July when Washington Elementary and other St. Landry schools will open and how they will function when they do. August 12 was originally scheduled as the first day of school, but that date has not been confirmed and will probably change.

Brenda Lavergne, principal at Washington Elementary, said more definite information will be posted on the school's Facebook page when it becomes available but that "right now everything is up in the air."



District school leaders say the coming school year may require a mix of virtual learning and traditional classes. Gov. John Bel Edwards has ordered the state to continue until July 28 under Phase 2 of its COVID-19 response, which allows for schools to operate at 50% of capacity.

Much will depend on whether state and local COVID-19 cases begin to decline, Lavergne said.

The state education department has suggested that districts should prepare for three possible reopening scenarios: traditional, hybrid, or distance/remote learning, and Lavergne said she is preparing master plans for each of those scenarios. She is hopeful that particularly the younger students will be able to get some classroom time.

State education superintendent Cade Brumley said the guidelines were developed "by engaging experts on the virus . . . and experts on what this guidance looks like when put into practice."

The state department said districts should consider such things as bus capacity and class sizes, student symptom monitoring, face coverings, and food preparation and meal service.

"Louisiana's plan for statewide reopening of schools outlines phases that are initiated once certain public health criteria are met," according to the guidelines. "Throughout these phases, restrictions will be gradually relaxed as the public health situation improves, allowing greater flexibility, including the potential of resuming school-building-based instruction. Should the public health situation decline, restrictions may also be gradually tightened. School systems should be prepared for either situation to occur during the course of the year."

Angela Cassimere, St. Landry director of curricula has said plans for the St. Landry school year are based on four models: a traditional setting with students back in the classrooms, an online-only method, a hybrid of traditional and online programs, and a plan for simultaneous online and traditional methods.

Students may be scheduled to attend classes on different days, and there may be students who cannot return to school at all because of health concerns.

### **Property donated to town**

Property across the street from Town Hall on North Washington Street has been donated to the town for use most likely as green space of some sort.

The Town Council authorized Mayor Dwight Landreneau to sign documents accepting the donation from Joe Kavanaugh, who purchased the property from heirs of Lydia Keller. Kavanaugh stipulates in the act of donation that he should have a role in naming the property and in the final plans for its use.

The mayor said he has received a commitment from the St. Landry Solid Waste Commission to assist in clearing and cleaning the property once the donation is finalized.

### **Census count said important to town**

Local and state officials are urging people to make sure they are counted in the federal census.

For the first time census data will be collected online, and according to the Census 2020 Louisiana Resource Guide, "The 'digital divide' experienced by urban and rural, hard to count communities will make it harder to avoid an undercount."

That document points out that "the census misses some population groups at greater rates, including "people of color, low income households, and young children," which can make a big difference in small towns.

### **What would you put in a time capsule?**

The Washington Tricentennial Commission is considering burying a time capsule at the end of this year, to be opened in the year 2070, and is seeking suggestions on what should be included in it.

Items will have to fit in a box no bigger than two feet square and should reflect some aspect of life in Washington today.

Send suggestions to Jim Bradshaw, chairman, Washington Tricentennial Commission, P. O. Box 1121, Washington 70589, or by email to jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com.

### **Annual water quality report released**

Washington's annual water quality report for the year 2019 is now available on the town website. The water system is tested at least twice monthly. The report is designed to inform citizens of the quality of the water and the services delivered by the town.

### **One bidder for town building**

The Town Council accepted a \$15,000 bid by Olde Wood Accents, owned by Patrick and Dan Fontenot, for sale of what was known as the old waterworks building at the corner of Washington and St. Mitchell streets. That was the only bid on the building that had been appraised at \$16,000.

### **New utility rates in effect**

New rates for water and sewer service will go into effect this month. A study found that the town has been charging less than what it must spend to maintain the system.

### **CPAs finishing audit**

Auditors with the CPA firm of Kolder, Slaven and Co. are finishing an audit that is necessary to keep the town in compliance with state regulations and eligible for grants.

### **Grants received for police roof, maintenance equipment**

Two new state grants of \$5,500 each will be used to repair the police station roof and for utility maintenance equipment.

### **Budget should be ready for August meeting**

The accounting firm of Darnell, Sykes & Frederick is expected to have a 2021 budget proposal ready for council action in August.

### **Town pays off federal, state liens**

Washington has paid off IRS and state liens for unpaid withholding taxes. The mayor said he is continuing to work to keep up with current bills and to pay off old ones.

### **Council meetings moving to 6 p.m.**

The Council will move its meeting time from 7 p.m. to 6 p.m. It will continue to meet each third Monday at Town Hall.

### **Cemetery foundation planning event**

The Washington Cemetery Foundation is working on donor mailing lists and planning an event for October 17.

### **'Health Buggy' still parked**

No decision has been made on when the "health buggy" will resume visits to area towns. when it does resume it will likely be on the same schedule as before, visiting Washington on the third Friday of each month.

### **No date for senior food distribution**

No date has been set for senior food distribution in Washington in July.

### **Mayor's surgery postpones meeting**

The June town Council meeting was postponed a week after mayor Dwight Landreneau had emergency back surgery for a herniated disc. He moderated the meeting on June 22 and said he is mending nicely.



### **Garden winners**

Jimmy and Debbie Vidrine received the Washington Garden Club's Garden of the Month distinction for June. The judging is part of the club's town beautification project. Shown with the Vidrines are garden club president Ammy Taylor, left, and Mayor Dwight Landreneau, right.

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