

In and about Washington

September 2024
FREE—TAKE ONE



Meeting first step in revitalization process

Residents attending a community meeting August 8 began a process to identify underused or blighted properties in Washington and discuss how they might be redeveloped.

The town is one of three in south Louisiana that will be studied under an environmental assessment grant administered through the Acadiana Planning Commission. The others are Ville Platte and Basile.

Participants created a map of properties with potential for revitalization under the Brownfield program of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and brainstormed on how they might best be used.

Regional planner Kade Jones said the Acadiana commission will use the map, suggestions, and other studies to prepare a list of properties for further evaluation. Grants may be available to nonprofit groups to improve properties that meet the Brownfield criteria. Low-interest loans may be available for privately owned property. The August meeting was just the beginning of a long process, Jones said, but Mayor Dwight Landreneau said that in the near term the study will help the town identify blighted properties.

Hotel Klaus holds ribbon cutting

Hotel Klaus, the nine-room boutique hotel created from the 1870s-era Max Klaus store on Main Street, held its grand opening August 7.

The hotel is offering a discount through September for local residents to introduce them to its amenities. Bookings are available through the hotel website, www.hotelklaus.com, or by calling (337) 565-9516.



Participants in the Hotel Klaus ribbon cutting included, front row, Parish President Jesse Bellard, Mayor Dwight Landreneau, renovator Stephen Ortego, Lori Dupuis of the St. Landry Chamber of Commerce, parish tourism director Herman Fuselier, Washington State Bank CEO Kip Bertrand, and, back row, Stephen Ortego's parents, Craig and Wanda Brignac Ortego, Andre Carr of SO Studio Architects, hotel marketing director Sharon Forman, and hotel manager Jonathan Sebastien (partially hidden).

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Of Note

THE AMERICAN LEGION

offers pork or chicken barbecue dinners for \$12 on the first Saturday of each month. Pick up is between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Legion home just across Bayou Courtableau on Highway 182. Proceeds are used to maintain the home.

WASHINGTON BAPTIST hosts a youth program each Wednesday at 6 p.m.

THE WASHINGTON Cemetery Foundation is accepting donations via the Venmo payment app. Donations may also be made by check to Washington Cemetery Foundation, P.O. Box 42, Washington 70589.

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.

THE ST. LANDRY Community Action Agency offers transportation for qualified people Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in t St. Landry and Lafayette parishes. Call (337) 948-3651 for details.

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



Scholarship winners announced

Betchina Amy, left, and J'Nae A. Hill, right, have been named recipients of \$1,000 scholarships given by the Steamboat City Association.

Amy is a graduate of Westminster Christian Academy. She is studying political science with a focus on international relations and human rights at Louisiana Technical College in Ruston.

Hill is a graduate of Opelousas High School. She is majoring in precardiopulmonary sciences with a focus on heart ultrasound at the LSU School of Allied Health in Baton Rouge.

THE WEATHER



August was hot and dry but did not rival last year's torrid heat. NOAA expects our weather to be hotter than normal through October.

The hurricane center predicts an active month.

August 1-27

High: 100, Aug. 18

Avg. High: 94.8

Low: 66, Aug. 21

Avg. Low: 73.3

Avg. Temp: 84.0

5-year Avg. 82.7

Aug. Rainfall: 0.08

Avg. for Aug.: 4.38

Rain for 2024: 47.34

20-year Avg.: 35.84



Joubert Park pavilion

A barbecue pavilion has been built at Jacob Joubert Memorial Park, Prescott at Vine Street, funded through a donation by Lightsource Renewable Energy Operations. The once derelict park has been revitalized through the work of volunteers and community contributions.

From Town Hall

School supplies

Town Council member Tanya Doucet, shown with principal Brenda Lavergne, again spearheaded a back-to-school supply drive for students at Washington Elementary. She gave special thanks to Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, its secretary Katie Fontenot, Washington Baptist Church, and Mayor Dwight Landreneau, who supported her efforts.



October 7 is voter registration deadline

October 7 is the deadline to register in person at the Registrar of Voter's office, by mail, or at the OMV office for the November 5 presidential and congressional election.

