

Washington

FREE – TAKE ONE

School board seeking new 9.9-mill tax

St. Landry voters will decide May 16 on a 9.9-mill property tax increase proposed by the parish school board. Superintendent Milton Batiste III said the tax would be used to fund a \$2,500 salary increase for all 1,700 school employees, address a backlog of deferred maintenance, fund added school security measures, and allow hiring of nurses, counselors and support staff.



In an open letter to parish voters, Batiste described the proposal as “a critical opportunity to invest in the future of our children, our schools, and our entire community” that is “designed to establish a sustainable funding stream to address critical needs in safety, staff compensation, and competitive student performance programs.”

The plan also includes installation of tracks and football/soccer fields at six high schools and an auditorium at the Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts in Opelousas.

Batiste noted that it has been 40 years since voters last approved a new school millage and that “everything has increased dramatically, yet our operational budget has largely remained frozen in time.”

Parish voters soundly rejected three larger school millage proposals in March 2022



Festival set for March 21

A car show will again be a featured attraction at the annual Washington Community Festival set for March 21. The day-long festival features live music, vendors offering a variety of foods, a Washington Garden Club plant sale, and activities for children.

The car show offers prizes in several categories. There is a \$25 registration fee. Proceeds from the show will benefit the Washington Cemetery Foundation and veterans' organizations. Contact Greg Doucet, (337) 945-1531, or Ricky Ducote, (337) 945-3426, for car show details. Anyone interested in becoming a vendor can contact Anne Jones at town hall {337} 826-3626 or ajones@townofwashingtonla.net.

Inspection found bridge scouring

Although the Bayou Carron bridge is the younger of our two Main Street bridges, engineers deemed it most in need of replacement. The work now underway was spurred by an inspection that showed water washing around the foundations has caused “critical” scouring.

The Bayou Carron bridge was built in 1962. The Bayou Courtaleau bridge was completed in 1936. According to its most current inspection report, “All primary structural elements are sound” and the foundations stable.

About 1,200 vehicles cross each bridge daily.

Of Note.

NEW OFFICERS of the Steamboat City Association are Ron Rona, president; Skip Holloway, vice president; Anne Jones, treasurer; and Hallie Coreil, secretary. The association is a non-profit organization organized in 2011 to support community activities.

THE FAMILY Healthcare clinic in the Community Center on Veterans Memorial provides wellness visits, school physicals, cholesterol care, diabetes and asthma care, immunizations, and DOT physicals. Call (337) 826-7702.

VOLUNTEERS helping to maintain Ethel Park meet at 8:30 a.m. each first and third Saturday at the park across from Town Hall

YOU CAN DONATE to the Washington Cemetery Foundation via the Venmo payment app or by check to P.O. Box 42, Washington LA 70589.

BAYOU STATE WASTE reminds residents that it does not handle bulky items such as appliances, mattresses, furniture, or anything too big to fit into a garbage cart. Call Morgan & Morgan Land Prep, (337) 331-5375, to schedule pickup of those items.



Nutrition program

The Town of Washington helped put on an LSU AgCenter Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program in December to help families learn how to eat better and live healthier. The program at the Washington recreation center was directed by Henrietta Richardson, an AgCenter nutrition educator associated with the St. Landry Parish Extension Office.

Walmart upgrading center

Walmart plans to invest more than \$330 million to upgrade its regional distribution center on La. 743 near Washington.

According to Louisiana Economic Development (LED), the multi-year project will include automation, robotics, and advanced technology. LED said the company is expected to keep its existing workforce.

The La. 743 center has been in operation for nearly 25 years and serves approximately 120 Walmart stores.



Brrrrr-isk

Washington awoke to a dusting of snow on January 26, but freezing rain accompanying an Arctic front that pushed into the state January 24 stopped just short of us. We did see overnight freezes and wind chills in the teens for almost a week.

WASHINGTON

WEATHER

January 1-27

High: 79, Jan. 8

Avg. High: 60.7

Low: 17, Jan. 27

Avg. Low: 40.6

Avg. Temp: 50.6

5-Year Avg: 50.0

Jan. Rainfall: 3.30

20-year Avg.: 4.58

Rain for 2025: 49.61

20-Year Avg: 52.79

Ready for events

The Community Center on Veterans Memorial is available for rental. It has a full kitchen and a barbecue pit. Tables and chairs are available. Contact town hall, (337) 826-3626, for details.



Mayor to appoint home rule charter panel

The Town Council gave Mayor Dwight Landreneau authority to appoint a Home Rule Charter Commission to review the document adopted in November 2010. The current charter was drafted by a seven-member commission and approved by Washington voters. Any changes to it will also have to be approved in an election.

The charter gives the town some authority that would otherwise belong to the legislature. Until its adoption, Washington operated under the Lawrason Act, which gives the legislature power over many local matters.

