

In and about Washington

July 2023
FREE—TAKE ONE



Volunteers bring park back to life

Neighborhood volunteers are rejuvenating the once-neglected Jacob Joubert Memorial Park at Vine and Prescott streets.

Hilton Williams and Charles Rue have taken on supervision of the park. Judge Al Harris, Judge Vanessa Harris, Tony Harris, the Karren's Kids Foundation, and others helped pay for equipment and supplies. Councilman Rogers Malveaux was an early advocate.

Mayor Dwight Landreneau thanked donors and volunteers, noting that "this park now provides a safe environment for neighborhood children to play. The volunteers assist with games and occasionally cook burgers, hotdogs and provide water and soft drinks."



Town budget shows small increase in spending

The town expects to spend a little bit more in the fiscal year that began July 1 than it did last year, when it brought in a little bit more than was budgeted. In both cases, emphasis is on "a little bit."

The town's original budget for the last fiscal year was a little over \$1.5 million and actual revenue was just over \$1.7 million. The budget for the coming year anticipates income of about \$1.8 million and expenses totaling about \$1.6 million. Expected income includes \$650,000 in utility charges, \$440,000 in fines and fees, \$300,000 in taxes, about \$150,000 in license fees and miscellaneous income, and \$190,000 from the state and other sources.

The spending projection includes \$500,000 by the police department, \$400,000 for general government, and just over \$500,000 by the utilities system, broken down to \$232,000 by the gas department, \$194,000 by the water department, and \$177,000 by the sewer department.

The budget does not include state or federal grants, both of which have contributed significantly to town coffers in recent years. More are anticipated but cannot be budgeted until they are received.

Steamboat whistle will be heard again in Washington

The sound of a steamboat whistle will be heard again in Washington after more than 120 years.

Washington State Bank has funded a project to install a three-tone steamboat whistle at the town pavilion. An electronic timer will sound the whistle at a pre-set time and it can also be tooted manually.

The specially crafted whistle is expected to get here this month or in early August.

The first whistle heard in Washington was aboard, the *Opelousas* in 1830. The last to whistle was *Warren*, which sank in the Mississippi in May 1900.

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Of Note

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL at Washington Baptist will be July 9 through 12 beginning at 6 p.m. each evening. It will offer programs for children, youths, and adults. A free meal will be served each night.

THE TOWN and Steamboat City Association will host a Summer Camp for youth aged 5 through 12 at the Washington Recreational Center July 17 through 21. Deadline to enroll is July 12. For information contact Town Hall, 337 826-3626

THE AMERICAN LEGION will sell barbecue dinners at the Legion home from 10 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month for \$11 a plate. Proceeds will be used for maintenance of the home and Legion activities.

THE HEALTH BUGGY offers free screening for blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol from 8 to 11 a.m. each third Friday. on the Immaculate Conception parking lot.

BINGO IS BACK, at 2 p.m. on each second and fourth Tuesday at the Recreational Center, Bridge St. at Martin Luther King.



Asks to expand cultural district

The Town Council approved a resolution to include the American Legion home in the Historic Washington Cultural District. The district, created in 2014 is one of more than 120 formed through the state Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism to encourage development of the cultural economy, including preservation of historic structures. The local district currently includes only the incorporated area of the town. The home is just outside the town limits on Bayou Courtableau. Inclusion will help the Legion post find grants for renovation and maintenance of the Quirk McCaffery home (circa 1920), which serves as its headquarters. The state must approve the expansion.

Forecast: Hotter than usual summer

June was hotter than normal, and we can expect the same thing for the rest of the summer. Heat warnings were issued practically every day during the middle and at the end of the month, when the actual temperature averaged over 92 degrees and heat indices climbed to well over 100. Nights cooled only to an average of 68.5 degrees, keeping the overall average above 80.

Showers lowered the temperature slightly several days late in the month, but added to uncomfortable muggy conditions.

The national Climate Prediction Center expects temperatures to remain above normal for July, August, and September, but forecasts about normal rainfall. That is about 4 to 4½ inches for each of the three months in Washington

THE WEATHER June 1-27



High: 96, June 16, 20,
24

Average High: 92.0

Low: 65, June 6

Average Low: 68.5

June Rainfall: 1.93

Avg. for Month: 4.52

Rain for 2023: 30.04

Avg. Yearly: 26.80



Town hosts St. Landry officials

John Gallagher, executive director of the Louisiana Municipal Association, right, spoke at the recent St. Landry Parish Municipal League dinner at the Washington Community Center. Joining him at the podium were Mayor Dwight Landreneau and Mayor Julius Alsandor of Opelousas, who is president of the St. Landry association and a vice president of the LMA.

