

The Mayor's Corner

By Mayor Beth A. Taylor

First, I would like to thank all the volunteers and citizen groups who donate their time and energy to help our town to be the community where we want to live, work, play and raise our families. I also want to share a card from one of our citizens. It is nice to be praised for doing good every now and then instead of not doing good enough! It reads as follows:

“A thousand thanks to the people who make Wytheville a wonderful place to live. Elected Officials, those who serve on Boards, and paid employees keep this Town beautiful and running. So many things happen every day that keeps the Town humming and many of them go unrecognized or unknown. The Town office, the street workers, the landscapers, safety people (both Police and Fire men and women), the trash collectors and so many others are often unthought of but thanks to them our Town is GREAT! Many Thanks A.L.”



PUBLIC SAFETY

Fire Chief Marc Brade would like to share this safety information with us.

- Portable electric heaters are a convenient source of supplemental heat for your home in cold weather, but they also increase the risk of fire and electric shock if not used properly. Space heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires in the United States. Safety should always be a top consideration when using space heaters.
- Make sure your space heater has the label showing that it is listed by a recognized testing laboratory.
- Before using any space heater, read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels.
- Inspect heaters for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use. If frayed, worn or damaged, DO NOT USE!!
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Turn it off when you are leaving a room or going to sleep. Do not let pets or children play too close to a heater.
- Proper placement of space heaters is critical. Heaters must be kept at least three feet away from anything that can burn.
- Never use extension cords with a space heater.

TOWN ACTIONS

At the December 9th Town Council meeting, there were three public hearings. Two of these were to consider the request of Marathon Reality (representing Food City Grocery Store). The first was to consider rezoning certain properties from B-1 Business and R-3 Residential to B-2 DT general Business District-Downtown. The second request was to consider discontinuing and vacating North 14th Street, between Main Street and Monroe Street parallel to North 14th Street and North 16th Street and discontinuing and vacating a portion of an alleyway.

Council voted to pass Ordinance #1374 for the rezoning and Ordinance #1375 for the vacating of 14th Street and a partial alleyway.

The third public hearing was for Renewing the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for 2020 for 276 Express, LLC for the operation of taxicabs. After reviewing the report from Chief Arnold, which consisted of the inspection of all their numerous vehicles and insurance data, the Council all voted to renew their certificate. Note that 276 Express, LLC was the only company applying for the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.

Other Actions by Council included Ordinance #1376 which was also adopted. This was a request from the CEO and CFO of Wythe County Community Hospital to do a Local Hospital Provider Assessment. This will hopefully help them collect additional funds to be paid back from the State Medicaid Program. This in no way will affect our citizens medical costs or local taxes. If additional funds are appropriated back to the hospital, then additional money will be put back into the community by way of programs and assistance with Emergency Medical Services.

Council also recognized six citizens during the last two meetings by way of a proclamation for being the only participants out of 100, that completed the “Walk the Distance of the Appalachian Trail” (which is about 2000 miles) challenge offered through the Recreation Center. This was a HEAL initiative, Healthy Eating Active Living.

OTHER NEWS

Permits: Just a friendly reminder that with the beginning of a New Year, we start to think about doing home improvements. Remember that all new construction and renovations need a building permit. Opening a business? To obtain a business permit you need a certificate of occupancy. When in doubt you may want to check with the Town office at 276-223-3354 to see if a permit is required.

Employment: Our local unemployment is 3.1% for 2019 and was 4.4% in 2018. Last month, I shared some information regarding part-time census jobs. Are you looking for more permanent employment, want to become part of a team with excellent benefits for full-time employment? For more information and applications go to the Town of Wytheville website under the Job Openings section. <https://www.wytheville.org/townoffice/employment.php>

A few current opportunities include full-time Building Official/Code Enforcement Officer, full-time Firefighter/EMT/Medic, full-time Certified Police Officer, full-time building Maintenance Custodian 111, full-time Mechanic-Public Works, part-time Lifeguard and part-time Fitness Instructor.

2019 YEAR REVIEW

There are some positive things to report, and a few not so positive.

Here are some positive highlights: completion of Downtown streetscape, finishing up East Main Street, Heritage walkways 1 and 2 completed, finishing up the Truss Bridge project, Farmers Market, completion of Community Boulevard, the LOVE letters, completion of the Wayfinding project (all our new street signs), cemetery changes with paving and stone work, the Edgemont Sewer Project is almost complete (lacking the pump station, which according to regulations this product needs to be a made in the USA and there is a wait.)

A couple of not so positive things would include the major water line break that lead to quite a few citizens without water. Since it occurred during a holiday, the State did not initiate any of its notification to schools/businesses/restaurants, to name a few. The lack of communication to our citizens was the biggest downfall and a definite opportunity going forward to learn and improve for any events in the future. I would recommend that everyone make sure you are on the Wythe County Emergency contact notification list.

The relocation of the re-cycling facility was not favored by many. The other issue with re-cycling is our vendors on the receiving end. The vendors have increased our fees due to an excess amount of improper materials, and, with the times, it has changed the types of materials accepted, especially plastics.

A PEAK INTO 2020 PROJECTS

- The Fire/EMS program continues to be on the horizon, which will lead to the need for a new Fire/EMS Station.
- We look forward to Food City building a new grocery store and gas station on the west end of town.
- We will continue efforts for economic development projects, industrial and other. The Millwald Theatre is a good example, and Heritage Walk Phase 3.
- Wytheville is a HEAL Town and we have a Platinum Program Status. I will continue our HEAL initiatives such as Walking with the Mayor/Coffee with the Mayor.
- We will continue sidewalk repairs and construction to help make this a more walkable community. There will be employee initiatives, and capital improvements planning.

As we go forward into the new year with all our accomplishments with the brick and mortar aspects of our growth and welcoming new businesses, we, the citizens, have an obligation to support our local businesses. I was reading information on <http://www.the350project.net> about saving the brick and mortar operations of our independent locally-owned stores. We all have a role to play! Think about which three independently owned stores that you would miss if they were gone. Stop in and say hello, pick up a little something. That's how these stores stay open and in business. For every \$100 spent in an independently owned store, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll, and other expenditures. With spending in a national chain, \$43 stays in the community. Spend money online and nothing comes home. It takes only one person to start the thread, and that person is you and me. We have built it and it is our responsibility to keep it alive. Happy New Year to all!

I welcome the opportunity to talk to you regarding your ideas and concerns. My office, at the Wytheville Municipal Building, is open prior to Council meetings on the second and fourth Monday evenings at 6:30 p.m., and other times by appointment. I can also be reached by phone at 223-3356 or via email at beth.taylor@wytheville.org.

BRUSH COLLECTION GUIDELINES

TOWN OF WYTHEVILLE, VIRGINIA

BRUSH PICKUP DATES FOR 2020

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

DATES TO REMEMBER

BRUSH COLLECTION GUIDELINES

- 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 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 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 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 Peebles, Director of Public Works, at 276-223-3357 with additional questions.