Since its adoption there has been some discussion about several items, particularly selection of the police chief. The charter now provides that the chief "shall be elected" and that he or she "shall have actually resided" within the town limits for a year before taking office. Questions have been raised about how many people living in town have the qualifications and background for the job. Suggestions include expanding the area from which a chief can be chosen and/or allowing the mayor to make the selection with approval by the Council.

Challenged district will likely be used

Washington will likely remain in the new majority-Black 6th congressional district for the 2026 midterm elections if the U.S. Supreme

 Court does not rule soon on a challenge to its makeup. Qualifying for the state's new party primary system has been moved from July to February 11-13, and candidates will already have been selected if the court does not rule before then.

Voting in the party primaries is set for May 16, runoffs will be on June 27, and the general election will be November 3. Incumbent Democrat Cleo Fields is expected to run again.

Under the old open primary system, all candidates appeared on the same ballot, regardless of party affiliation, and any voter could choose any of them. Under the new system registered Republicans and Democrats will be able to vote only in their party's primary. No-party voters will be able to pick which primary they want to vote in, but those affiliated with a party other than Democrat or Republican will be eligible to vote only in the general election.

From Town Hall

THE TOWN COUNCIL

approved reappointment for another year of Kolder Slaven & Co. as Washington's CPA and auditor, Steven (Buzz) Durio as town attorney, Ben Trant as magistrate, Halli Polotzola as municipal clerk, and Jimmy Alfred as public works supervisor.

THE TOWN'S online payment processor for utility billing is changing, and the site will look different. The updated link will remain on the Town of Washington website and utility customers should always use that website for online payments. Call town hall, (337) 826-3626, if you have questions.

UTILITY bill payments are due on the 17th of each month. Payments after 3 p.m. are posted on the next business day. A \$10 late fee is charged if the bill is not paid on time.

TOWN HALL will be closed February 17 for Mardi Gras.

Submit items for *In and About Washington* to Jim Bradshaw, P.O. Box 1121, or e-mail jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com.

1953 rains brought flood control to Courtableau

Just before noon on April 28, 1956, engineers opened a heavy steel floodgate to let water from Bayou Courtableau flow into the Atchafalaya Basin, ending an “intensive effort” to stop flooding on Bayou Courtableau. That effort began after heavy rains caused the bayou to rise to its highest recorded level, 35.29 feet on May 22, 1953.

The bayou had already been described as “treacherous” before 8½ inches of rain fell on Washington on May 17. More than 500 people had to be evacuated from Washington, Beggs, Dubuisson, and Garland. The road to LeBeau went under water a day later, and trains quit running after “workmen, who had been feverishly sand bagging approaches to a trestle about a mile north of Washington, were forced to give up as the banks collapsed,” according to the *Opelousas Daily World*.



Looking Back

That flood prompted the “intensive effort” headed by former congressman Henry Larcade, who’s call for controls got through the federal bureaucracy relatively quickly. He said quick action was needed because, “we are liable to get a repetition of those terrible rains [that will] put us under water again.”

The engineers unveiled a \$1.7 million plan in May 1954 to build five floodgates where Bayou Courtableau meets the West Atchafalaya Floodway levee about a mile south of Highway 190. The gates that Senator Long helped open two years later are designed to let water out of the bayou when it gets too high and into it when it is too low.

The Courtableau is now maintained at an average of about 18 feet at the gauge on the Washington Main Street bridge, which measures the height of the bayou above sea level, not the actual depth of the bayou. The lowest level recorded here is 10.72 feet on October 18, 1956.

Mark these dates for events in St. Landry

- Children’s Parade & Chicken Run, 6 to 10 p.m. February 6. Riverview RV Resort, Krotz Springs
- Mardi Gras Chicken Run & Parade, 9 a.m. February 7, Riverview RV Resort, Krotz Springs
- Lebeau Mardi Gras Festival, 1 to 8 p.m. February 7, Immaculate Conception Church
- Taster’s Choice Culinary Event, 6 to 9 p.m. February 11, Mumphrey Center, LSU-Eunice
- Cankton Courir de Mardi Gras, 7 am. to 6 p.m. February 14, Pitre Memorial Park, Cankton
- Eunice Children’s Mardi Gras, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. February 14, Eunice Recreation Complex
- Eunice Courir de Mardi Gras, all day February 17, Northwest Community Center
- Opelousas Mardi Gras Parade, 11 a.m. February 17, downtown
- Zyde Gras on the Square, 2 to 5 p.m. February 17, courthouse square, Opelousas
- Zydeco Capital Jam, 1 to 3 p.m., second Saturday, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 23
- Zydeco Dance Lessons, 6 p.m. each Wednesday, Holy Ghost Church cafeteria, Opelousas
- Rendezvous in the Prairie, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. each Thursday, Prairie Acadian Cultural Center, Eunice
- Jammin’ on the Bayou, 1 p.m. third Saturday, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 23



Come see us today!

St. Landry Visitor Center
978 Kennerson Road
(I-49 exit 23)

337.948.8004
cajuntravel.com