State dollars will fund new water meters

Electronic water meters will soon replace the old manually read ones in Washington, using \$500,000 in capital outlay funding approved in the last legislative session. The town also received a \$125,000 appropriation for vehicles and infrastructure improvements.

The new meters will be less labor intensive and more accurate, according to Mayor Dwight Landreneau. He thanked Sen. Gerald Boudreaux and Rep. Dustin Miller for steering the appropriations through the legislature.

Law regulates slow-moving vehicles

People who drive slow-moving vehicles such as golf carts on town streets must have a valid driver's license and liability insurance, and the vehicles must have mirrors and other safety equipment.

The rules are part of an ordinance adopted by the Town Council at its June meeting that also requires registration of the vehicles at Town Hall. The ordinance does not apply to ATVs or 4-wheelers, which are not allowed on the streets.

The law defines a slow-moving vehicle as "a four-wheeled, gas or electric powered vehicle with a maximum speed of ... not more than 25 miles per hour."

The full ordinance and required forms are available at Town Hall.

From Town Hall

THE TOWN COUNCIL

adopted an ordinance clarifying fees and procedures for public records requests. There is no charge for looking at public records by appointment during regular office hours. Copies range from 25 cents for a one-sided copy and 50 cents for two sides, to \$15 for a report on a computer disc or videotape. The full schedule is available at Town Hall.

TWO ORDINANCES

were introduced by title at the June meeting. One involves bringing town traffic regulations into line with the state highway code. The other relates to court costs for the mayor's court. Public hearings will be held on them before the next Town Council meeting.

REGULAR MEETINGS

of the Town Council are at 6 p.m. on each third Monday at Town Hall. This month's meeting will be on July 17. The agenda is posted on the town website beforehand.

THE TOWN'S

Facebook page. Historic Washington, Louisiana, can be accessed at townofwashington.la.

Send items for *In and About Washington* to jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com.

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1920s choice: Hot, smoky lamps or cooling electric fans

Washington began thinking about electricity as early as 1915, when there was talk about buying it from Opelousas, but that didn't work out.

In late August 1915, Opelousas power plant superintendent A. C. Jones, told the *St. Landry Clarion* that "the probabilities are that Washington would be connected" at a cost "much cheaper than ... Washington [would pay to] erect a plant."

"The people of Washington have been exceedingly anxious to secure electric lights, but the historic town has never been able to figure that a plant would be a paying proposition. Now that [Opelousas] has one of the best and most up-to-date electric plants in the state, electric lights could be furnished [to] the people of Washington for practically the same that users of electricity pay in this city," the Opelousas paper said.

Opelousas mayor Edward Loeb had a different view. He said it would overtax the power plant to generate enough electricity to serve Washington just then, but "the day is not far distant ... when the two towns ... will be supplied ... from the Opelousas power plant."

Despite the optimism, Opelousas power lines never stretched to Washington. We continued to use "old, smoking lamps," as one writer described them, until 1923, when Washington aldermen called for the sale of \$32,000 in bonds "for the purpose of constructing an Electric Light and Power Plant and to improve the Water Works ... and to build a Town Hall."

Washington voters approved the bond sale and the aldermen advertised for bids to build a system that would include two 50-kilowatt generators "directly connected to oil engines, a switchboard, oil storage tank" and the necessary lines, transformers and other apparatus."

It's not clear from existing accounts just who got that contract, but it seems that a year later a lot of Washington residents were still sticking to their old, smoking lamps. In August, the aldermen accepted a plan by Cooperfields Electric of Opelousas to finance residential connections to Washington's new plant. "The plan adapted is the same as followed by many of the smaller towns, where it is found difficult to induce the citizens to take advantage of electric service," the Opelousas *Clarion-Progress* said.

Coopersfield had an interest in getting folks connected; it sold electrical appliances. One of its ads in the heat of August asked, "Have you a convenient outlet to plug your electric fan into during these hot summer nights?" Another one advertised a "two-tube Radiola" for just \$35, promising clear reception through headphones and "power enough for a loudspeaker."

That probably wasn't a big inducement for people in Washington, but more residents eventually signed up. The newspaper took particular notice one evening in January 1925, when "the electric lights were turned on at the new school building ... which made that section of the town look very attractive."



Looking Back

In and About
Washington

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