

In and about Washington

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

Audit confirms town owes a lot of money

An audit for the fiscal year 2019 confirmed what was already known: Washington is deep in debt, with a lot of money due to agencies that cannot write off what is owed.

CPA Burton Kolder presented the audit findings to the Town Council September 21. His firm is now auditing the books for fiscal 2020, and it is not expected to be any prettier.

Both audits should have been done months ago, but were not because the town had not paid for the previous year's audit. The lack of a proper audit made the town ineligible for grant money and caused the state legislative auditor to consider taking over town affairs.

The old audit has now been paid for and Washington is again eligible for grant money. The town is now operating within a stringent budget and slowly paying down old debt, Mayor Dwight Landrenau said.

One of the biggest hurdles is money owed because the town did not pay a share of traffic fines to agencies such as the Acadiana Crime Lab, St. Landry Crime Stoppers, Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, and others. It "used the funds for operating expenses, rather than remit them to the appropriate organizations," according to the audit. "This has been going on for over a decade," Kolder said. As a result, "the town owes a tremendous amount of money."

Flaws in record keeping also contributed to the poor picture, Kolder said. "The whole accounting system for the town ... needs a complete overhaul," he said. "You have to have good, up-to-date financial information. I don't know that you have that."

The audit report comes as the town is preparing its next budget, which, Kolder warned, must be based on a realistic estimate of revenue. "You cannot rely on a surplus, because you have none," he said. "You have no cushion. You just have to live within your means."

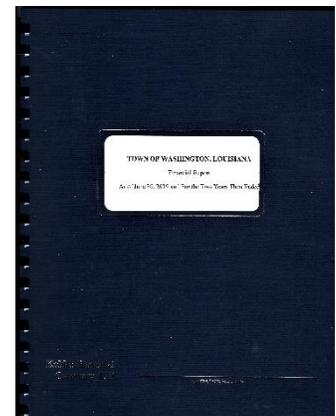
The town is making a bit of headway, Landreneau said. "We are able to receive grants that free up some current income to pay down old debt. But anything we do, we have to be careful" not to add any debt.

Important voting dates this month

If you are not registered to vote, the deadline to do so in person or by mail is October 5. The Registrar of Voters office is in the parish courthouse. The mailing address is P.O. Box 818, Opelousas LA 70570.

In addition to voting for the U.S. president on November 3, Washington voters will choose between Dwight Landrenau and Mona Wilson to complete the two years remaining on the term of Mayor James Olivier, who resigned in December of 2019.

Early voting is October 20-27 (excluding Sunday, October 25) from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.



The deadline to request a mail ballot is October 30 by 4:30 p.m. You can request a mail ballot online through the secretary of state's office or in writing through the parish registrar's office.

Election officials advise that mail ballots should be posted at least a week before the election. They must be received by the registrar by 4:30 p.m. November 2.

Who's on the Washington ballot November 3?

President

Joseph R. Biden, Kamala Harri, Democrat
Jo Jorgensen, Jeremy Cohen, Libertarian
Donald J. Trump, Michael Pence, Republican
Brian Carroll, Amar Patel, American Solidarity Party
Jade Simmons, Claudeliah Roze, Becoming One Nation
President Boddie, Eric Stoneham, C.U.P.
Don Blankenship, William Mohr, Constitution Party
Brock Pierce, Karla Ballard, Freedom and Prosperity
Tom Hoefling, Andy Prior, Life, Liberty, Constitution
Gloria La Riva, Sunil Freeman, Socialism and Liberation
Alyson Kennedy, Malcolm Jarrett, Socialist Workers Party
Kanye West, Michelle Tidball, The Birthday Party
Bill Hammons, Eric Bodenstab, Unity Party America



U. S. Senator

#1 Beryl Billiot, No Party	#9 Jamar Montgomery, No Party
#2 John Paul Bourgeois, No Party	#10 Dustin Murphy, Republican
#3 "Bill" Cassidy, Republican	#11 Adrian Perkins, Democrat
#4 Reno Jean Daret, No Party	#12 Antoine Pierce, Democrat
#5 Derrick "Champ" Edwards, Democrat	#13 Melinda Mary Price, Other
#6 "Xan" John, Other	#14 Aaron C. Sigler, Libertarian
#7 David Drew Knight, Democrat	#15 Peter Wenstrup, Democrat
#8 M.V. "Vinny" Mendoza, Independent	

