

The Mayor's Corner

By Mayor Beth A. Taylor

Fellow Citizens,

As we welcome the new year of 2021, it would be easy to reflect on all the negative things that transpired in 2020. At the end of the year, I asked Town of Wytheville Department heads to share with me some of the positive things for our citizens, employees and businesses that came about as a result of COVID-19. As we begin this year, I would like to share some of these positive thoughts with you.

One of the biggest positive things that I am grateful for is our Public Works and Public Utilities (water and sewer) Departments. These employees keep the Town moving with all the street maintenance, trash and brush removal, keeping the debris off the streets and public right of ways,

and continue to keep the Town of Wytheville beautiful. They provide us with clean healthy drinking water, and kept the town sanitized with sewer repairs day, night, holidays and weekends, in the rain, wind or snow! Yes, it is their "job," but they chose to continue to work for all of us during this pandemic. We appreciate their dedication to their job and to the citizens of our Town and I want to thank them for providing some normalcy for the rest of us to do our jobs.

Wytheville Police Chief Joel Hash shared that during this crisis the Wytheville Police Department has come together and become stronger by supporting each other as the pandemic affected the way they operate. They witnessed strong community spirit everywhere they went and has seen the community coming together with support groups and outreach programs to help all those affected socially, financially and spiritually. The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed families to spend extra quality time together interacting in a warm, safe and loving environment.

Wytheville Fire & Rescue Chief Marc Brade stated that they have been able to continue answering calls for service. He shared that about 50% of their calls are in some way COVID-related. They have been able to upgrade their personal protection gear to not only protect themselves but also to protect the people they serve. Their entire department is committed to the safety and well-being of the citizens they serve.

What is CARES Act funding? How has it positively impacted our citizens, employees and our travelers? Through the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, the CARES Act provided payments to State, Local, and Tribal governments to help navigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The money was allocated from the federal government to the states and then from the states to local governments. This was quite helpful because our fiscal year budget for 2020-21 was cut slimmer than slim. The funding did, however, come with extremely strict regulations/guidelines on spending. These funds could only be spent on COVID-19 related projects and had to be utilized by the end of 2020.

Department heads were asked to submit a list of COVID-related needs. These included things related to safety issues for our citizens, employees and our traveling guests. Most improvements would not have been feasible through the Town's existing budget. All Town buildings were equipped with touchless sinks and toilets as well as protection shields on desks. There were improvements for safety and protection in the Treasurer's office. At the Wytheville Police Department there were some much needed improvements made for safety and wellbeing including a work room, break room, improved locker area and restrooms.



The old Wythe County EMS building has undergone structural changes for the safety of our Fire and EMS employees to include sleeping quarters, kitchen and workspaces. There were also additional funds allocated for the Wytheville Convention & Visitors Bureau to resume marketing to encourage travelers to visit our area when they feel safe and ready.

There was a collaboration of different entities that worked very hard to organize, execute, and market community events and community outreach for our citizens during the pandemic. These organizations included Downtown Wytheville Inc, Joint Industrial Development Authority (JIDA), Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Wytheville. Community events included Cruise Thru on Main Street, Illumination of Lights for the Fourth of July, Black Friday and Small Business Saturday, and the Virtual Zombie Bash. Christmas activities included the wonderful "Wytheville Christmas Show," spearheaded by the Wytheville Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Wytheville Fire & Rescue Department transporting Santa street by street on a fire truck and with the drive-by of Santa perched on the ladder truck at the Wytheville Recreation Center. These activities were enjoyed by children and adults alike.

There are two main outreach projects that focused mainly on small businesses. First, was a zero-interest loan program from the Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD). Downtown Wytheville reached out to the JIDA and the Chamber of Commerce and they contributed \$20,000 each for a pool of \$60,000. The second was a Community Developed Block Grant (CDBG) of \$800,000 which was used for a small business relief program for rent and mortgage fees of local businesses. These projects required an extreme amount of administrative time on the part of these entities. I thank each and every one of them.

At the direction of Wytheville Town Council, the Town also did community outreach through the extension of some deadlines for some licenses and fees. Business license deadlines were extended from May 2020 to July 31, 2020, water disconnects were not performed during the months of March, April and May, and Town real estate tax deadlines were extended from December 5, 2020 to March 5, 2021.

Here are a few other general thoughts and things to be thankful for:

- I appreciate the increase in sanitization that has occurred because of COVID-19. It has helped those of us who are immunocompromised to protect against other germs.
- At the Community Center, memberships were extended to compensate for the time we were not open. Some of the patrons have expressed that it is nice to work out with the equipment spaced for social distancing.
- Wearing a mask protects us from the cold.
- Grocery store trips are easier with less people.
- Businesses that are operating "by appointment" can be more comfortable for patrons than waiting in a crowd.
- Fuel prices have stayed relatively low.

I welcome the opportunity to talk to you regarding your ideas and concerns. I can be reached by phone at (276) 223-3356 or via email at beth.taylor@wytheville.org.

In closing, I would like to share with you a poem written by Wytheville Parks & Recreation Fitness Coordinator Becky Irvin.

Mixed Blessings

In everything broken,
from Covid-19,
let us try to find good,
through the heartache we've seen.

Like, dinners together,
home cooked meals.
Without the hustle and bustle,
It helped families to heal.

