

# In and about Washington

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

## **Washington getting back to business, but cautiously**

Health and emergency officials are reminding businesses and their customers to follow social distancing and other guidelines as the town begins to reopen from a months-long hiatus brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Gov. John Bel Edwards formally moved the state into Phase One of its Roadmap to a Resilient Louisiana on May 15, allowing businesses to open with strict social distancing, stringent sanitation requirements and a requirement for masks for employees serving the public.



The governor planned to announce early this month whether the state will remove more restrictions. The governor's May order suggests that people should still avoid unnecessary exposure to COVID-19. Those who are at a higher risk should still stay at home except for essential activities such as getting food, medicine, or medical care. The governor said restrictions will be reimposed if the deadly virus shows signs of spreading rapidly again.

The May order expands the types of businesses that can open but limits many of them to 25 percent of occupancy and requires strict social distancing. Churches can reopen but only with 25 percent occupancy. Casinos and video poker establishments can open but must have a plan approved by the Gaming Control Board. More information is available at [OpenSafely.la.gov](https://www.opensafely.la.gov).

Businesses that can open with occupancy limits, strict sanitation, and social distancing include restaurants, cafés and coffee shops, shopping malls, gyms and fitness centers, barber and beauty shops, nail salons, movie theaters, racetracks (not open to spectators), museums, zoos, aquariums (no tactile exhibits), and bars and breweries with health department food permits

Business that must stay closed include massage establishments and spas, tattoo parlors, carnivals, amusement parks, water parks, trampoline parks, arcades, fairs, bars and breweries without LDH food permits, pool halls, bowling alleys, contact sports, children's play centers, playgrounds, theme parks, adult entertainment venues, and other similar businesses.

## **Town about \$112,000 behind budget projections**

All town departments except the police department are currently within their budgets, according to Mayor Dwight Landreneau. The town is operating under an austere \$1.8 million budget that made drastic spending cuts for all departments.

Landreneau said the police department is "running behind anticipated revenue" by about \$130,000, and that the town as a whole is "about \$112,000 out of budget."

He said the legislative auditor has volunteered to "help find ways to correct the budget and build one for next year."

“Last year we were about \$400,000 out of whack, this year about \$112,000,” he said. “All in all, we’re in pretty good shape for the shape we’re in.”

### **Water, sewer rate changes approved**

The Town Council without debate adopted long discussed changes to water and sewer rates that were recommended after a study found that the town has been charging “considerably less” than what it must spend to produce good drinking water, treat waste water, and maintain the system. The ordinance does not change natural gas rates, which can vary with the amount the town must pay for its gas supply. The new water and sewer rates are as follows:

#### **In Town Residential**

Water: Minimum of \$14 for the first 2,000 gallons used; \$3 for each 1,000 gallons extra. Sewer: Minimum of \$4.75 for the first 2,000 gallons; \$2.50 for each 1,000 gallons extra.

#### **Out of Town Residential**

Water: Minimum of \$15.25 for the first 2,000 gallons used; \$ 3.75 for each 1,000 gallons extra. The town does not provide sewer service.

#### **In Town Commercial**

Water: Minimum of \$42.50 for the first 5,000 gallons used; \$5 for each 1,000 gallons extra. Sewer: Minimum of \$20 for the first 5,000 gallons used; \$2.75 for each 1,000 gallons extra.

#### **Out of Town Commercial**

Water: Minimum of \$47.50 for the first 5,000 gallons used; \$5.50 for each 1,000 gallons extra. The town does not provide sewer service.

A \$1 Safe Water Drinking Fee and a \$1 Gas Pipeline Safety Inspection fee will be added to each monthly bill. The rate for the extra 1,000-gallons can be raised by five percent each year, but the basic fees cannot be changed without an amendment to the ordinance.

### **Surplus property list being prepared**

The town is preparing a list of surplus items that will be auctioned, but that will not include a 1950s-era fire truck that has been sitting at the town barn for some 15 years.

The truck was removed from consideration, at least for the time being, after Council member-at-large Mona Bob objected to its sale.

### **What would you put in a time capsule?**

The Washington Tricentennial Commission is considering burying a time capsule at the end of this year, to be opened in the year 2070, and is seeking suggestions on what should be included in it.

Items will have to fit in a box no bigger than two feet square and should reflect some aspect of life in Washington today.

Send suggestions to Jim Bradshaw, chairman, Washington Tricentennial Commission, P. O. Box 1121, Washington 70589, or by email to jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com.

### **Yard sale proceeds donated**

Johnnie and Eric Fontenot made a \$400 donation to the town from proceeds of a garage sale they conducted. They especially thanked Jan Terhune and Joann Jones for items they provided for the sale. Mayor Dwight Landreneau and town clerk Annette Rosette accepted the check.

### **‘Health Buggy’ still parked**

No decision has been made on when the “health buggy” will resume visits to area towns. when it does resume it will likely be on the same schedule as before, visiting Washington on the third Friday of each month.

### **No date for senior food distribution**

No date has been set for senior food distribution in Washington in June.

### **Town hall lobby open again**

The town hall lobby is again open during regular business hours with access limited to three people at a time. Customers are encouraged to use the night depository for payments, using a check or money order. No cash.

### **Physician assistant may come to Washington**

The mayor is negotiating a lease with a physician assistant for the medical offices at the community center on veterans memorial, who can do most things a regular doctor can do. the mayor anticipates the arrangement will be complete within the next month or two.

### **Grants moving forward**

A \$37,000 grant to buy a backhoe and a smaller grant to repair the police department roof are “in the works,” the mayor said.

### **Town inventorying property**

The town council voted to create an inventory of town property that is valued at \$1,500 or more. CPAs recommended the listing for accounting purposes.

### **Town taking bids for building**

The town is accepting bids for a 32-by-88-foot metal building on a 3/4- acre lot at the corner of St Mitchell and South Washington streets. Bids will be accepted at town hall until close of business June 12.

### **Volunteers needed to cut grass**

With the growing season in full swing, the mayor is asking for volunteers to help cut grass. Volunteers need to fill out a form at Town Hall. Aside from the practical effect of grass cutting, the volunteer hours can be counted as part of the matching funds the town needs in applying for grants.

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