

In and about Washington

February 2023
FREE—TAKE ONE



New council sworn in

St. Landry Clerk of Court Charles Jagneaux administered the oath as the new Town Council was sworn in at the January 18 meeting. Standing, from left, are Beau Wilson, District 1; Rogers Malveaux, District 2; Erick Fontenot, at-large; Tanya Doucet, District 3; and Mary Ann Lavergne, District 4. Town Clerk Halli Polotzola and Mayor Dwight Landreneau, seated, were sworn in separately. Police Chief William Worthy took the oath on December 29.

Utility rate increases adopted by council

The base utility rates for Washington residents who use both water and natural gas will go up \$14.20 under an ordinance adopted by the Town Council at its January 18 meeting. The bulk of that increase, \$11.25, is in sewer rates, which had not been adjusted in 20 years and which auditors said were far below what is needed to cover the cost of operation.

Base commercial rates in town will increase about \$20. Water rates for out-of-town residents and businesses will go up a bit more. Washington does not provide sewer service outside of town. Gas rates will be the same for residents and customers outside of town.

An audit showed that Washington’s gas, water, and sewer operations had a combined loss of \$83,489 last year. Under law, the utilities must charge enough to cover costs.

The new rates “will bring us into compliance,” Mayor Dwight Landreneau said. “Nobody likes price increases, but we have no choice.” The ordinance notes that the new rates were set after a “comprehensive review of the utility system’s revenue requirements” by CPAs.

		Water Rates				
		Base Rate	Rates per 1000 gallon after base rate			
			effective 7/1/2022	Proposed Base Rate	Proposed Con. Rate	BASE RATE INCREASE
Residential In Town	First 2,000 Gallons (\$7/1000 gal)	\$ 14.00	\$ 3.31	\$ 15.00	\$ 4.50	\$ 1.00
Commercial In Town	First 5,000 Gallons (\$8.50/1000 gal)	\$ 42.50	\$ 5.52	\$ 45.00	\$ 6.50	\$ 2.50
Residential Outside Town	First 2,000 Gallons (\$7.63/1000 gal)	15.25	4.14	\$ 17.00	\$ 5.50	\$ 1.75
Commercial Outside Town	First 5,000 Gallons (\$9.50/1000 gal)	\$ 47.50	\$ 6.07	\$ 52.00	\$ 7.00	\$ 4.50
Bulk Water Rates	for 0-1000 gallons minum		\$ 15.74		\$ 25.00	\$ 9.26
	for each 1001-gallon after				\$ 25.00	
		Sewer Rates				
		Base Rate	effective 7/1/2022	Proposed Base Rate	Proposed Con. Rate	
***Sewer is calculated from water usage						
Residential	First 2,000 Gallons (\$2.38/1000 gal)	\$ 4.75	\$ 2.77	\$ 16.00	\$ 3.50	\$ 11.25
Commercial	First 5,000 Gallons (\$4.00/1000 gal)	\$ 20.00	\$ 3.04	\$ 32.00	\$ 4.00	\$ 12.00
		Gas Rates				
		Base Rate	effective 7/1/2022	Proposed Base Rate	Proposed Con.-no change	Increase
Residential & Commercial	First 500 CCF	17.05	cal by cost	\$ 19.00	cal by cost	\$1.95

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Of Note

A TALK on Black Cowboys will be presented by Performing Arts Serving Acadiana (PASA) at the Recreation Center, Bridge Street and Martin Luther King, at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 1.

SHARON HICKS of Washington has been recognized in the Volunteer Spotlight by CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) as an advocate for St. Landry children in foster care.

DR. STEVE BENNETT will speak at the 10:30 a.m. Washington Baptist service on February 19.

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

THE WEATHER January 1-27

High: 78, Jan. 3, 11
Average High: 67.8
Low: 29, Jan. 14
Average Low: 48.2
Jan. Rainfall: 4.13
Avg. Jan. Rain: 4.38
Rain for 2022: 48.41
Avg. Yearly: 52.79



Community festival set for March 25

Preparations are well under way for the second Washington Community Festival planned for March 25. The event, a revival of one that was replaced a dozen years ago by a short-lived Catfish Festival, drew hundreds of people to Washington's historic Main Street last year and is expected to be even bigger this year.

Activities will begin at 9 a.m. Organizers anticipate about 50 booths offering food and crafts made by local people. Vintage cars will be displayed on Main Street.

Four bands are scheduled throughout the day, including Chubby Carrier and the Bayou Swamp Band (10 a.m. to noon); The Don Fontenot Band (1 p.m. to 3 p.m.); Shotgun Lillie (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.); and Travis Matte (7 p.m. to 9 p.m.). DeeJays will provide music between bands.

Booth spaces are available at \$75 for food and beverage vendors and \$50 for other booths. Anyone interested should contact Donna Dardeau at 337 351-1448.

Who represents us?

Here are the current town and parish officials after the last election.

TOWN Mayor

Dwight Landreneau
337 826-3626

Chief of Police

William Worthy
337 826-3305

Town Council

Erick Fontenot, At large
337 308-2442

Beau Wilson, District 1
337 351-6915

Rogers Malveaux, District 2
337 945-9266

Tanya Doucet, District 3
225 200-2979

Mary A. Lavergne, District 4
337 308-9829

PARISH

District Attorney

Chad Pitre
337 948-3041

Sheriff

Bobby J. Guidroz
337 948-6516

Clerk of Court

Charles Jagneaux
337 942-5606

Assessor

Sherri Zeringue McGovern
337 942--3166

Coroner

Zebediah (Zeb) Stearns
337 457-1599

Parish President

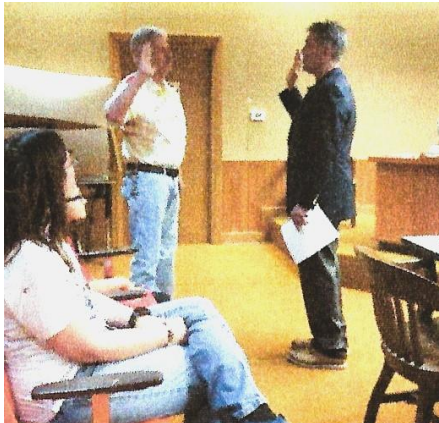
Jessie Bellard
337 948-3688

Parish Council, District 4

Mildred Thierry
337 942-2931

School Board, District 4

Raymond Cassimire
337 826-7762



Sworn in as chief

William Worthy was sworn in as Chief of Police on December 29 by Clerk of Court Charles Jagneaux. He took office January 1.