There are no local races on the ballot, but Washington voters will help select a new congressman in the newly created majority-Black 6th Congressional District. Five candidates qualified for the seat. They are Quentin Anderson, Democrat, Baton Rouge; Cleo Fields, Democrat, Baton Rouge; Elbert Guillory, Republican, Opelousas; Wilken Jones Jr., Democrat, Opelousas; and Peter Williams, Democrat, Baton Rouge.

Early voting is October 18 through 29 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the registrar's office in the parish courthouse.

Southland CEO visits



Mayor Dwight Landreneau introduced Joey Lombardo, CEO of Southland Industrial Coatings, at the Brownfield planning meeting held here August 8.

Land preparation has begun on a 100,000-square-foot, \$13.1 million plant on a site east of I-49. The company expects the expansion to create 120 new jobs. Job recruiting will likely begin after the first of the year.

AS EXPECTED, the Town Council made no change in the property tax millage. The tax will remain at 6.55 mills, where it has been for years.

THE OPELOUSAS Daily World has again been designated the town's official journal for publication of legal notices.

UTILITY CUSTOMERS are reminded that bill payments are due on the 17th of each month and that payments received 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

REGULAR MEETINGS of the Town Council are at 6 p.m. on each third Monday at Town Hall.

THE TOWN'S Facebook page. Historic Washington, Louisiana, can be accessed at [townofwashington.la](https://www.facebook.com/townofwashington.la).



**Take pride in your town.
Stash your trash.**

Daughter saved father from sinking steamboat

A heroic daughter and a bale of cotton saved her father's life when the steamboat *Lessie Taylor* sank not long after leaving Washington in early February 1878. The boat had been a mainstay here for nearly a decade and was regarded as one of the better boats operating on Bayou Courtableau before it ran into a streak of bad luck. David Jasper McNicoll recalled in his Washington memoir that the sinking was so notable that "folks used to mark time by that event."

Max Kennison was the captain when the boat was introduced to the bayou in 1870. It was advertised as newly built, "with all modern improvements" and "extra inducements to passengers and shippers." The owners were Washington businessmen Elbert Gantt and Thomas C. Anderson.

Gantt operated a sawmill on Bayou Courtableau and also owned a cotton gin that later became known as the Nicholson Brothers Gin. Anderson had been in the steamboat business since 1854. He was president of the Washington Board of Police (town council) from 1850 to 1852 and was also postmaster.

The steamer seemed to be popular with passengers and shippers. An advertisement in 1872 said that it connected at Washington with "a line of good barges ... [that could reach] all points on Bayou Boeuf" (which was too shallow for steamboats). In February 1877 the "Magnificent Passenger Steamer" advertised round-trip tickets for just \$10 for an excursion to the New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration.

That would be the *Lessie Taylor's* last Mardi Gras. The boat had just left the Courtableau on its way to New Orleans when it struck a sunken log in the Atchafalaya, "near Glover's Bend."

According to the *Opelousas Courier* account, the boat left Washington as usual on a Saturday evening "with a good load of freight and a considerable number of passengers, among whom were four ladies. About 5 o'clock the next morning, when in the Atchafalaya about 4 miles from the mouth of the Courtableau, she struck a snag or sunken tree and sunk in about 20 minutes."

Most of the passengers were asleep when the log ripped a hole in the hull, "and though the boat was landed as soon as possible ... some of them were unable to leave her before she began to settle down ... and were compelled to swim ashore."

One of the four ladies, a "Miss Newell, of Elm Bayou, in this parish," was one of those swimmers. The news account said she was "universally praised for the great heroism she displayed on this trying occasion." The boat was half submerged and sinking quickly in deep water when "she secured a bale of cotton and, placing her aged father upon it, managed to push her clumsy 'craft' with its precious load ashore." That was no easy task. A bale of cotton could weigh 500 pounds or more.

The loss of the boat and freight was estimated at \$60,000 in 1878. That would be nearly \$2 million today. The newspaper reported that "most of the valuables, books, papers, &c., of the boat were saved, but very few of the passengers saved anything." The "hull, engines, boilers, and appurtenances" of the boat were salvaged and sold, but not for nearly enough to cover the loss.



Looking Back

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Washington

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