Representative 4th Congressional District

#29 Ben Gibson, Republican
#30 Kenny Houston, Democrat
#31 "Mike" Johnson, Republican
#32 Ryan Trundle, Democrat

Judge 27th Judicial District

#72 Ledricka Johnson-Thierry, Democrat
#73 LaDonte A. Murphy, Democrat

District Attorney

#74 Charles Cravins, Democrat
#75 Chad P. Pitre, Republican

Washington Mayor

#89 William Dwight Landreneau, Democrat
#90 Mona C. Wilson, Democrat

There are also seven constitutional amendments and a parishwide referendum on sports betting on the ballot.

Cemetery event set for Oct. 17

Plans to maintain and refurbish three historic cemeteries will be the focus at an October 17 event sponsored by the newly formed Washington Cemetery Foundation.

Food and drinks will be available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the main entrance to Cedar Hill Cemetery.

“We would like to show everyone what we have done, what needs to be done, and what our plans are for the beautification of all of our old Historic Cemeteries,” according to a foundation circular. “We would also love to hear any ideas you may have to help us maintain and preserve these beautiful historic landmarks.”

Besides Cedar Hill, the nonprofit organization wants to preserve and restore the Hebrew Rest Cemetery and the Old Church Landing Cemetery, also known as the “yellow fever cemetery.”

Park design, grant application moving forward

The Washington Garden Club and members of a citizens’ committee headed by Hallie Coreil are working to complete a design proposal and grant application for a small park on donated land across from Town Hall. Once plans are in place, volunteers will be needed to maintain it and native plant donations will be solicited. More information is available at Town Hall.

Work set on 182 between Nuba and Opelousas

The state has awarded a \$3.5 million contract for repair and overlay of Highway 182 from Church Street, next to St. Landry Catholic Church in Opelousas, to the Highway 190 intersection at Nuba. No date was set to begin the work.

Mayor authorized to sign Midway Plan agreement

The Town Council has authorized Mayor Dwight Landrenau to enter into a governmental agreement committing to a cooperative effort with other communities in developing the I-49 corridor from Lafayette to Lebeau under a proposed Midway Plan.

Some water bills investigated

The utility department staff has been re-reading meters and Louisiana Rural Water Association specialists are looking into the situation after some water meters in Washington registered large amounts of water consumption, according to Mayor Dwight Landreneau. “If it is determined that anyone has been overcharged, a refund or credit to the account will be issued,” he said.

Millage change will have small effect

The Town Council approved a slight increase in Washington’s property tax millage, but most property owners will pay no more in taxes because property assessments have declined. The mayor said the tax on property assessed at \$100,000 may go up by less than two dollars.

No antique fair this month

The October Antique Fair at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall has been cancelled because of coronavirus restrictions. Fairs are usually held during the second weekend of April and the second weekend of October.

Washington grant will fix gas line

Washington has received a \$135,000 grant from the Delta Regional Authority to replace the leaking natural gas line that crosses Bayou Courtableau. It is one of 19 grants totaling \$4.6 million announced by the agency for economic development in Louisiana.

Plans to fix potholes in October

Potholes throughout town will be addressed during October, according to the mayor. He said he hopes the project can be completed by November 1. St. Landry Parish Solid Waste is funding the project.

Private manager may run RV park

The mayor has been authorized to negotiate a contract for private management of the town RV park near I-49.

Free health screening returns to Washington

The "Health Buggy" returned to Washington in September. and will continue to provide free health screening for blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol on the third Friday of each month from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the Immaculate Conception parking lot.

Public Square Rosary October 10

A Public Square rosary will be prayed at noon on October 10 in the yard at Immaculate Conception. Prayers are offered for the town, parish, state, and nation.

Washington Baptist Harvest Fest October 25

Washington Baptist will hold its Harvest Fest alternative to Halloween beginning at 5 p.m. on Sunday, October 25. There will be food and games for kids. Everyone is invited.

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