Shelvin assistant chief

Veteran officer Easton Shelvin will be Assistant Chief of Police here. He will primarily oversee enforcement ,and Chief William Worthy will deal mostly with administration, the mayor indicated.

Shelvin worked in the patrol division, as a detective, and on the S.W.A.T. team with the Sheriff’s Department before moving to the Opelousas City Marshall’s office as assistant marshal.

He holds the District 3 seat on the Parish Council and is pastor of Truth Ministries in Opelousas.

Water system gets top mark

The Washington water system received a preliminary grade of A in ratings released January 1 by the Louisiana Department of Health. It was one of 954 community water systems that were evaluated.

The grades are part of a new program in which the state issues grades based on operations and maintenance, infrastructure, water quality violations, or the presence of contaminants. Final grades will be issued May 1, after the systems submit information on customer satisfaction and financial sustainability.

Town reappoints staff, consultants

The Town Council approved reappointment of administrative staff and consultants for the coming year.

Halli Polotzola will continue as town clerk and Jimmy Alfred will remain public works supervisor. Also reappointed were Chris Granger, town attorney; Ben Trant, magistrate of the town court; and Burton Kolder, CPA and auditor.

Fuselier graduates from tourism academy

Herman Fuselier, executive director of the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission, was one of 22 graduates of the Louisiana Tourism Leadership Academy (LTLA) presented at the annual meeting of the Louisiana Travel Association.

Each participant chose a year-long project to work on as part of the program. Fuselier’s project was helping to develop a marketing plan for Washington. The goal of the program is to “equip each class member with knowledge and skills that will enrich their tourism-related organizations, therefore strengthening the state-wide tourism industry,” according to the LTA.



From Town Hall

THE MONTHLY financial report to the Town Council shows that the Town’s old debt load continues to fall. It has been reduced from some \$700,000 in 2020 to just under \$215,000 at the end of December.

THE TOWN’S new Facebook page is Historic Washington, Louisiana. It can be accessed on the town website at townofwashington.la.

CREDIT CARDS CAN now be used to pay all town bills after an upgrade in software and Web links at Town Hall.

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 February 20. The agenda is posted on the town website beforehand.

SOME BACK ISSUES of *In and About Washington* are now on the town website, townofwashington.la. Click on History and Community, select Newsletters.

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

Progressive League wanted steamboats back

When the railroad came to Washington in 1880, it was the beginning of the end for the steamboat trade. The *Warren*, the last Courtableau steamer, left in May 1900, leaving no way to travel or ship crops except by train. But by the early 1900s some shippers were calling for the boats to come back.

The Washington Progressive League reported in 1907 that there was a “fearful congestion of freights at [the] railroad depot,” complaining they were being overcharged for poor service. The civic group claimed 100 tons of cotton seed rotted in a warehouse waiting for a train car to carry it, that a carload of salt took nearly a year to be delivered here, and that the delays in shipping cost planters a lot of money.

“Often cotton [sent] to New Orleans remains in transit a month. This, with the erratic fluctuations of the price of cotton, often incurs serious loss to the owner or shipper, whereas with Bayou Courtableau navigable, [cotton] could be landed in New Orleans by boat within 48 hours,” the League said in a letter to Congress. It charged that “our troubles relative to Bayou Courtableau have largely arisen since the advent of the railroads. ... [at a time when] our territory is rapidly being opened up by the clearing of new lands ... and by the starting of new industries.

“In the last few years there has been cleared and put in cultivation an area of seven miles on both sides of Bayou Courtableau ... and several sawmills have recently been established along this route. In addition ... there is being erected at Washington a hardwood sawmill with capacity of 40,000 feet daily, and several other enterprises are contemplated, all of which would be greatly benefitted by the restoration of Bayou Courtableau to navigation.” The League estimated that shipping by water would save local merchants and planters \$84,000 a year over rail transportation.

Unfortunately, Bayou Courtableau had been largely neglected by then, and logjams made it impossible to navigate. The League said the savings in shipping costs would more than justify an appropriation to bring the bayou back to life.

This wasn’t the League’s first complaint. Congress was still contemplating a plea made the year before to keep railroads from building fixed-span bridges that would block the bayou.

“For many, many years ... every merchant, every shipper of cattle and field produce and poultry, in this vast section were dependent on that stream,” the League wrote in that plea. “The advent of railroads has forced it into ... disuse, but the stream is still there, serving as a safeguard against extortionate freight rates by railroads. ... Blocking it with railroad bridges would not only stop its navigation, but the question would be proper from Congress: [Why] would you have us open a stream that [has been made] ... unfit for navigation ... by your own hands?”

Congress, in its wisdom, ultimately agreed that railroads had to build bridges that would let boats pass, but also approved building a levee on the Atchafalaya that closed the mouth of Bayou Courtableau and made a long, expensive trip down the river then up Bayou Teche the only way for a boat to get here.



Looking Back

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Washington

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