The creative wells,
bursting at seams.
The time left sitting still,
helped many realize their dreams.

When jobs had been lost,
many found a new passion.
For when push came to shove,
it drove them to action.

We came to miss smiles,
and hugs and handshakes.
It's amazing what we miss
with a little bit of space.

And In heartache and pain,
fear and frustration,
We leaned closer to God,
with faith filled anticipation

And as things start to shift,
as they will, this won't last.
I hope we rise in our future,
from these lessons of past.

BRUSH/LEAF COLLECTION GUIDELINES

TOWN OF WYTHEVILLE, VIRGINIA

ATTENTION: Brush must be placed on your property; not in alleyways or on neighboring properties.

DATES TO REMEMBER

BRUSH PICKUP DATES FOR 2021

January 25 — 29
 February 22 — 26
 March 29 — April 2
 April 26 — 30
 May 24 — 28
 June 28 — July 2
 July 26 — 30
 August 23 — 27
 September 27 — October 1
 October 25 — 29
 November 22 — 26
 December 27 — 31

BRUSH/LEAF COLLECTION GUIDELINES

- Leaves will be picked up in the fall as announced.
- In order to avoid getting a citation, please do not have brush out earlier than 6:00 PM on the Friday before collection week.
- Do not place brush/leaves on water meters or sewer cleanouts.
- Do not place branches, grass clippings or leaves in the travel lane or block sidewalks.
- Any brush placed out after the scheduled collection time may not get picked up in a timely manner or may result in a fine/charge.
- Tree and leaf removals by a contractor for a homeowner are to be disposed of by the contractor.
- Vehicles should not be parked near the brush as this blocks accessing the piles.
- The Town does NOT pick up old furniture, lumber, tires, or similar items. Disposal of these items are the responsibility of the owner or tenant.
- **The brush disposal site located at 602 Atkins Mill Road is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 AM to 3 PM. A fee of \$3 per cubic yard must be paid at the Treasurer's Office prior to disposal or a \$5 minimum fee. The receipt must be presented to the attendant on duty. Unless brush permits are sold, there will not be an attendant on duty.**
- The site will be open on the first and third Saturdays of each month from 8 AM to 1 PM for Town residents to take brush without a fee. There are no restrictions on the number of loads brought to the brush disposal site.
- During the week of the monthly pickups, the site will be open Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 3 PM.

Few localities offer this type of free service. Your assistance in following the guidelines will ensure the service continues. Please contact Chris Peeples, Director of Public Works, at 276-223-3357 with additional questions.



SORT LEAVES AND GRASS CLIPPINGS INTO SEPARATE PILES; GRASS CLIPPINGS MUST BE BAGGED OR IN CONTAINERS



IN A VERY SMALL PILE, BRANCHES MAY BE IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS



ARRANGE ALL BRANCHES IN THE SAME DIRECTION PARALLEL TO STREET



MORE THAN ONE DUMP TRUCK LOAD (10 FT. X 7 FT. X 4 FT.) PER HOUSEHOLD



DO NOT PLACE BRUSH, GRASS CLIPPINGS, OR LEAVES IN THE TRAVEL LANE OR BLOCK SIDEWALKS



DO NOT PUT ANY OTHER ITEMS IN THE BRUSH PILE



BRUSH SHOULD NOT BE ON WATER METERS OR SEWER CLEANOUTS OR AT FIRE HYDRANTS OR GUIDEWIRES



BRANCHES MUST FACE SAME DIRECTION; STACK LOGS SEPARATELY NO LARGER THAN 4 INCHES IN DIAMETER



Operation Inop Cleanup

Will start January 1st. 2021

In accordance with the Town of Wytheville ordinance on inoperable vehicles, Article VII – Keeping inoperative vehicles, Sections 12-128 through 12-136;

https://library.municode.com/va/wytheville/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH12SOWACODI_ARTVIIKEINVE

It is hereby declared that inoperative vehicles openly kept on property in residential, business, or agricultural districts of the town are a fire hazard, hinder the deployment and mobilization of firefighting equipment, create harborage for rodents and insects, are a danger to children, pose substantial health and safety hazards to the public at large, are a blighting influence on the town's neighborhoods, and constitute a nuisance.

Wytheville police officers have been directed to make notice to any property owner in the Town of Wytheville if they are in violation of this ordinance.

Wytheville Police Officers will deliver written notice to any property owner who is in violation of this ordinance, and the necessary steps to correct the violation.

If you have an inoperable vehicle on your property you can take the following steps to avoid being served an ordinance violation:

1. Make vehicle street legal with current registration, inspection, insurance, in running condition. DMV Antique Vehicle plates are acceptable on street legal vehicles in running condition.
2. Shield from view or shielded from view; means completely precluding visibility of the subject vehicle from all adjacent streets, alleys, and properties, by placing the vehicle within:

(1)A fully enclosed building or structure; or(2)An area completely enclosed either by a solid, rigid, opaque fence composed of standard fencing materials, which must meet the requirements of the town zoning ordinance, or by a landscaped arrangement of nondeciduous trees or bushes, sufficient in height, spacing, density, and circumference shall be sufficient to comply with the requirements of this article.

The placing, draping or securing of a tarpaulin, or other non-rigid cover, over or around an inoperative vehicle **shall not be sufficient** to comply with the requirements of this definition.